

## EXPLORING INTERNATIONAL NGO CONNECTIONS IN SENEGAL

ASPIRATIONS FOR SENEGAL:  
EXPLORING INTERNATIONAL NGO CONNECTIONS

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## **Abstract**

In Senegal, local communities have faced a wide range of economic and political challenges. In their attempt to address these issues, local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have engaged in a wide variety of improvement projects, and have often partnered together in these efforts. This dissertation examines the linkages formed between Senegalese and international NGOs in their efforts to achieve their aspirations of improvement for the country in a context of global interconnection. By engaging with relevant literature and ethnographic data collected through anthropological research efforts, I seek to provide a more in-depth understanding of the perspectives and experiences of NGO practitioners in Senegal while considering the interrelated issues of global connection, civil society and social hope. My research aims to contribute to the anthropological discourse on NGOs by examining how practitioners engaged in a variety of NGOs in Senegal understand and approach their work and how they engage in the complex power relationships entailed by these international NGO partnerships. In addition, this study explores the issue of social hope among NGO practitioners, examining how they approach and experience the concept of hope through their NGO efforts at improvement. With a focus on implementing programs targeted at certain groups over a short period of time, the hope of NGO staff involves a desire for long-term change despite the challenges faced. This study also considers the aspirations of NGO staff with respect to their political engagement with the state and their perception of Senegal's place in the world. This involves exploring their belief that civil society and NGOs are the basis for hope in Senegal rather than the state. In this context, NGOs seek improvement by working within the political and economic system, constrained and limited by the dictates of their external donors and their approach to social change.

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to Adam Allentuck, a wonderful husband and fellow scholar, whose kindness, generosity, laughter, and support made it possible for me to undertake and complete this doctoral research.

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## **List of All Abbreviations**

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| BBC    | British Broadcasting Corporation                                       |
| CIDA   | Canadian International Development Agency                              |
| CONGAD | Council of Development NGOs (Conseil des ONG d'Appui au Développement) |
| IMF    | International Monetary Fund  |
| MEI    | Multilateral Economic Institutions                                     |
| UN     | United Nations   |
| USAID  | United States Agency for International Development                     |
| WTO    | World Trade Organization   |

## **Chapter One - Introduction**

Senegal, a nation of 12.5 million people on the West coast of Africa, has been portrayed as a hopeful place in a continent afflicted by poverty and conflict. Not only has it been celebrated as a model of democracy in Africa, but the country's economy is also relatively stable compared to many other African economies, its population has relatively low HIV infection rates, and the nation is considered to be a place of religious tolerance. In many ways, Senegal is viewed as challenging Western perceptions and stereotypes of African and Muslim countries. Despite this portrayal, the people of this country have experienced a range of economic and political problems. In an attempt to assist local Senegalese people in managing these difficulties, local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have engaged in a wide variety of improvement projects, and have often partnered together in these efforts. My thesis research examines the linkages formed between Senegalese NGOs and International NGOs (INGOs) in their efforts to achieve their aspirations of improvement for the country in a context of global interconnection.

### **Aims and Objectives**

In this dissertation, I aim to explore several interrelated issues, including: how international ties between local NGOs and INGOs have developed in the attempt to

achieve shared goals and the form these ties take in Senegal; how NGO practitioners<sup>1</sup> understand and approach their NGO work in the country; what Senegalese and non-Senegalese NGO practitioners aspire to achieve through their respective organizations; how they view the current situation in Senegal, its place in Africa and the world, and what they aspire for it to be through their engagement with NGOs and civil society. The research process for this dissertation involved discussions with NGO practitioners regarding the work of NGOs in Senegal and their views on global connections and partnerships between INGOs and local Senegalese NGOs. These discussions with NGO practitioners also entailed a consideration of their perspectives on hope, which included their personal hopes for the future, in addition to aspirations for their NGOs and for the country of Senegal and its place in the international community. In the following chapters, I delve more deeply into the NGO context in Senegal and consider the perspectives of NGO practitioners regarding their efforts to assist the local population. In doing so, I follow what Li (2007:3) has described as the anthropological tradition of making taken-for-granted issues and practices “strange”, which can assist in drawing out and examining interesting effects and peculiarities. My efforts in this regard involve questioning assumptions about civil society and NGO work and exposing the complexities and contradictions found in the discourses and practices of NGO staff. As noted by Fisher (1997:441), more anthropological analysis of NGOs and their growing ties are needed given that there have been few studies of what is happening with specific

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<sup>1</sup> The terms NGO practitioners or NGO staff refer to the paid and voluntary workers of INGOs, NGOs and local associations.

organizations in particular places, how NGO practices impact power relations, and how discourses have emerged presenting NGOs as the solution to problems of development, welfare service delivery and democratization. My research aims to contribute to the anthropological discourse on NGOs by exploring how practitioners engaged in a variety of NGOs in Senegal understand and approach their work, and how this is connected to their aspirations for their NGOs and the country. More broadly, I employ the NGO context in Senegal as a site for studying the intersection of three main themes of interest: civil society and governmentality, global connections, and social hope. I consider how civil society organizations are engaged in techniques of governmentality by exploring how NGOs in Senegal pursue programs of improvement, which seek to educate the desires and reform the practices of their target populations (Li 2007:16). As well, in a context of increasing scholarly discussion of globalization and global civil society, my study seeks to investigate these growing global connections by examining their actual emergence and form in the partnerships developed between local and international NGOs in Senegal. In considering the practices and discourses of NGO practitioners regarding partnerships, I aim to highlight the complex aims and power relationships entailed by engaging in these international connections. As is further discussed in Chapter Two, the issue of hope has received little attention in social theory, and few have studied it using an anthropological approach. My research considers social hope as an area of study by examining the object of NGO practitioners' hope in their work with Senegalese NGOs, and by exploring how they express and aim to achieve these hopes through their efforts with these organizations. By engaging with relevant literature and ethnographic data

collected through anthropological research efforts, I seek to explore the issues of global connection, civil society and social hope while providing a more in-depth understanding of the perspectives and experiences of NGO practitioners in Senegal and their aspirations for improvement.

### **Notable Issues and Findings**

A number of interesting issues and findings arise in the examination of these related topics, and I will discuss these issues further in the chapters that follow. This includes the hierarchical relationship and power differential existing between local organizations and INGOs as they grapple with the matter of financial dependence between these organizations. As well, an examination of the perspectives of NGO practitioners on their work reveals a focus on expertise and management techniques to assist local communities rather than addressing the conditions and structures of inequality and poverty. In addition, the hopes of NGO practitioners can be seen as shaped by the context of NGO work and development that involves pursuing small, gradual changes in the long process of improvement. Finally, there is the matter of how NGOs interact with the state to achieve their goals since their aim is to work within economic and political systems to create positive improvement, not to directly challenge these systems.

In this dissertation, I explore the hopes of those working with NGOs, a milieu shaped by global connections to funding and experts and an emphasis on using expertise and management techniques to engage in discrete projects, efforts that aim to achieve a more democratic, equal and sustainable world in a context of neoliberal globalization. As

well, I suggest that NGOs in Senegal are constrained politically by dependence on funding chains that originate outside of the country. This, in combination with their emphasis on managing populations and hoping for improvement through the long-term culmination of brief interventions limits the political aims they are able to pursue. Thus, the efforts of NGOs involve trying to help local people mitigate the negative experiences of structures of power and inequality fostered by neoliberal globalization. In order to approach the issues raised by this research, it is necessary to consider the context, both historical and current, in which NGOs in Senegal operate and which has shaped their emergence and growing presence in the country.

### **Senegal: Historical Background and Current Context**

Senegal has often been portrayed as one of the few countries in West Africa with a glimmer of hope due to its democratic rule. In this section, I will provide a brief discussion on the historical background of Senegal and an overview of the current situation in the country. Inhabited by a number of ethnic groups, including the Wolof, Lebu, Serer, Tukulor, Mandinka, Fulbe and Diola, Senegal's first contact with Europe began in the mid-fifteenth century with the arrival of the Portuguese (Gellar 1995:1, 4). Senegal became a major source of slaves to Europe in the sixteenth century, and by the seventeenth century, France had gained a significant foothold in the country after establishing a trading post and fort in the town of Saint Louis (Gellar 1995: 4, 5). During the eighteenth century, France and Britain competed for empire and control of trade in the Senegambian region, and in the late 19th century, the region was partitioned into the

French colony of Senegal and the British colony of Gambia (Gellar 1995:5). After many years of French colonial rule, Senegal gained its independence in 1960, with Leopold Senghor serving as the first Senegalese president (Olaniyan 1994:177). Senghor emphasized dialogue as a method for the prevention and resolution of conflicts and promoted a philosophy involving the complementarity of human civilizations, aspects that Gellar (2005:162) credits with strengthening and preserving Senegalese traditions of encouraging ethnic tolerance. After independence, Senghor ruled over a one-party system until the mid-1970s when the constitution was revised to allow a three party system, which included Senghor's newly named Socialist Party, and the Senegalese Democratic Party, led by Abdoulaye Wade (Gellar 1995:22, 23). In January 1981, Abdou Diouf succeeded Senghor as president, and shortly thereafter, Diouf established a multiparty system allowing for other political parties to apply for legal recognition (Olaniyan 1994:177).

In the early 1980s, Senegal faced an economic crisis primarily caused by rising foreign debt, erosion in the terms of trade, severe droughts and rising oil prices (Park et al. 2003:74). Facing pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and other donors to alter drastically its economic policies, Senegal became one of the first African countries to accept a structural adjustment program (SAP) (Gellar 1995:72). As stated by Park et al. (2003:74), "Following neoliberal prescriptions, SAP imposed the usual mixture of reform of government finance, cutting government spending, devaluation, trade liberalization, and privatization." In order to receive structural adjustment loans and the rescheduling of foreign debt, Senegal had to meet

these economic conditions set by the IMF and World Bank, which aimed to achieve stabilization, greater economic liberalization, and higher economic growth rates (Gellar 1995: 72). According to Olaniyan (1994:176), Diouf's efforts at further democratizing and liberalizing the Senegalese political and economic systems were much admired by the Western world that believes this path to growth is the way forward for developing countries. However, Gellar (1995:72) notes that while accepting the need for economic liberalization, the Diouf government had to face political consequences when its economic policies were unfavorable to key political groups in the country, including trade unions, state bureaucrats and low-income urbanites. Due to pressure from constituents, the government often proceeded very slowly or failed to implement conditions imposed by donors (Gellar 1995:72). For Senegalese critics of SAP, the program has been problematic for its failure to attain economic recovery, and its high social costs, including poorer quality health care and education, as well as contributing to unemployment and pauperization (Gellar 1995:78; Olaniyan 1994:201). In January 1994, advocated by the IMF and World Bank, Senegal's currency, the CFA franc, was devalued by 50 percent, which was to spur exports and revitalize agricultural production, resulting in economic recovery and growth (Gellar 1995:79). However, this devaluation led to sharp price increases in imported clothing, food and other essential items without a corresponding increase in farm prices or salaries to prevent a decrease in living standards (Gellar 1995:74-75). Ford (2003:42) notes that the 1994 devaluation of the CFA franc has had a massive impact on Senegal's lack of economic progress, given that it has doubled the national debt and cut purchasing power in half (Ford 2003:42-43). In Gellar's view, the

international economic situation and powerful economic institutions such as the IMF and World Bank have had significant impacts on the Senegalese economy, and as a result, he states that “Senegal provides a classic example of a dependent economy in which economic growth and prosperity are largely conditioned by external economic forces and actors” (Gellar 1995:62).

### *Current Context*

Despite the economic challenges the country has faced, Senegal has been considered one of West Africa’s bright lights, which is in large part due to its history of political stability and democratic values. According to Gellar (1995:21), “...Senegal remains one of the most democratic and least repressive regimes on the African continent.” He attributes this long-standing political stability to support from Senegal’s Muslim leaders, in addition to skilled political leadership, commitment to democratic traditions and values by most of country’s elite, the military’s professionalism, and a political culture that focuses on resolving conflicts through dialogue (Gellar 1995:21). Indeed, Senegal has been held up as an example of one of Africa’s model democracies due to its relatively stable democratic government over the last several decades, and particularly due to the peaceful and transparent election of Abdoulaye Wade’s Senegalese Democratic Party in 2000 after forty years of Socialist Party rule (BBC 2010). Many viewed this election as a rare transfer of democratic power on a continent plagued by conflict, coups, and election fraud (BBC 2010). According to the World Bank (2010), Senegal’s tradition of stability is considered to be the result of a relatively diverse and

free media, involving numerous radio stations and newspapers, the prominent role of civil society, including hundreds of NGOs actively engaged in a variety of issues, and the country's ability to maintain social equilibrium between religious communities and modern institutions.

Indeed, in a nation of over twelve million people, harmony between Senegal's 95 percent Muslim population and other religious groups has also been emphasized in the media, which has noted that Senegal's constitution is secular, and that the government celebrates both Muslim and Christian holidays (Ba 2006). One author, Soares (2006), describes how Christmas is still widely celebrated in the country, and female tourists do not have to abide by any religious restrictions on clothing. As well, many families consist of members of different faiths, and consequently, this peaceful coexistence has been described as a "point of pride" for the West African country (Ba 2006). Senegal continues to be a secular state that aims to treat all religions equally, and the emphasis on religious and ethnic tolerance has been shaped not only by Senegal's political leaders, including Senghor, Diouf and Wade, but also by religious leaders and followers (Gellar 2005:162). Most Senegalese Muslims are associated with one of the country's Sufi Brotherhoods (Gellar 1995:111), which promote respect for all religions and religious followers as long as they do not attack Islam (Gellar 2005:112). The result has been a great deal of religious tolerance toward the adherents of different brotherhoods, as well as toward the Christian minority (Gellar 2005:112).

In addition, with respect to HIV/AIDS, considered an especially deadly epidemic in Africa, Senegal has been described as a remarkably hopeful case given its noticeably

lower incidence rates. Donnelly (2003) discusses how Senegal has a two percent HIV infection rate (and it has never risen above this number) compared to 12 African countries where ten percent of people aged 15 to 49 are infected with HIV. Even amongst prostitutes, the category of people considered to be most at risk for the disease, there is a 20 percent infection rate, compared to almost 95 percent in Kenya and 76 percent amongst one group of Ugandan prostitutes (Donnelly 2003). Low HIV infection rates in Senegal are attributed to collaborations between the government and Islamic religious leaders in promoting premarital abstinence, marital fidelity, safe-sex practices, and required health care check-ups for prostitutes (Donnelly 2003).

Even in economic terms, Senegal has been considered to benefit from a relatively stable economy in the region. According to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (2000) notes that there have been improvements in Senegal's economic growth in the last decade, and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) (2011) describes Senegal as hub of economic stability in West Africa. The above factors have contributed to Senegal's positive portrayal in the West.

Given these positive assessments of Senegal, it seems apparent that this country is in a hopeful position for a bright and stable future. However, further examination of the current context in the country shows that Senegal does have its share of economic and political problems, despite its relatively strong position in West Africa. CIDA (2011) notes that Senegal is amongst the world's poorest countries, and USAID (2000) cites a 50 percent unemployment rate in the capital. The World Bank (2010) reports that "From the mid-90s until 2005, Senegal had one of the best economic performances in Sub-Saharan

Africa.” However, by the mid-2000s, a number of external and internal shocks have impacted the country, including an increase in oil prices and a surge in food prices from 2007 onward, the global recession, and flooding in the Dakar area (World Bank 2010). This has resulted in increases in inflation and a weaker economic performance in the second half of the last decade (World Bank 2010).

Ford (2003:42) points out that while the IMF once considered Senegal to have a model economy, today its economic performance has been in decline. With an economy that remains largely based upon agricultural production, namely cotton and peanuts, environmental problems and erratic rainfall that has led to droughts and flooding have been detrimental to this agricultural production (Ford 2003:44,45). Senegal’s rural communities are expected to continue to struggle with drought, desertification, population growth and lower commodity prices (Ford 2003:44). In 2008, a drop in expected economic growth was linked with a slow-down in economic activity, government overspending, and high food and oil prices (Reuters Africa 2009).

Today, Senegal has many “development partners” providing financial assistance to the country. This includes the IMF and World Bank, as well as France, the EU, USAID, Germany, Japan, Canada, and numerous United Nations agencies (World Bank 2010). Ford (2003:42) reports that “Senegal receives around €70 per head of population in the form of international aid, which comprises about 15% of GDP.” He notes that this is above average for Africa, and is somewhat surprising given that Senegal is not amongst the most unstable of African states, nor amongst the poorest 50 percent (Ford 2003:42). Still, in 2010, Senegal ranked 144 out of 169 countries in the Human Development Index,

with a life expectancy of 56.2 years, an adult literacy rate of 41.9%, and in 2008, a per capita GDP of \$1839 (US) (UNDP 2010). In addition, national debt in Senegal is around 70% of GDP (Ford 2003:44). To this, Ford (2003:44) points out that “Around two-thirds of this debt is owed to multinational creditors headed by the IMF, so good relations with multilaterals are as important here as elsewhere in Africa.”

In an effort to manage this debt, Senegal accepted a debt reduction package through the IMF’s heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative in June 2000, although this initiative depends on the achievement of a poverty reduction programme (Ford 2003:44). According to Ford (2003:43), Senegal’s current relationship with the IMF is dominated by agreements to cut the number of civil servants, decrease dependence on foreign aid, and reduce public spending. These agreements have been set out in Senegal’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) for the IMF, which describes the structural, macroeconomic and social programs and policies to be engaged in to promote growth and reduce poverty (World Bank 2011). From 2003-2005, Senegal participated in its first IMF poverty reduction strategy, and Senegal’s second PRSP was to cover the period from 2006-2010 (World Bank 2011). These PRSPs are to be prepared by governments in a participatory process with development partners such as the World Bank, the IMF, and civil society (World Bank 2011). However, critics have suggested that values such as greater participation and country ownership touted by the World Bank and IMF in the recent PRSP process have not been adequately achieved, and, “Overall, the Senegalese case suggests that the PRSP has not significantly shifted control of the development process into the hands of national governments” (Phillips 2005:2,10). According to

Phillips (2005:10), international funding institutions continue to support neoliberal economic models of development, despite evidence that these models may run counter to poverty reduction goals. As well, she finds that governments such as that of Senegal view their primary responsibility to the IMF and World Bank rather than to their people, which undermines democratic development and the stated goals of the PRSP (Phillips 2005:10).

In addition to experiencing economic difficulties, there is evidence that the political stability Senegal has been recognized for may be experiencing some setbacks. While Senegal has enjoyed a reputation as an important example of democracy in West Africa, a variety of political concerns have tarnished this status (Polgreen 2008:A5). This includes a number of internal conflicts and disagreements within the government, and speculation amongst the population that the current president is preparing his son to become his successor (Polgreen 2008:15). According to Polgreen's (2008:A5), such political concerns have diminished Senegal's reputation as a shining example of democracy in this region. In recent years, several incidents involving the government have led to accusations of corruption and authoritarian leadership. This includes a departing IMF representative receiving €100,000 "parting gift" from the Wade government (LeMonde.fr avec AFP 2009), the 2004 arrest of a local newspaper editor critical of Wade's regime (Gellar 2005:166), and the crackdown on marches by opposition supporters (Mbow 2008:163). Gellar (2005:89) points out that while Wade was in opposition, he demanded fair elections, more freedom of the press, a stronger role for Parliament and greater transparency in the operations of government. However, he notes that "Once in power, Wade broke many of his campaign promises and adopted a

personal style of governance that tarnished his image as one of Africa's greatest fighters for democracy" (Gellar 2005:89).

Clearly, while Senegal has achieved a relatively stable economy and a certain amount of democratic reform, it faces many economic and political difficulties that create challenges in meeting the basic needs of its populace. This has resulted in growing concern in the West that the once hopeful example in West Africa is seeing its good fortune fade, perhaps indicating further problems for this troubled area of the world (Polgreen 2008:A5). Further discussion of internal perspectives on the political context in Senegal will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

### **NGOs in Senegal**

Given the many difficulties facing the Senegalese population, the civil society sector in Senegal, including the number of NGOs, has grown over the years in an attempt to address some of these problems. Michael (2004:92) notes that Islamic brotherhoods, trade unions and student movements have been active throughout Senegal's history. However, fiscal crises and droughts in the 1970s led to the growth of NGOs in both numbers and influence (Michael 2004:92). She states that "The disengagement of the state from many sectors of development activity over the last decade, as the politics of structural adjustment and decentralization have gripped the continent, has been a major driving force behind the growth of local NGOs in the country" (Michael 2004:92). With increasing decentralization, NGOs have been propelled to the front of national development processes, a role they have been called onto play by donors, the state, and

local communities alike. According to Michael (2004:92), with worsening levels of human development and poverty in the country, it is like that the role of Senegalese NGOs will continue to grow in the future.

In terms of the number of NGOs in Senegal, Senegal's Council of Development NGOs (CONGAD) (2009), which was created in 1982, states that there are currently 178 national, foreign, and international NGOs registered as members of its organization. According to a report by the Senegalese Ministère de la Famille, de la Solidarité Nationale de L'Entreprenariat Féminin et de la Micro Finance (2008:2), in 2008, there were 469 organizations registered as NGOs in Senegal: 295 national and 174 international. In this context, local Senegalese NGOs have partnered with a wide range of international organizations from a variety of countries (Michael 2004:110). Michael (2004:110) notes that these international development organizations have been attracted to partner and work with local NGOs in Senegal due to CONGAD's international reputation. Indeed, most operational INGOs in Senegal are engaged in partnerships with local NGOs as a result of pressure from both CONGAD and donor agencies (Michael 2004: 98, 100).

In Senegal, the Directorate of Community Development of the Ministry of the Family provides oversight of NGOs, and foreign and national associations wishing to establish themselves as NGOs must submit a request for approval by the Ministry (Kamara 2010:9,15). Decree no. 96-103 of February 8, 1996, which amends Decree no. 89-775 of June 30, 1989, sets the conditions of NGO intervention (Sarr 2006:109). According to Sarr (2006:109), "This stipulates that NGOs are associations or private

organizations regularly declared as nonprofit, with the objective of supporting development in Senegal and being recognized in this capacity by the government.”

In this study, I use the terms INGOs, NGOs and local associations to refer to the organizations with which my participants engage. I follow Michael's (2004:3) approach to the term NGO, which she describes as, "...independent development actors existing apart from governments and corporations, operating on a non-profit or not-for-profit basis with an emphasis on voluntarism, and pursuing a mandate of providing development services, undertaking communal development work or advocating on development issues." While Michael (2004:3) also employs the term community-based organizations (CBOs), I prefer to use the term local association, since some of these organizations in my study include members from a variety of groups and communities, while still remaining less structured than NGOs. Still, I find Michael's (2004:3) distinction between NGOs and CBOs useful, as she notes that CBOs tend to remain more locally focused and operate with less formalized structure than NGOs, benefiting from the time and resources of members in undertaking their activities. She states that "NGOs, on the other hand, are usually more structured organizations with their own staff and locale, a wider mandate covering a greater geographic area and a range of activities which does not necessarily directly benefit the staff or members of the NGO" (Michael 2004:3). In addition, NGOs have to be registered with the appropriate government authority in the country, and this requires abiding by state regulations and having certain financial and organizational controls (Michael 2004:3). In my study, local NGOs refer to Senegalese-based NGOs that focus their operations in Senegal and have NGO status with the government of Senegal.

As previously noted, I also refer to INGOs, which are international NGOs that have offices, projects and mandates encompassing a number of different countries. Wallace et al. (2006:12) describe INGOs as European and U.S. NGOs that work in several countries in the South, raise funds from donors globally, and can access sources of knowledge, influence and capital in the North.<sup>2</sup> While Michael (2004:3) points out that most INGOs are based in the North (NNGOs), NGOs originating from Southern communities (SNGOs) have recently begun to play a more prominent role in international development. Still, in my research, only one INGO was based in the South, while the rest originated from Canada, the U.S. and Europe. For ease of understanding, in this dissertation, I employ the terms INGO and local NGO, while providing further clarification where necessary, in discussing these organizations.<sup>3</sup> With respect to the size of these organizations, based on my interviews with NGO practitioners and my volunteer experiences with a local NGO and a local association, I would estimate that, not including varying numbers of volunteers, INGOs in Dakar ranged from 10 to 50 staff people in their country offices, while local NGO offices ranged from 6 to 25 staff people, and local associations had approximately 4 to 10 staff members.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In my study, participants were also engaged in Canadian-based INGOs.

<sup>3</sup> I should note, however, that since some of the literature on INGO and NGO partnerships continues to use the terms NNGOs to refer to northern INGOs and SNGOs to refer to local NGOs originating in the South, I use these terms interchangeably when referring to this literature in Chapter Four.

<sup>4</sup> Note that in some cases, the staff of local associations are volunteers, in addition to having between 15 to 150 local members.

## **Chapter Overview**

Given the complex socio-economic and political context in Senegal, the prominent role of NGOs in the country, and their engagement in international partnerships, this dissertation seeks to delve deeper into these issues and address a number of related topics in the subsequent chapters. In Chapter Two, I explore the three main theoretical themes that shape and inform this thesis research. This includes an examination of the literature on civil society, NGOs, and governmentality, followed by a discussion of global civil society and global interconnection, and concluding with a consideration of the concept of hope, and how it is defined and engaged with by current social theorists. Chapters Four through Seven draw upon this theoretical literature, in addition to bringing in more specific literature to the particular issues raised.

In Chapter Three, I provide an overview of the anthropological methods employed for this doctoral research, which included eight months of living in Dakar, Senegal, where I conducted 90 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with local and international NGO practitioners, and engaged in participant observation with two local organizations. I also describe the techniques utilized to analyze my data, and provide a profile of the individuals and organizations that participated in the study. In addition, I consider the benefits and challenges of engaging in anthropological methods to study NGOs.

Chapters Four to Seven share the findings of my research and are intended to provide a more in-depth understanding of the NGO context in Senegal and how NGO practitioners engaged in these organizations understand and approach their work.

Chapter Four examines the connections between local Senegalese NGOs and INGOs engaged in partnerships. With a consideration of why and how these partnerships actually take place, I explore the experiences of NGO practitioners involved in these relationships, and their perceived benefits and challenges, which reveals concern about organizational dependence and unequal power dynamics. The chapter concludes with a discussion of NGO staff fears about the future operations of NGOs in Senegal.

In Chapter Five, the discourses of NGO practitioners regarding their work are further explored. I examine their criticisms and concerns about NGO work, as well as discussing issues of bureaucracy and hierarchy found within and amongst these organizations, a growing emphasis on incorporating private sector activities, and a focus on capacity building and the authority of experts.

Having explored how NGO partnerships operate in Senegal in Chapter Five and considered the organizational culture of these NGOs, I then turn in Chapter Six to a topic of a more personal nature involving the motivations and aspirations of NGO practitioners for their NGO work. This chapter examines their approaches to the concept of hope, and what they hope to accomplish through working with NGOs in Senegal. It also considers the hopefulness, frustration and disappointment experienced by NGO practitioners engaged in this work given the daunting challenges they face in their efforts at improvement. This chapter aims to gain insight into why these individuals have decided to engage in NGO work in Senegal, and what they hope to achieve through these efforts.

Chapter Seven provides a discussion of how NGO practitioners perceive the current political and economic context in Senegal, and their hopes for a better future for the

country. It considers how their aspirations for improvement are viewed as very possible for a number of reasons, most notably that of Senegal's strong civil society, including NGOs. This is in contrast to their critical view of the state, which is considered corrupt and unable to meet the needs of the local population. Despite these criticisms, NGOs often collaborate with the Senegalese state, although tensions do exist between them. This chapter also discusses the political activities NGOs engage in, which largely involve advocating for greater democracy and the promotion of human rights, urging the state to comply with these reforms while not seeking to directly challenge systems of political and economic power. It concludes by noting that NGO political activities are constrained by the agendas of the foreign donors providing their funding for projects of a limited scope.

Finally, the dissertation concludes with a discussion of the major issues addressed in the thesis, along with a consideration of potential areas of future research based on the findings presented here. These are the issues that I now turn to in the following chapters of this dissertation, beginning with an exploration of the relevant literature and theoretical considerations informing my research.

## **Chapter Two - Theoretical Considerations and Literature Review**

There are a number of interconnected theoretical issues shaping the research presented in this dissertation, and this chapter will address these main issues. In this first section, I will explore the literature surrounding civil society and NGOs, along with a consideration of governmentality and the forms it takes in a context of globalization. This is followed by a related section exploring the notion of global civil society, which includes an examination of the efforts of anthropologists to apply ethnographic techniques to the emerging fields of global interconnection. The final section of this chapter considers the concept of hope, how it is defined and expressed in different contexts, and how current social theorists are engaging with hope in their studies.

### CIVIL SOCIETY, NGOs AND GOVERNMENTALITY

Civil society is a highly contested term that has recently re-emerged in popular imaginings both inside and outside academia. This section will explore some of the major debates surrounding civil society and the NGOs associated with it, including a discussion of the issues that have been raised with respect to its conceptualization and appearance in African contexts. The critical review of this literature raises several interrelated concerns about the concept of civil society, including the need to contextualize its meanings in order to understand how it is being used and for what purposes, and the need to situate it in non-Western contexts without simply transplanting Westernized ideas about the notion. This is followed by an exploration of the notion of governmentality, first introduced by

Foucault, and includes a discussion of the efforts of states and NGOs to govern, the governing of populations by experts, the will to improve of trustees engaged in improvement schemes, and the emergence of a transnational governmentality.

## **Exploring Civil Society**

### *Definitions of a Contested Concept*

The concept of civil society has re-emerged in the last two decades as a popular construct with which to understand new social and political organizations and movements. Since the social, economic and political revolutions of the late 1980s, the notion of civil society has been taken up in a wide variety of circles and circumstances (Kaldor 2003:1-2). As the Comaroffs (1999:1) note, the idea of civil society has stirred up political aspirations and social imaginations across the globe. There is a great deal of disagreement about how to define this popular concept, but Foley and Edwards (1996:38) note that the commonly accepted version of civil society is that of a dense network of civil associations that is said to promote the effectiveness and stability of the democratic polity through the ability of the associations to mobilize citizens on the part of public causes and encourage cooperation, tolerance and civic engagement. More generally, civil society tends to be used to refer to NGOs, associations, social movements, or the non-profit sector (Kaldor 2003:21).

### *Historical Background*

The notion of civil society has a long history that stretches back to classical antiquity, and it has been imbued with different meanings at different historical moments (Kaldor 2003:16). Kaldor (2003:7) notes that for Western scholars in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, “Civil society was a society characterized by the rule of law, based on certain fundamental individual rights, which was enforced by a political authority also subject to the rule of law.” For Foley and Edwards (1996:39), this version of civil society revolves around the work of Ferguson, De Tocqueville, and Smith in the eighteenth century, and emphasizes the ability of associational life and habits of association to foster patterns of civility in the actions of citizens, strengthening the polity. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Hegel addressed the concept of civil society, describing a public sphere existing within modern society that was located in the realm of politics and distinct from the state (Powell 2007:41). In contributing to this discourse, Marx shared his critical view of civil society as disguising and supporting the power of the capitalist class (DeLue 1997:8). Marx described a double existence in civil society, where individuals, engaging as members of civil society, consider themselves to be private persons that are seeking their own welfare and pursuing their own interests, while also considering themselves to be citizens committed to pursuing the common good (DeLue 1997:265). However, for Marx, with a civil society dominated by market relations and overridden by the power of the dominant economic class, the private dimension of civil society plays a more substantial role and prevents the creation of community (DeLue 1997:266). Writing in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Gramsci also considered the concept of civil society, describing it as

separate from the state and market, and including a wide variety of groups and ideologies that challenge and uphold the existing order (Lewis 2002:572). Edwards (2004:8) notes that Gramsci viewed civil society as, "...the site of rebellion against the orthodox as well as the construction of cultural and ideological hegemony." This was expressed through the media, families, schools, in addition to voluntary associations, given that all these institutions are significant in shaping and influencing citizens and their political dispositions (Edwards 2004:8).

More recently, the concept of civil society re-emerged in scholarly discourses in the 1970s and 80s in Latin America and Eastern Europe with an emphasis on civic autonomy and self-organization in reaction to the increase of the reach of the modern state (Kaldor 2003:1, 21). Here, civil society is conceptualized as a sphere of action independent of state and capable of energizing resistance against a tyrannical regime (Foley and Edwards 1996:39). The diversity of historical understandings of civil society continues to be reflected in the current debates surrounding how to interpret this concept.

#### *The Current Context Shaping Interpretations and Interest in Civil Society*

Today, there are a wide variety of meanings associated with civil society, and there is no agreed definition of the term (Kaldor 2003:2). As the Comaroffs (1999:5) state, "...for all the efforts to recuperate it, to assign to it a genealogy and a telos, the Idea of civil society has proven impossibly difficult to pin down." Kaldor (2003:7-9) describes three different versions of civil society expressed today, including: the activist version, which sees civil society as active citizenship that employs political pressure for change;

the neoliberal version, which considers civil society to be associational life that restrains state power and takes on many functions of the state; and the post-modern version, which views civil society as an arena of pluralism and contestation. Many authors assert that these approaches to civil society are shaped by the spread of neoliberalism and global capitalism, which also affects its current salience as an analytical form. As Lewis (2002:571) states, “Indeed, much of the recent interest in civil society is clearly linked to the global dominance of neo-liberal ideologies during the past decade, which envision a reduced role for the state and privatized forms of services delivery through flexible combinations of governmental, non-governmental and private institutional actors.” For some, neoliberal policies have focused on the growth of civil society in an attempt to weaken the role of the state, while others see civil society as a means of challenging such neoliberal visions. According to Yúdice (2003:5-6), conventional political parties have not been able to effectively counter neoliberal policies of privatization, trade liberalization, lowering of wages, removal of labour rights and reduction of state services. This is due to the enormous financial pressures from international financial interests that have discouraged reform and worsened conditions, and also because institutionalized political process is not very good at responding to social needs (Yúdice 2003:5-6). He states that “Consequently, the most innovative actors in setting agendas for political and social policies are grassroots movements and the national and international NGOs that support them” (Yúdice 2003:6). To Yúdice (2000:88), while many leftist views of globalization tend to be pessimistic, the focus on civil society in the context of new technologies and neoliberal policies has opened up new modes of progressive struggle.

However, the meanings and uses of civil society continue to be diverse and highly contested.

### **Conceptualizing the Composition of Civil Society**

In discussions of the different approaches to civil society, there are numerous debates surrounding what exactly is included in the concept, and whether it should be viewed as separate from the state and the market, whether it should include political aspects and associations, and which associational groups are to be considered members.

#### *Questioning the Separation from State and Market*

In the twentieth century, civil society has been envisioned as the space of social interaction separate from the state and the market (Kaldor 2003:20). However, there are those like Ferguson (2006:90) who urge for greater scrutiny of this state-civil society opposition and the organizations considered part of civil society. In his view, “When such organizations begin to take over the most basic functions and powers of the state...it becomes only too clear that ‘NGOs’ are not as ‘NG’ as they might wish to believe” (Ferguson 2006:101). He points out that even the state sometimes looks like civil society, such as when NGOs are run out of government offices (Ferguson 2006:99). In addition, some scholars question whether the market belongs in civil society. In Keane’s (2003:75) discussion of civil society in a global context, he notes that excluding the market from the concept would imply that global civil society could survive without monetary exchange or money. He notes that global civil society is constantly affected by market pressures,

and some NGOs not only depend on funding from their for-profit enterprises, but also model themselves on business enterprises (Keane 2003:90-91). Thus, he states that markets are necessary in civil society and that there is no distinction between the two (Keane 2003:76-77). Certainly, given that the state and the market can be seen as playing a significant role in civil society, this suggests the need for more flexible and nuanced approaches to the concept and what it constitutes.

*Questioning the Inclusion/Exclusion of the Political*

Another issue raised in the discussion of civil society is whether the concept should include a political aspect, and particularly whether political parties should be considered members. Foley and Edwards (1996:42) point out that different definitions of civil society have a tendency to marginalize principally political associations, especially parties. Indeed, most writers state that political society, which includes political parties and groups that explicitly want control of the state, is separate from civil society (Carothers and Ottaway 2000:10). Donors to civil society also consider political parties to be separate, since this helps to defend their claim that they can support democracy through NGOs without getting involved in partisan politics and interfering unduly in the domestic politics of another nation (Carothers and Ottaway 2000:10-11).

Correspondingly, in his study of the development projects in Lesotho sponsored by INGOs and Western states, Ferguson (1994:7, 256) notes that the development industry does not allow its role to be formulated as political. As a result, he views the development apparatus in Lesotho as an “anti-politics machine”, whisking political realities out of sight

and depoliticising all with which it comes into contact (Ferguson 1994: xix-xv). Still, there are those who assert the very political nature of civil society by considering it a means through which political pressure is employed to challenge and resist orthodoxies and oppressive regimes (Kaldor 2003:7; Lewis 2002:582; Foley and Edwards 1996:39). For Foley and Edwards (1996:47), definitions of civil society need to incorporate the political variable, including both the political associations involved and the work of political restraint, compromise and accommodation necessary to reconcile competing interests in a peaceful and rather orderly way. Thus, to ignore the political aspect is problematic in its denial of power implications and agendas underlying projects of civil society.

#### *Questioning the Inclusion/Exclusion of Particular Associations*

In this literature, there are also different perspectives on the types of groups that are associated with civil society. Some authors warn that not all forms of associational life should be considered part of civil society, since some groups may even work to undermine this civility. According to Chazan (1992:283), not all members of the voluntary sector are a part of or supportive of civil society. In her view, to be considered a member of African civil society, a group must legitimate state authority and contain state power, and also have specific goals, a discrete constituency, and participatory organizational structures (Chazan 1992:283, 288-289). Therefore, parochial associations such as fundamentalist religious groups and ethnic associations that do not encourage interest in areas outside of their immediate concerns, or those that seek to take over the state, are not part of civil society (Chazan 1992:283, 288). According to Chazan

(1992:290), “When their activities carry exclusively ethnic or regional overtones, they can, quite obviously, totally undermine the delicate fabric of civil society”. Similarly, Whaites (1996:242) states that some NGOs lose sight of the importance of the quality of associative forms to suggest that all civil associations, including development or community groups, naturally build civil society. However, he asserts that some groups that are supported by NGOs, such as those that are “primordially homogenous”, i.e. those based on religion, ethnicity, and language, will strengthen internal identities and not necessarily contribute to building civil society (Whaites 1996:242). In contrast to these rather limited views of ethnic and religious associations, Lewis (2002:579) suggests that we need to think more broadly about the moral and organizational basis of civil society in non-Western contexts such as Africa, and that the concept of civil society should be widened to include kinship relations and involuntary membership. In his view, there can be parochial, fundamentalist or partisan organizations that have a claim to civil society membership and roles (Lewis 2002:579). Lewis (2002:579) notes that recognizing local counter-part traditions may counteract the tendency to undervalue the role of ethnic and kin-based organizations in helping to form political pressure groups and form public opinions.

### **Civil Society: An Ambiguous and Powerful Sign**

Given the debates and critiques surrounding different interpretations of civil society, it is apparent that this term is highly contested and very ambiguous. Indeed, the concept of civil society has been described as hard to define, diffuse, empirically

imprecise and ideologically laden (Allen 1997:329). The Comaroffs (1999:3) view civil society as an all-purpose placeholder, capturing otherwise inchoate popular aspirations, sites of practice, and moral concerns. They note that its definition cannot be decided finally by rational debate, empirical investigation or forensic debate, since it is not a concrete entity waiting for identification, rather, "...it is an immanent construct that manifests materially only to the extent that it is named, objectified, and sought after" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:6). To Foley and Edwards (1996:42), ideas of civil society change depending on the context, and, "At times the concept seems to take on the property of a gas, expanding or contracting to fit the analytic space afforded it by each historical or sociopolitical setting." In their view, civil society argument as it is typically presented is partial at best and misleading at worst, presupposing the political peace it is imagined to provide (Foley and Edwards 1996:47). Echoing their view, Potte-Bonneville (2007:610) notes that "...both the definition of civil society and the categories through which this notion is either claimed or criticized are largely a function of the historical context in which they are debated." However, he points out that for Foucault, the historicity, and contingent and transient character of phenomena like civil society do not make them less effective or real (Potte-Bonneville 2007:619). As Potte-Bonneville (2007:619) states, "Claiming that the meaning of a reference to civil society is a function of the context where this reference takes place does not amount to disqualifying the concept of civil society as ill-conceived." Instead, he finds that the fact the meaning of this concept is underdetermined is critical to its political use-value, since the malleability of the concept is what makes it useful in different cases. The Comaroffs (1999:8) also

note that the key to the promise of civil society as a powerful sign that is as good to feel and think with as it is to act upon, lies in its polyvalence, its promiscuity and its protean incoherence, perhaps fatally compromising its status as an analytic term. But it is an interesting concept to look at how and why it is used as an ideological trope in particular times and places, how imaginings interact with traditions of the Western intellectual endeavor, and why it dominates recent social discourse about and within Africa and elsewhere (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:8). As well, its capacity of motivate and mobilize, to open up discourses of moral economy and democracy, to hold out promise of political engagement and property lies in its very polysemic character (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:24-25). Thus, the concept of civil society should be considered an area of analysis itself in terms of trying to understand its salience in particular contexts and how it is being interpreted and mobilized for certain projects.

### **Civil Society in Africa**

#### *The Emergence of Civil Society in African Contexts*

The concept of civil society and the related discourse on NGOs have also been explored in terms of the African context. Mamdani (1996:19-21) notes that there have been several historical moments in the development of civil society in Africa, including the struggle of colonial subjects against racial barriers existing in civil society, followed by anticolonial struggles, independence and efforts to deracialize civil society, and a demobilization of political and social movements with the proliferation of state nationalism. Indeed, in his writing about the Algerian revolution and the efforts of

ordinary people to self-organize in their communities during the 1950s and 60s, Fanon is described as contributing work that best represents critical civil society and the spirit of political liberation that emerged in the anti-colonial struggle in Africa (Bond 2005:2). While civil society can be considered to have a presence historically in Africa given its development stretching over the last century, Mamdani (1996: 14, 19-21) notes that the concept only emerged in the late 1980s as the lens through which to examine events in Africa due to the growing prominence of the concept of civil society in analyzing the uprisings in Eastern Europe. Certainly, Allen (1997:329) notes that civil society has a long history in political theory, but has only appeared in discussions of African politics since the 1980s, particularly in the analysis of African struggles for democratization (Allen 1997:329). According to Allen (1997:329) “‘Civil society’ has become a popular concept in both the analysis of the social bases of recent political change in Africa, and in external policy support for processes of liberal democratic political reform.” In the latter case, civil society is portrayed as driving and guaranteeing democratization and the containment of the state (Allen 1997:329). To the Comaroffs (1999:2), the rapid circulation of the civil society idea in contemporary Africa, used as a political cliché, an analytical concept, a grassroots cry for change, a Utopian idyll and an article of faith, has an unequivocal, slippery quality to it. It has come to signify many, sometimes incommensurate, things, from voluntary associations to society against the state (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:2).

Recent trends in the contemporary African context have shaped the popularity and use of the civil society concept. Chazan (1992:279) states that Africa is currently

undergoing a period of major economic, social and political ferment, such that “During the past five years almost every African country has introduced substantial economic liberalization measures and accepted a rigorous structural adjustment program.” In her view, while external shifts in international politics have been influential in this shift, the new political climate on continent is related to domestic explanations involving a rising civil society confronting authoritarian regimes (Chazan 1992:280-281). She states that “The burgeoning of the informal sector, the flourishing of voluntary associations, and the emergence of new economic, social, and intellectual elites, combined to apply multiple pressures on African governments and alter the political calculus in most parts of the continent” (Chazan 1992:281). There has been a great deal of excitement from economists, anthropologists, and sociologists who have renewed interest in civil associations and their ability to shape cultural life and help societies adapt to rapid change (Chazan 1992:281).

While not explicitly addressed by Chazan (1992), this rapid change has been attributed to the capitalist expansion in Africa as a result of neoliberal globalization (Prempeh 2006:78). For some, African civil society has emerged as in this context as a form of resistance against global capitalism. Prempeh (2006:78) states that with structural adjustment programs that emphasize deregulation, privatization, and liberalization, the World Bank and IMF have further integrated the African economies into the system of global capitalism, subjecting Africans to the forces of capitalism. In his view, “As Africa continues to be in the throes of sustained economic crisis and uneven development through the logic of capitalism, many social movements have arisen to resist, contest and

engage with imperial globality and global coloniality” (Prempeh 2006:73). The aim of African civil society groups and social movements within the anti-capitalism and deglobalization movement is to overcome and rollback the neoliberal agenda (Prempeh 2006:4). For some, an example of this is the rejection of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) in 2002 by various members of African civil society (SARPN 2002). NEPAD, an African Union program, was adopted in 2001 and it aims to enhance Africa’s development, growth and participation in the global economy (NEPAD 2011). Spearheaded by African leaders such as Thabo Mbeki (Bond 2005:3) and Abdoulaye Wade, NEPAD has contributed to Wade’s importance in the African political scene (Fall 2007:23). However, this program has also been strongly criticized by members of African social movements, NGOs, trade unions, academics, women and youth organizations, faith-based organizations and other civil society groups for relying on external institutions and governments and focusing on raising external financial resources (SARPN 2002:1). In addition, they describe NEPAD as “...a top-down programme driven by African elites and drawn up with the corporate forces and institutional instruments of globalisation, rather than being based on African peoples experiences, knowledge and demands” (SARPN 2002:1). These civil society groups also criticize NEPAD and its proponents for largely excluding alliances with civil society movements, described as international and local social, environmental and labour groups, which they view as “*the main agents of progressive change*” in their struggles for economic and socio-environmental justice (Bond 2005: 3). In this context, civil society groups have been viewed as an integral part of the movement for progressive change in Africa.

*Civil Society and the African State*

In the literature on civil society in Africa, authors often raise concerns about role of the state and emerging civil society in a context of neoliberal globalization. In many parts of contemporary Africa, Ferguson (2006:93) notes that states are, "...no longer able to exercise the range of powers we usually associate with a sovereign nation-state, or even (in a few cases) to function at all as states in any conventional sense of the term." The decline of the state in Africa has provided entry points for local and foreign NGOs to engage in development work, such as when states have been unable or unwilling to provide adequate services in areas such as education, health care, and agricultural and credit extension (Ndegwa 1996:21; Chazan 1992:285). Ndegwa (1996:21) directly connects the implementation of structural adjustment programs with the strained ability of African states to provide programs and services. This has attracted more NGOs to cushion the negative short-term effects of adjustment programs, such as by providing affordable and accessible healthcare services (Ndegwa 1996:21). However, as Yúdice (2000:107) critically asks, "And does not the effervescence of NGOs cut two ways: helping to buttress a public sector evacuated by the state, and at the same time making it possible for the state to steer clear of what was once seen as its responsibility?"

One of the reasons for the weakened position of the African state and the burgeoning civil society sector is due to the perception that these states should not be the only site for engagement with development activities given that they are corrupt, while local, grassroots organizations are better able to meet the needs of the people and should be encouraged. As Ferguson (2006: 95-97) points out, a new paradigm in the study of

African politics emerged in the late 1980s that viewed the local as the site of civil society, involving voluntary associations and grassroots organizations, a site suffocated by the overbearing, despotic state whose role needs to be reduced (Ferguson 2006:95-97). Indeed, in their 1988 article, Mamdani et al. (1988:980) note that much focus had been placed on the state as the subject of development in Africa, and greater attention should be placed on the organized social forces mobilizing in Africa, including popular movements, that require greater study. Not only should more emphasis be placed on social groups and movements as agents of improvement, but, in this growing perspective, the state is considered to be a barrier to development. As Ndegwa (1996:15) states, “Progressively, the proposition that the postindependence African state is indeed the *problem* and the inhibitor of social, economic, and political development has become the common view among students of African development” (Ndegwa 1996:15). The direction of immense resources through NGOs is a result of perceptions that the African state is riddled by corruption and inefficiency, whereas NGOs are viewed as less bureaucratic and more efficient (Ndegwa 1996:20). Consequently, according to O’Brien et al. (2000:2), since the early 1980s, the functioning of key multilateral economic institutions (MEIs) like the IMF and World Bank has gradually changed. In general, there is a pattern of their increasing engagement with social groups, where MEIs are moving beyond their mandates to work with states to actively engage with civil society actors in numerous countries (O’Brien et al. 2000:2). For these institutions, political reform is considered essential for economic reform, and developing programs that support civil society and NGOs, with funding diverted from the state, now considered bureaucratic, inefficient and

self-interested, is considered an integral part of political reform (Allen 1997:335-336). In Ferguson's (2006:102) view, international institutions are not only eroding and usurping the power of African states through policies of structural adjustment, they are now also bypassing the state and directly sponsoring their own interventions or programs through NGOs in a wide variety of areas. Thus, the weakening of the African state and the flourishing of civil society organizations can be considered connected to the political imperatives of international institutions motivated by ideas that the state is a barrier to political and economic reform.

#### *African Civil Society and Liberal Democratic Reform*

Much of the literature on civil society in Africa revolves around its connection to building liberal democracies. For Allen (1997:329), the continued use of the term civil society is based on ideological underpinnings, particularly the notion that it is distinct from the state and in opposition to it, and that it is the source of liberal democratic pressures and values. In his view, it is those who support liberal democratic reform who require civil society, particularly those external to African polities (Allen 1997:329). To this, Carothers and Ottaway (2000:3) point out that in the last ten years, U.S. aid aimed at encouraging the development of civil society in other countries has increased dramatically. Indeed, they note that "All around the world, one hears aid officials and aid recipients talking about civil society and its importance for democratization" (Carothers and Ottaway 2003:3). While this term was rarely used within the democratic aid community ten years ago, it has now become a ubiquitous notion in documents and

discussions about democracy promotion worldwide (Carothers and Ottaway 2000:3). Carothers and Ottaway (2000:5) cite two factors as encouraging the democracy aid boom, the first involving a global democratic trend starting in the 1990s as more and more countries adopted democratic practices, and the second concerning the end of the Cold War, where lowered ideological tensions and barriers allowed for the funding of more politically-charged aims (Carothers and Ottaway 2000:5). Carothers and Ottaway (2000:4) note that the idea that civil society is always a positive force for democracy can be considered most important in the eyes of many aid recipients and donors. Civil society is viewed as holding governments accountable and is the “base upon which a truly democratic political culture can be built” (Carothers and Ottaway 2000:4). From this view emerges the idea that promoting the development of civil society is key to democracy building (Carothers and Ottaway 2000:4).

Certainly, there are numerous scholars who support the notion that a strengthening of civil society leads to greater support for processes of democratization. Prempeh (2006:2) puts democratizing globalization at the heart of anti-capitalism movement, where civil society organizations and social movements are trying to build a more democratic and human-centered alternative to the democratic deficit of neoliberal globalization. In his view, there is a new democratic moment reinvigorating African social and civil society movements in securing an arena for civil action and enforceable political rights (Prempeh 2006:3). This movement is also encouraging new strategies of social justice and popular participation, which have formed the basis for developing alternatives to global capitalism and its destructive consequences on a global scale and in

Africa (Prempeh 2006:3). For Ndegwa (1996:2), NGOs are important, although problematic, contributors to the spread of democracy in Africa. He notes that the organizational actions of civil society are not necessarily oppositional to the state or democratizing, and there is nothing inherent about civil society organizations that make them proponents of democracy and opponents of authoritarianism (Ndegwa 1996:4, 6). Ndegwa (1996:7) states that in order for organizations in civil society to support democratization, they need to embrace this social movement for democracy, have democratic values, and pursue actions to challenge non-democratic political regimes. However, not all civil society organizations are aligned this way, and there are cases in Africa where the expansion of civil society led to instances where anti-democratic forces were also unleashed (Ndegwa 1996:7). He suggests that we need to look at organizations that express democratic values rather than generic civil society in examining civil society's role in democratic transition and consolidation (Ndegwa 1996:7).

Some authors, such as Allen (1997), are more critical of the connections being made between civil society and democratization. He states that the notion that civil society organizations are significant in the democratic transitions of governments is not well supported, and that the civil society concept is not useful in describing or analyzing struggles for democratization (Allen 1997:334). In fact, he points out that not only are some civil society organizations close to authoritarian governments, but organizations that have been actively pursuing democratic reforms may fall victim to the politics of corruption and clientelism, such that the role of civil society in democratization appears to be merely an ideological construct (Allen 1997:336). Similarly, Patterson (1998:423)

questions the assertion that a vibrant and plural civil society fosters development of a democratic state through its promotion of democratic values amongst its members. Indeed, in her study of civil society groups in rural Senegal, she finds that "... groups in civil society rarely teach their members democratic values because most associations do not practice legitimate, inclusive and accountable decision making" (Patterson 1998:423). She notes that power relations and social hierarchies that shape the interactions of different classes and genders limit democracy, resulting in inefficiency and disorganization within these groups, which hinder their ability to achieve their social, economic or political goals (Patterson 1998:423-424). The undemocratic nature of civil society, including its conflicting goals, internal divisions and lack of accountability and communication, limit the ability of these groups to challenge the state on matters of democratic practice (Patterson 1998:424, 441). Thus, one should not assume the ability of civil society to encourage democratic development at the state level given the lack of democratic practices and accountability that can be found within some civil society groups. This suggests the need for further research into the connections between civil society and democratization, as well as further critical analysis of liberal projects of democratic reform that are supported by powerful international institutions.

#### *Western Origins and African Modes of Civil Society*

Given the Western European origins of the civil society concept, some scholars are skeptical of its analytical value in non-Western contexts such as Africa. The Comaroffs (1999:20) note that some academics see civil society in Africa as a replay of

Euro-capitalist modernity. This is the case for Allen (1997:337), who states that it is advocates of the 'liberal project' that need civil society, including Western governments and their associated multinationals and agencies. As a result, he asserts that Africanists can dispense with the concept since it briefly appears to illuminate analysis but is too inclusive, diffuse and ideologically laden to sustain this illumination (Allen 1997:337). However, there are those who do not want to dispose of the notion of civil society simply because of its connection with the West. To Keane (2003:30), the Western origins of the civil society concept are not the issue here, but whether it is a useful concept in revealing aspects of the world. Kaldor (2003:14) points out that the term was reinvented in Latin America and Eastern Europe, not in the West, and while Western voices are often dominant, the idea itself is one of openness to different views and perspectives and different means of emancipation.

For some, the notion of civil society can be useful in the study of African contexts, but it should be considered in African terms, not as a transplanted version from the West. Lewis (2002:574, 582) is persuaded by the idea that the concept of civil society is potentially relevant to non-Western places, but will take on local meanings and should not be applied too rigidly in analytic terms or in policy-implementation. He sees a problem with a universalist view of civil society that disregards the historical legacy of colonial civil society building, and ignores groups that do not fit into its prescriptions, such as those based on ethnicity, or kin or local tradition (Lewis 2002:578). A more adaptive view argues there is a middle way between either crudely applying the concept from outside, or abandoning it altogether as inappropriate (Lewis 2002:578). However,

the Comaroffs (1999:20) find that few scholars have tried to identify what Africanized modes of civil society might look like, or how these modes might resonate with ideals of political accountability and sociality that are different from those found in the West. They point out that “Few have considered the sorts of public sphere presumed by specifically *African* relations of production and exchange, codes of conduct, or styles or social intercourse; by *African* markets, credit associations, informal economies, collective ritual, modes of aesthetic expression, discourses of magic and reason,” i.e., the various parts composing civil society in Africa (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:23). As they state, we need to look at local histories to understand the impact of African realities on ideas of civil society (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:27). Such an approach would enrich our understandings of civil society as it plays out in non-Western contexts and unsettle our universalist assumptions about the forms it takes in different parts of the world.

#### *Civil Society in the Senegalese Context*

While more studies of African forms of civil society are needed, it is important to note that there are a number of Senegalese scholars who have pursued the study of civil society in African contexts, including that of Senegal. They have explored the concept of civil society in the country, along with considering the historical context and the emergence of a variety of groups, such as social movements and NGOs. For instance, in their discussion of the political context in Senegal from 1960 to 1990, Diop and Diouf (1990) consider the development of the state and emergence of local civil society under Presidents Leopold Senghor and Abdou Diouf. As well, Bathily et al. (1995:369, 370)

provide an analysis of the political, social and cultural aspects of the Senegalese student movement, noting that its roots trace back to the early 1900s. They note that in the 1970s, the student movement became fragmented into a variety of organizations with little cooperation between them, and by the late 1980s, the student movement responded to growing unemployment and state repression by joining urban youth to protest in the streets (Bathily 1995:399, 400). In their study, Bathily et al. (1995:401) find that students seek involvement in their nation as members of civil society, but encounter obstacles to having an impact on the socioeconomic stakes due to their transitional status. Similarly, Diouf (1996:249) has provided a study of a social movement involving the young and marginalized in Dakar who engaged in clean-up campaigns, murals and protests in opposing the state and its policies in a context of structural adjustment in the early 1990s.

More recently, Mbow (2000) has explored Senegalese civil society and its response (or lack thereof) to the local caste system. She notes that the emergence of civil society in Senegal is deeply tied to the democratic and multiparty system, along with the triumph of structural adjustment policies (Mbow 2000:73). However, this phenomenon is also connected to the will of the Senegalese to be engaged as citizens (Mbow 2000:73). Mbow (2000:73) finds that in the Senegalese context, civil society is characterized by both its diversity and dynamism. Correspondingly, Fall (2004:61) notes that Senegalese civil society encompasses a wide range of groups and people, including social movements, religious guides, volunteers involved in development, and associations engaged in social change (Fall 2004:61). In his discussion of several factors that lead to the success of local development in Senegal, he highlights the importance of citizen engagement (Fall

2004:61-62). As well, in her recent study of civil society in Senegal, Sow Dia (2007:67) notes that this phenomenon emerged in the country in the late 1970s with the expansion of foreign and national NGOs and association movements. Civil society is viewed as acting as an intermediary between the state and a society without voice (Sow Dia 2007:68, 69). NGOs engaged in development are associated with the will of populations to ensure their self-determination, and they are involved in social regulation, as well as influencing the economic, political, and social orientations of the state (Sow Dia 2007:78). However, Sow Dia (2007:78) asks if it is the state that determines the place of civil society, its power and the dimension it takes, or if it is civil society that determines the contours of the state. In her view, NGOs should assume their role in constructing democracy in the country, and to do so, civil society needs to be recognized by the state as a factor of political, social and economic equilibrium (Sow Dia 2007:78). Thus, Senegalese scholars have contributed to the literature exploring the forms and roles of civil society in the Senegalese context, helping to consider how local realities have shaped the emergence of civil society in this setting and the issues of interest in which they are engaged.

### **Exploring Governmentality: Civil Society and the State**

#### *Foucault and the Government of Population*

Civil society and the state take different forms in different contexts. Both are interested in issues involving the governance and management of populations. Indeed, the concept of governmentality, which involves the techniques of governing the population's

conduct (O'Farrell 2005:107), requires further exploration, and discussion of this issue follows a consideration of the work of Foucault and his views on government and governing. Foucault (1991:93) notes that one governs things, and that government is a complex that is composed of things and people. Government is concerned with the population, and more specifically, the relations of the population with other things such as wealth, territory, resources, as well as their habits and customs, in addition to their misfortunes such as epidemics, famine and death (Foucault 1991:93). He states that "Government is defined as the right manner of disposing things so as to lead... to an end which is 'convenient' for each of the things that are to be governed" (Foucault 1991:95). In Foucault's (1991:95) view this implies a plurality of goals, such that the government has to ensure that the greatest amount of wealth is produced, that the population has adequate means of subsistence, and that it is able to multiply, etc. In this sense, government does not consist of imposing laws on the population, but involves disposing things; employing tactics in order to arrange things so that certain ends are achieved through particular tactics (Foucault 1991:95). He contrasts government with sovereignty, noting that unlike sovereignty, "...government has as its purpose not the act of government itself, but the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, etc" (Foucault 1991:100). The government will act on the population either directly, with large-scale campaigns, or indirectly, using techniques that direct population flows into certain areas or stimulate birthrates, without the population having full awareness of such activities (Foucault 1991:100). He points out that "...the population is the subject of needs, of aspirations, but it is also the object in the

hands of the government, aware, *vis-à-vis* the government, of what it wants, but ignorant of what is being done to it” (Foucault 1991:100). The government of population focuses on the interest of the population, regardless of the specific interests and aspirations of the individuals composing it, employing this interest of the population as a fundamental instrument in its range of techniques and tactics (Foucault 1991:100).

*Governmentality: Shaping Aspirations and Conduct*

Government can be viewed as functioning by configuring aspirations, beliefs and habits, in addition to educating desires (Li 2007:5). In approaching these techniques of governing, it is helpful to employ Foucault’s notion of governmentality, which involves the systematization and rationalization of a particular approach to exercising political sovereignty entailing the government of the conduct of the population (O’Farrell 2005:107). O’Farrell (2005: 107, 138) points out that Foucault originally employed the term governmentality to describe a certain way populations were administered in modern Europe during the rise of the notion of the state, but later expanded this definition to include all techniques of governing both groups and individuals, and their conduct at every level (O’Farrell 2005:107, 138). Techniques of shaping the interests and conduct of the population are explored further by Rose (1999:52) who uses the notion of “technologies of government”, which he describes as, “...those technologies imbued with aspirations for the shaping of conduct in the hope of producing certain desired effects and averting certain undesired events.” In this context, technical means are employed to understand and act on human capacities (Rose 1999:52). Thus, a technology of

government can be considered a collection of forms of practical knowledge, involving forms of judgment, modes of perception, types of authority, practices of calculation, human capacities, non-human devices, techniques of inscription, etc (Rose 1999:52). These collections are transected by aspirations to achieve particular goals with respect to the conduct of the governed (Rose 1999:52).

These techniques and technologies of governing are of particular interest to Rose (1999:18), who further notes that in contemporary power relations, it is within the field of governmentality that one can see the persistent attempts to define, as well as redefine, which aspects of governing are within the capacity of the state and which are not, what is considered political and what is not, what is private and what is public, etc. For Rose (1999), the lens of governmentality can be beneficial in providing a unique approach to the study of power. He states that (1999:20), “To analyse political power through the analytics of governmentality is not to start from the apparently obvious historical or sociological question: what happened and why? It is to start by asking what authorities of various sorts wanted to happen, in relation to problems defined how, in pursuit of what objectives, through what strategies and techniques” (Rose 1999:20). This viewpoint brings particular questions into focus, such as the aspect of our history shaped by rationalized programs, techniques, schemes and devices that aim to shape conduct to attain certain ends (Rose 1999:20). Such an approach focuses on the kinds of ideas, knowledge and beliefs about society, authority, economy, subjectivity and morality that have prompted certain problematizations and the tactics, programs and strategies of government (Rose 1999:21). In his view, studies of government are not a new theory of

power, but they seek to investigate problems and problematizations, "...the sites and locales where these problems formed and the authorities responsible for enunciating upon them, the techniques and devices invented, the modes of authority and subjectification engendered, and the telos of these ambitions and strategies" (Rose 1999:22). In this dissertation, I consider the approaches and techniques of NGO practitioners regarding their attempts to manage populations selected for their improvement projects.

### *The Governing of Experts*

In order to develop certain problematics of the population and design and implement particular tactics and techniques to deal with them, a certain expertise in the field of intervention must be attained and recognized. For Foucault (1991:96) a good ruler must have wisdom, which he describes as "...the knowledge of things, of the objectives that can and should be attained, and the disposition of things required to reach them..." Li (2007:7), who has studied improvement programs in the highlands of Central Sulawesi, Indonesia for over ten years, further describes the practices involved in translating objectives to be attained into specific programs. The first step involves problematization, which is the identification of deficiencies that must be corrected. The second involves a practice Li (2007:7) refers to as "rendering technical", a notion she builds on from Rose (1999), which is a set of practices that assemble information and develop techniques to mobilize revealed entities. Li (2007:7) notes that these two practices are not separate, and she states that "The identification of a problem is intimately linked to the availability of a solution. They converge within a governmental assemblage in which certain sorts of

diagnoses, prescriptions, and techniques are available to the expert who is properly trained.” Indeed, Rose (1999:22) points out that attempts to govern are limited by the practical and conceptual tools available for the regulation of conduct, although they can be used in new ways and inspire the development of new techniques. Interestingly Li (2007:7) also suggests that through this practice of “rendering technical”, expertise is confirmed, solidifying the boundary between expert trustees, who have the capacity to identify deficits in others, and the population that is subject to their expert interventions. She points out that it takes effort to maintain this boundary, which can in fact be challenged (Li 2007:7).

Li (2007:7) also notes that in rendering issues technical, they are also rendered nonpolitical. In connecting with Ferguson’s (1994) work on the depoliticization of the development apparatus, she notes that “For the most part, experts tasked with improvement exclude the structure of political-economic relations from their diagnoses and prescriptions. They focus more on the capacities of the poor than on the practices through which one social group impoverishes another” (Li 2007:7). Li (2007:7) appears more forgiving of the development industry than Ferguson (1994), as she notes that it is through their training that experts learn to frame problems using technical terms, and that this is their job to carry out. As experts, “Their claim to expertise depends on their capacity to diagnose problems in ways that match the kinds of solution that fall within their repertoire” (Li 2007:7). In addition, closure is an aspect of expert discourses, which lack reference to issues they cannot address or that could cast doubt on the fullness of their findings or the feasibility of their proposed solutions (Li 2007:11). They exclude

political-economic questions involving issues of control over the means of production, and questions about the structures of force and law that support inequalities in the system (Li 2007:11). However, Li (2007:9) asserts that while improvement schemes can depoliticize issues, they cannot be narrowly viewed as solely serving to enrich ruling groups or assert the control of the global North over the global South. While there are cases of bad faith and good reason to be skeptical of some improvement claims, she notes that trustees have attempted to improve the welfare of populations for centuries, and that focusing on identifying hidden motives of domination or profit unnecessarily limits analysis and obscures that which occurs in the name of improvement (Li 2007:9). As a result, Li (2007:9) states that she seriously considers the proposition that the, "...will to improve can be taken at its word."

*The Will to Improve: Governmentality and NGOs*

Li's (2007:4) work on governmentality focuses on this notion of the will to improve, which involves many different parties that act as trustees, a position defined by claiming to know how other people should live, what they need, and what is best for them. In this role of trusteeship, the objective is not to dominate others, but rather to enhance the capacity of others to act, and to direct this action (Li 2007:5). These trustees engaged in improvement projects have benevolent intentions, sometimes even utopian, and they desire to make the world a better place (Li 2007:5). However, in her view, "...the claim to expertise in optimizing the lives of others is a claim to power, one that merits careful scrutiny" (Li 2007:5).

In her research in Indonesia, Li (2007:5) notes that trustees engaged in improvement schemes have included missionaries and colonial officers, bureaucrats and politicians, specialists in hygiene, credit, agriculture and conservation, international aid donors, and various NGOs (Li 2007:5). Certainly, one can see that the techniques of governing are not carried out solely by state authorities, but also by a growing web of local and international actors, including NGOs. It is interesting to note that the use of the term non-governmental organization is questionable when one considers governmentality and the similarities of technologies and techniques of government across domains (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:995). Increasingly, the political realm is viewed as involving relations and exchanges between a range of private, public and voluntary organizations (Rose 1999:17). Indeed, NGOs, along with donors, consultants and development banks that also participate in the transnational development apparatus, operate by educating the desires and attempting to reform the practices of their target populations (Li 2007:16).

### *Transnational Governmentality*

The notion of transnational governmentality is further explored in the work of Ferguson and Gupta (2002:982), as they consider the relationship between emerging networks of transnational NGOs, international organizations, and weak African states. As they state, “ In thinking about the relation between states and a range of contemporary supra-national and transnational organizations that significantly overlap their traditional functions, we have found it useful to develop an idea of *transnational governmentality*, borrowing and extending the idea of "governmentality", a notion that was first introduced

by Foucault (1991) (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:989). They suggest extending the discourse of governmentality to forms of government that are being developed on a global scale (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:990). This includes new approaches to regulation and discipline exemplified by the IMF and the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as "...transnational alliances forged by activists and grassroots organizations and the proliferation of voluntary organizations supported by complex networks of international and transnational funding and personnel" (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:990). In their view, the state's outsourcing of its traditional functions to NGOs and other nonstate actors is a key feature of an emerging system of transnational governmentality (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:990). They point out that in Africa, many contemporary states are no longer able to exercise powers typically associated with sovereign nation-states, and in a few cases, there are nations unable to function as states in the traditional sense of the term (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:991). For Ferguson and Gupta (2002:991) considering such extreme African cases is useful in decentering the state and bringing new forms of transnational governmentality to the forefront of analysis, although these forms, while especially important and visible in this continent, are not unique to the African context.

According to these authors, local actors today are increasingly enabled to challenge the state through new forms of transnational connection, as can be seen through the efforts of a multitude of well-connected and worldly "grassroots" organizations (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:988-989). These groups may override the claims of the state through appealing to world opinion and utilizing email links to powerful agents of surveillance such as Africa Watch, World Vision International, or Amnesty International

(Ferguson and Gupta 2002:989). However, they question the labeling of NGO efforts and international mission organizations as international, national or local phenomena, instead suggesting that they embody local dynamics in addition to being a product of powerful national, regional and global forces (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:991). Indeed, they point out the activities engaged in by organizations like World Vision International in local African communities, and ask, “Are such giant, transnational organizations to be conceptualized as "local"? What of humanitarian organizations such as Oxfam, Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE), or Doctors Without Borders, which perform statelike functions all across Africa?” (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:994). This includes NGOs like World Vision Zimbabwe that have engaged in numerous statelike activities, such as sanitation and health projects involving building health clinics and providing family planning assistance, agricultural interventions involving irrigation schemes and livestock management programs, and educational programs that involve building classrooms and providing school supplies to children (Bornstein 2005:26). While such organizations are certainly not states, in some respects, they are undeniably statelike (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:994). However, they are not well described as national or supranational, but are global and local at the same time, such that they can be considered transnational, not falling into a vertical division of analytic levels (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:994). In their view, such movements and organizations are understudied, and until recently, they have been relegated to more applied studies rather than part of the theoretical discussions on African politics (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:994).

Ferguson and Gupta (2002:994) are careful to point out that this transnational apparatus of governmentality should not be viewed as replacing the nation-state system, but coexisting with it, such that these new organizations operate as horizontal contemporaries of the state. For the state, these political entities are sometimes rivals, sometimes watchdogs, sometimes servants and sometimes parasites, but in all cases, they act on the same level and in the same global space as the state, and it is necessary to consider both state and non-state governmentality within a common analytical frame (Ferguson 2002:994). This emergence of transnational governmentality suggests the need for further consideration of new forms of global interconnection, such as that described by the term global civil society. These issues will be addressed in the following section.

#### GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY AND GLOBAL (DIS)CONNECTION

In further consideration of civil society, this section will explore the growing ties between local and transnational civil society groups into a form described as global civil society. In this context of globalization, global civil society is viewed as a new political form of interconnection, although there are a variety of approaches taken by scholars to understand this concept. Scholars such as Fisher (1997) suggest the need for more in-depth, detailed research into the actual operations of global civil society and those of its constituent members, NGOs, in order to move past the level of theory and generalities into a better appreciation of actually-existing forms. This section concludes with a consideration of the work of Tsing (2005) and Riles (2000) in their application of ethnographic techniques to the study of global civil society and interconnection, followed

by a discussion of Africa's place in the world in a context of globalization and global disconnection.

### **Globalization and Global Civil Society**

The polyvalence of the notion of civil society is evident in its more recent appearance in the form of global civil society, shaped by a context of growing global connections and the popularity of the topic of globalization. Ideas about globalization first appeared twenty years ago, and today, globalization studies are a major area of academic focus found in many degree programs and academic associations (Scholte 2004:102). Similar to the civil society concept, historical and social circumstances, as well as the position of the definer, affect the definition and understanding of the unfolding of globalization, resulting in many diverse and contested conceptions of the term (Scholte 2004:103). However, in very general terms, globalization can be considered the development of increasing interconnectedness, while globality refers to the condition (Scholte 2004:102; Kaldor 2003:113).

In the context of increasing interest in globalization has come a new deployment of the civil society concept on a global scale in the form of global civil society. According to Keane (2003:18), global civil society "...is now found on virtually every part of the earth's surface." Kaldor (2003:78) describes global civil society as, "...the groups, networks and movements which comprise the mechanisms through which individuals negotiate and renegotiate social contracts or political bargains at a global level." In her view, such groups inhabit a political space outside of formal national politics, address a

range of institutions that are local, national, and global, often receive funds from abroad, and are operated through links with a variety of international institutions, such as inter-governmental organizations, NGOs, foreign states, and diaspora groups (Kaldor 2003:82). It should be noted that some authors are careful to point out that there is no clear line separating national civil society from global civil society as they constantly intersect and define each other (Keane 2003:24). Kaldor (2003:79, 81-82) states that she does not draw a line between what is considered national and what is considered global since such distinctions do not make sense given that most NGOs and social movements, even those nationally focused, have transnational connections.

*Global Civil Society: A New Political Form of Interconnection*

For its proponents, global civil society has formed in a unique geopolitical context and constitutes a new political form. In describing this context, Kaldor (2003:2) notes that with the end of the Cold War and growing global interconnectedness there have been new opportunities for groups to link up with other like-minded groups in other parts of the world and new opportunities for addressing demands to the state, as well as other states and global institutions. She describes global civil society as a new form of politics that is an outcome and an agent of this global connectedness (Kaldor 2003:2). Fisher (1997:440) points out that in the political space left by the globalization of power and capitalism, by shifting interdependencies among political actors, and by the decline of the state, growing numbers of groups loosely called NGOs have engaged in a wide variety of activities. This includes promoting social justice and human rights, implementing sustainable or grass-

roots development, protesting environmental degradation, and pursuing many other activities previously left to government agencies or ignored. He notes that the potential of global associational explosion has grabbed the attention of a wide variety of policy makers, scholars, activists, and development planners (Fisher 1997:440).

Global civil society is often noted for its broad linkages between a wide variety of interests and organizations. To Keane (2003:11), global civil society, "...refers to a vast, sprawling non-governmental constellation of many institutionalized structures, associations and networks within which individual and group actors are interrelated and functionally interdependent." He states that cross-border links and networks of global civil society have the power to stimulate awareness among the people of the world that mutual understanding of different lifeways is a practical necessity (Keane 2003:17). In his view, "...we are being drawn into the first genuinely bottom-up transnational order, a global civil society, in which millions of people come to realize, in effect, that they are incarnations of world-wide webs of interdependence, whose complexity is riddled with opportunity, as well as danger" (Keane 2003:17). These linkages can lead to a new way to voice concerns and apply pressure for change. Keck and Sikkink (1998:x) point out that "Voices that are suppressed in their own societies may find that networks can project and amplify their concerns into an international arena, which in turn can echo back into their own countries. Transnational networks multiply the voices that are heard in international and domestic politics" (Keck and Sikkink 1998: x).

*Alternative Approaches to Global Civil Society*

Not everyone is comfortable with employing the concept of global civil society. There is quiet agreement that global civil society is a good ideal, but this concept is not well explored, and global civil society continues to be an elusive and heavily contested term (Keane 2003:176). Consequently, alternative approaches to emerging global connections have been formulated. Keck and Sikkink (1998:1) employ the term “transnational advocacy network” to refer to the links being formed between states, civil societies and international organizations. In their words, “A transnational advocacy network includes those relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse and dense exchanges of information and services” (Keck and Sikkink 1998:2). For Keck and Sikkink (1998:33), advocacy networks cannot fit under notions of global civil society or transnational social movements. They find that there is a lack of convincing studies of processes through which individuals and organizations create or resist something resembling global civil society (Keck and Sikkink 1998:33). They note that there is more agency than is represented in notions of global civil society, and that they find little support the strong claims of an emerging global civil society (Keck and Sikkink 1998:33). As they state, “We are much more comfortable with a conception of transnational civil society as an arena of struggle, a fragmented and contested area” (Keck and Sikkink 1998:33).

For Hardt and Negri (2004:xiv), their focus is on the multitude, which they consider to be an expansive and open network that provides a means of encounter where differences can be expressed equally and freely, allowing us to live and work in common.

In their view, “The multitude is composed of innumerable internal differences that can never be reduced to a unity or a single identity – different cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations; different forms of labor; different ways of living; different views of the world; and different desires” (Hardt and Negri 2004:xiv). Hardt and Negri (2004: xi) state that the project of the multitude expresses the desire for a world of freedom and equality and demands an inclusive and open democratic global society. While the concerns of the multitude are extremely diverse, they see existing forms of political representation, poverty and war as three areas of protest and reform shared in this movement for a new democratic world (Hardt and Negri 2004:269, 270, 290).

O’Brien et al. (2000) suggest taking yet another approach. They note that non-state actors are increasingly engaging in activities across national borders, but that there has been no agreement in the literature on what this means and how to classify it (O’Brien et al. 2000:12). They choose to employ the term “global social movements” to refer to these phenomena. In their view, “Social movements are a subset of the numerous actors operating in the realm of civil society. They are groups of people with a common interest who band together to pursue a far reaching transformation of society.” They describe a global social movement as that which operates on a global scale, as well as in international, national and local space (O’Brien 2000:12). To O’Brien et al. (2000:13), “The term global social movement refers to groups of people around the world working on the transworld plane pursuing far reaching social change.” These alternative visions suggest that there are numerous ways to approach emerging global connections, and challenge us to refine our understandings of global civil society entails.

*An Anthropological Consideration of Global Civil Society and NGOs*

Given the elusiveness and ambiguity of the concept of civil society and global civil society, perhaps an anthropological approach would help to enhance our understanding of what is actually taking place within these fields. NGOs are growing in number, taking on new functions, and developing complex ties (Fisher 1997:441). Fisher (1997:441) notes that the study of changes in local and global forms of collective action is useful to anthropologists in terms of understanding of local and translocal connections, reconsidering the idea of governance and governmentality, and examining changing relationships among associations, citizenry and the state. However, he states that, “...while the associational revolution has generated tremendous enthusiasm and a large new interdisciplinary literature, anthropologists, to date, have made relatively limited contributions to it” (Fisher 1997:441). He finds the current literature in this area to be based more on faith than fact, and that there are few detailed studies of what is occurring within specific organizations in particular places, as well as few analyses of how NGO practices impact relations of power among the state, communities, and individuals (Fisher 1997:441). To Fisher (1997:441), a more enhanced anthropological contribution would enrich this literature that is full of sweeping generalizations and optimistic statements about the potential for NGOs to provide development, welfare services and facilitate democratization. He states that much of this literature obscures its political stance in generalizations and simple categories. According to Fisher (1997:447), “Understanding NGO practices requires that we question the selective uses of examples to illustrate the claimed advantages of these organizations, unpack the asserted generalizations about the

relative advantages of NGOs, and attend to the ideology and politics of both the associations and the analysts.” He suggests that the need to unpack literature is clear when see how it relies on key terms (community, participation, local, empowerment) which mean different things depending on the agenda and perspective of the imaginer, such that it is sometimes seen as part of march towards liberal democracy, part of the push towards privatization, or a way of resisting Western knowledge, values and development schemes (Fisher 1997:442). As Fisher (1997:447) states, “Divorced from ethnographic particulars, these debates hinge on two essentialized categories – civil society and NGOs – which are used in different ways by different theorists.” For Fisher (1997:459), NGOs are an area of research fitting for anthropologists, since community level organizations are not new in anthropology, but alliances and networks open new sites for anthropological research which may only appear through “chaotic public spectacles of ritual performance” like international conferences. In his view, this calls for innovative research methodologies in the field of anthropology (Fisher 1997:459).

*Ethnographic Approaches in the Study of Global Connection*

There are, in fact, some anthropologists who have attempted to study the associational revolution of NGOs using unique ethnographic techniques. For example, in her study of local empowerment struggles against the destruction of Indonesia’s rainforests, Tsing (2005: ix) notes that she offers “an ethnography of global connection”, where she looks at the unfolding of collaborations and interconnections across diverse and distant terrains. Her research technique involved using ethnographic fragments,

starting in rural Kalimantan and following global connections to other sites of rainforest politics, focusing on rural groups, activists, nature lovers, scholars and donors (Tsing 2005: 271, 273). In her view, such methods enable a more nuanced approach and understanding to global connections where one can see diverse groups forming coalitions based on awkwardly-linked incompatibilities (Tsing 2005:271). Tsing (2005:x) notes that one should not assume collaborators share common aims, and that social mobilizing, "...is based on negotiating more or less recognized differences in the goals, objects, and strategies of the cause. The point of understanding this is not to homogenize perspectives but rather to appreciate how we can use diversity as well as possible" (Tsing 2005:x). Tsing (2005:3) also emphasizes the unexpected and sometimes volatile aspects of global interaction, and uses the notion of friction to describe the unequal, awkward, creative and unstable attributes of interconnection across difference. Friction can slow things down, but it is also required to keep global power in motion, and new projects of hegemony and connection may emerge here (Tsing 2005:6, 12). In her view, "As a metaphorical image, friction reminds us that heterogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power" (Tsing 2005:5). For Tsing (2005:12), it is in this context of friction that "Unexpected alliances arise, remaking global possibilities."

Riles (2000: xvi, 3) also describes relying on fragmentary resonances in her study of transnational issue networks. Her particular focus is on the persons and activities associated with the national, regional and international NGOs and governmental agencies based in Suva, Fiji, who were involved in the 1995 U.N Fourth World Conference on Women (Riles 2000:2, 12). Riles (2000:1) describes her research as, "an experiment in

the ethnographic observation, description, and critical reflection on analytical phenomena for which we lack tools of description” (Riles 2000:1). Her study involved not a community or a society, but institutions and persons that share a set of informational practices, such as constant meetings and conferences, cataloguing and discussion of documents, procedures to secure funding, and travel to meetings (Riles 2000:xvi). Thus, Riles’ (2000:xv) fieldwork consisted of fifteen months of working with NGOs, government offices and international aid agencies, and observing and participating in the daily activities of five or six institutions and networks preparing for the U.N. conference. This type of research approach in the study of transnational networks is significant, since Riles (2000:3) notes that to date, there have been few sustained observations of such activity, and for the most part, globalization has been understood in theoretical terms, at the level of thought experiments and reflections. Thus, the work of Tsing (2005) and Riles (2000) shows that anthropologists are developing innovative research methodologies in order to provide richer, more detailed accounts of the operations of NGOs and transnational coalitions and networks, and how such global connections are formed.

#### *Africa, Globalization and Global (dis)Connection*

One would think that with all that has been written about globalization and global connection, that Africa would be an area of consideration in these discourses. However, Ferguson (2006:25) points out that in the vast literature on globalization, there is remarkably little written about Africa, and that “Astonishingly, the entire continent is

often simply ignored altogether, even in the most ambitious and ostensibly all-encompassing narratives.” While focusing on jobs gained and lost in the United States, terrorism in the Middle East and the manufacturing boom in China, popular publications on globalization manage to characterize the globe without having much to say about a continent of 800 million people that takes up 20 percent of the earth’s land mass (Ferguson 2006:25). Academic efforts in the realm of globalization literature have also failed to include Africa in their analyses, causing Ferguson (2006:26) to suggest that perhaps Africa does not fit the storyline of globalization, and is considered an inconvenient case. It is inconvenient for defenders of neoliberal structural adjustment programs, since it is challenging to find any African nations that have benefited from liberalizing their economies and implementing IMF programs (Ferguson 2006:26). Indeed, in recent years, many of the poorest African nations have implemented IMF sponsored reforms, mostly involving the privatization of state assets and the opening of markets, practices that were intended to create a flood of capital investment (Ferguson 2006:35). For the most part, however, there has not been a boom in foreign investment but a collapse of basic institutions including major industries and social institutions, as well as a sudden increase in official illegality (Ferguson 2006:35). When capital does come to Africa, it tends to be invested in mineral-resource extraction, and it is often concentrated in secured enclaves that have little impact on the wider society, such as off-shore oil extraction operations in Angola (Ferguson 2006:35). Certainly, Africa provides few success stories for those in support of structural adjustment programs.

Africa is also an inconvenient case for anti-globalization critics that typically view globalization as an expansion of capitalism in search of new markets and cheap sources of labour for its factories, since Africa's problems have little connection to these issues (Ferguson 2006:26). As Ferguson (2006:26) notes, "It is hard to find evidence of the depredations of runaway capitalist expansion in countries that are begging in vain for foreign investment of any kind and unable to provide a significant market for the consumer goods stereotypically associated with globalization." In addition, most of the prevalent theories of globalization involve the notion of a worldwide convergence (Ferguson 2006:27). However, as Ferguson (2006:27) points out, from the earliest European colonization projects to the most recent structural adjustment programs, Africa has managed to be remarkably resistant to a wide range of externally imposed projects that have attempted to bring the continent into conformity with Western or so-called "global" models. When globalization theorists have addressed Africa, they have typically done so through negative characterizations that risk overlooking the political, social and institutional specificity of Africa and reinventing it as a current-day "dark continent" (Ferguson 2006:29). To this, Ferguson (2006:29) states that, "...contemporary Africa is clearly *not* a featureless void defined only by its exclusion from the benefits of global capitalism, nor is it an informational 'black hole'." He suggests that a reading of recent interdisciplinary literature on Africa can be helpful in revealing the specific ways in which the continent is, and is not, global, which would also shed new light on our present understanding of globalization (Ferguson 2006:29).

As an inconvenient case for globalization theories of worldwide interconnection and convergence, Ferguson (2006) suggests that the African context supports the notion that global processes should be viewed as settling in particular locales, rather than encompassing the entire globe. According to Ferguson (2006:47), “We have grown accustomed to a language of global ‘flows’ in thinking about ‘globalization,’ but flow is a peculiarly poor metaphor for the point-to-point connectivity and networking of enclaves that confront us when we examine Africa’s experience of globalization.” He notes that the global as seen from Africa involves capital flows that are at once lightning fast and incomplete and patchy, as well as being a place where globally networked enclaves sit next to ungovernable humanitarian disaster zones (Ferguson 2006:49). This is a global not of planetary unity and interconnection, but of segregation, segmentation and disconnection (Ferguson 2006:49). To Ferguson (2006:49), the global from Africa’s perspective is not a world without borders, but a patchwork of hierarchically ranked and discontinuous spaces with edges that are carefully delineated, guarded and enforced. He states that, “What we have come to call globalization is not simply a process that links together the world but also one that differentiates it. It creates new inequalities even as it brings new commonalities and lines of communication. And it creates new, up-to-date ways not only of connecting places but of bypassing and ignoring them” (Ferguson 1999:243). This is equally true of the efforts of NGOs in Senegal that target particular populations and not others, deeming some locales accessible and worthy of assistance, while disregarding other groups that do not fit within the goals of their mission statements

or the funding objectives of international donors.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Ferguson (2006:40) extends this notion of discontinuous spaces to the work of NGOs, stating that "...the humanitarian emergency zone is subject to a form of government that cannot be located within a national grid, but is instead spread across a patchwork of transnationally networked, noncontiguous bits." While global flows can be considered patchy and inconsistent, marginalized groups aspire to gain access to promises of globalization – to gain access to global membership and to improve their place in the world (Ferguson 2006:20-21, 32). This issue will be further explored in the following section that considers the notion of hope and theories of aspiration through an anthropological lens.

#### ANTHROPOLOGY AND THEORIES OF SOCIAL HOPE

In a context of increased scholarly interest in exploring global connections and civil society, it is useful to consider the issue of social hope given the hopefulness associated with civil society efforts for improvement in Africa. As noted in the previous discussion on civil society and the state in Africa, in more recent years, civil society has been viewed as the flourishing driving force of development and an important source of democratic liberal reform in the face of the despotic state. In addition, some consider civil society as providing a significant contribution to developing new strategies of social justice and formulating alternatives to global capitalism. However, there has been criticism about how considerable a role civil society and some of its members, such as NGOs, play in encouraging improvements in these areas. Thus, in this domain that has

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<sup>5</sup> This issue is further explored in Chapter Five.

been imbued with hope as a remedy to some of the political and economic challenges facing Africa, there is a need for greater research into how civil society organizations actually engage in these processes of improvement and their ability to address these challenges. Given that NGOs emerged in a post-WWII context that embraced the dream of development involving a liberal desire for equality and modernity, we can view these organizations as engaging in particular forms of hope – hope to improve society through techniques of governmentality, and hope to instill certain aspirations amongst the populations with which they work. Before turning to further discussion of the issue of social hope and NGOs in Senegal, which is explored more in-depth in Chapters Six and Seven, it is important to consider how the concept of hope has been approached in the social theory literature, and how it has begun to emerge as an area of interest in anthropology.

Hope, a concept considered to be an integral aspect of human experience, has received historically little attention in social theory. While it has been an area of interest to some theologians and philosophers, particularly in the 1960s, there has recently been growing debate and discussion about hope in anthropology, geography and other social sciences. Many involved in these renewed discussions of hope include Bloch's ideas about secular hope in their writing. Still, conceptions of hope today are diverse, and it has been variously considered to be an emotion, an affect, or a human capacity. The distinction between hope and optimism has been highlighted by some scholars, drawing out some of the potentially negative qualities of hope. For many, hope is shaped by the context in which we live, affecting what we hope for and how hopeful we feel about our

future. In fact, the current interest in hope can be described as emerging from a context of neoliberal capitalism, since those inside and outside academia are frustrated with the hopes presented by this system and the sense that there are no alternatives. Thus, they seek to bring hope into their studies, with some focusing on locating and developing hopeful alternatives, while others express the need for a method of hope in their work. This renewed focus on hope has the potential to reinvigorate academic scholarship and open up new possibilities for social research.

## **Explorations and Understandings of Hope**

### *Hope in Social Theory*

Many people consider hope to be an essential aspect of human experience and expression. According to Webb (2007:66), “It is widely acknowledged that *hoping* is an integral part of what it is to be human.” Despite the significant role it is regarded to have in people’s lives, the hope concept has not been widely studied in scholarly contexts. Crapanzano (2003:5) notes that when he recently began to research hope, he was surprised to discover that hope is rarely mentioned in the social and psychological sciences, and it is certainly not explored in an analytic or systematic way. However, Crapanzano (2003:5) does point out that hope has been an area of interest to theologians and philosophers. According to Capps (1968:3), in the 1960s there was a rash of symposia, or “hope conferences” that dealt with the future, particularly involving those in theology and philosophy. For Capps (1968:4) the mood and interest in hope at that time were related to theological and philosophical schools articulating a general concern

amongst people everywhere about nuclear warfare, emphasizing a need to focus on the future and not leaving it up to chance, accident or arbitrary will.

In general, however, Webb (2007:66) notes that hope has long been avoided in social theories. This includes a lack of research on this concept in anthropology. To this, Crapanzano (2003:5) states, “We have to ask, why has a category of experience that we value so highly – and not just in religious terms – had only an incidental role in our ethnographic explorations and social and psychological understanding?” There are numerous ideas on why this might be. Crapanzano (2003:5) suggests that it might be due to our determined secularism, or perhaps because the waiting time of hope runs counter to today’s aggressive individualism, or a consumerism that produces an instant gratification. To Webb (2007:66) there are different ideas on this, but generally, the avoidance of hope is a result of it being considered both tainted by Christianity and devoid of value in its vagueness. In Waterworth’s (2004:1) view, “Hope is a pervasive phenomenon in human life that is often overlooked, partly because of its very familiarity. But familiarity does not entail understanding.”

While there has been little study of hope in the past, there is an emerging literature and debate on hope in social theory, which includes the recent work by Crapanzano (2003), Hage (2003), Harvey (2000), Rorty (1999), Zournazi (2002) (Miyazaki 2006:149). Many of these authors employ the work of Ernst Bloch in their discussions of hope. His central work, *The Principle of Hope*, is composed of three volumes, each of which arranges a series of examples of hope into a set of encyclopedic lists, including wishful images, the realm of anticipatory consciousness, and outlines for a better world

(Anderson 2006b:693-694). According to Bloch (1986:7), “Expectation, hope, intention towards possibility that has still not become: this is not only a basic feature of human consciousness, but, concretely corrected and grasped, a basic determination within objective reality as a whole.” Thus, Bloch (1986:5, 7) views hope as an emotion connected to the desire for a better future as subjectively experienced by human beings, but it also can be learned from and drawn upon to radically change objective reality. In his view, only saying farewell to the static, closed concept of being allows the real dimension of hope to open (Bloch 1986:18). He states that “Instead, the world is full of propensity towards something, tendency towards something, latency of something, and this intended something means the fulfillment of the intending. It means a world which is more adequate for us, without degrading suffering, anxiety, self-alienation, nothingness” (Bloch 1986:18). For Bloch (1986:5), if the given context in which people live is bad, their existence is pervaded by dreams for a better life, and every human intention is applied on these grounds of hope, whether false or genuine (Bloch 1986:5). It should be noted that given Bloch’s use of an unorthodox Marxism, he postulated a form of socialism as the object of objective, genuine hope (Anderson 2006b:696). While not all would agree with his goal, it is his secular views of hope as aspiration towards a better future that have influenced the emerging discourse on hope within the social sciences.

### **Approaches to Conceptualizing Hope**

Hope is a slippery concept to pin down, and there are a wide variety of definitions that have been applied to this notion. According to Webb (2007:80), “There is no one

definitive account of what it is to hope. No one theory or model can possibly claim to capture the full range of its objectives and associated cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions. A clear and consistent grasp of what it is to hope will always elude us.” For example, he notes that our hopes may be patient or critical, private or collective, active or passive, grounded in evidence or resolute despite it, socially transformative or socially conservative, goal-directed or open-ended (Webb 2007:68, 80). We can also hope as a momentary feeling, or experience hopefulness as a lasting or ensuring state of being (Hage 2003:10). Certainly, in terms of temporality, Waterworth (2004:6) points out a unique aspect of hope: hope is future-oriented as the objective of hope lies in the future; however, it is in present time that the act of hope occurs. She also notes that hope is relevant where serious events, issues or states of affair are concerned, but it is also possible to have hope for trivial objectives (Waterworth 2004:3). Indeed, the language of hope is associated with widely different aspirations, from hoping for ice cream, to hoping for world peace (Hage 2003:10). As Webb (2007:80) points out, “We all hope, but we experience this most human of all mental feelings in a variety of modes.”

For Hage (2003:9), thinking about hope as a social category is both exhilarating and frustrating. It is exhilarating because, “...once one has hope within one’s field of vision, one discovers the astounding degree to which the constellations of feelings, discourses and practices articulated to hope permeate all social life” (Hage 2003:9). However, it is perhaps because of this that hope is also incredibly frustrating, since it sometimes seems as though one is examining something as vague as ‘life’ given the many signification and meanings associated with it (Hage 2003:9-10). The ambiguity of hope is

apparent when one considers how it has been variously conceptualized as a human capacity, affect, and emotion.

*Hope as a Human Capacity*

In his discussions of poverty and democracy, Appadurai (2004:69; 2007) has characterized hope as a human capacity, which is particularly evident in his notion of the capacity to aspire, described as a navigational capacity that is nurtured by the possibility of conjectures and refutations in the real world (Appadurai 2004:69). In his view, “The more privileged in any society simply have used the map of its norms to explore the future more frequently and more realistically, and to share this knowledge with one another more routinely than their poorer and weaker neighbors” (Appadurai 2004:69). Due to their lack of opportunities to practice this navigational capacity given that their situation allows for fewer experiments and less easy documentation of alternative futures, the poorer members of society have a more brittle horizon of aspirations than those who are more privileged. Appadurai (2004:69) notes that he is not stating that the poor cannot want, wish, plan, need or aspire, but that part of poverty involves a diminishing of the circumstances in which such practices occur. In his view, the capacity to aspire needs to be strengthened amongst the poor, as it would help them to find the resources necessary to contest and change the conditions of their poverty (Appadurai 2004:59). To increase the capacity to aspire amongst the poor, he suggests that development agents encourage exercises in local learning and teaching that increase the poor’s ability to navigate the cultural map where aspirations are located, thus developing an explicit understanding of

the connections between specific goals and more inclusive contexts, scenarios, and norms (Appadurai 2004:70, 83). He also points out that the explosion of civil society movements, composed of numerous organizations and alliances, have been involved in developing forms of democratic politics where hope is tied up in attempts to build the capacity to aspire (Appadurai 2007:33). This includes employing conventional practices of democracy, as well as developing a new range of practices allowing poor people to exercise their imaginations for participation, such as techniques for self-education, methods for attaining economic dignity through devices like micro-credit, and community-based organization of security, health, and infrastructure (Appadurai 2007:33).

### *Hope as a Human Affect*

In contrast to Appadurai's (2004; 2007) view of hope as a capacity, Anderson (2004; 2006a; 2006b) considers hope to be an affect. As he states, "Hope and hoping are taken-for-granted parts of the affective fabric of contemporary Western everyday life" (Anderson 2006a:733). However, Anderson (2006a:734, 737) notes that affect is a contested term itself that is used differently in different literatures, and that affect, feelings and emotions tend to slide into and out of one another, disrupting their neat analytic distinction. Still, Anderson (2004:744) employs notions of affect based on the work of Spinoza, and refers to Damasio's (1994:150) description of affect as "background bodily feeling" and "the feeling of life itself, the sense of being." Altieri (2003:2) provides a useful definition when he suggests that affects are "...immediate

modes of sensual responsiveness to the world characterized by an accompanying imaginative dimension.” For Anderson (2006a:736, 737) the emergence and movement of affect and its expressions in bodily feelings create the sense of life that dampens or animates the space-times of experience. In describing hopefulness, he states that “As a positive change in the passage of affect it opens the space-time that it emerges from to a renewed *feeling* of possibility; this is a translation into the body of the affects that move between people in processes of intersubjective transmission to make a ‘space of hope’” (Anderson 2006a:744). Hopefulness thus involves the movement of affect that emerges from a particular context, opening this space-time and the body to a sense of potential and possibility. This hopefulness entails a disposition that gives a dynamic imperative to action since feeling hopeful is characterized by yearning to live and experiment, and it enables bodies to go on (Anderson 2006a:744).

### *Hope as a Human Emotion*

Other writers explicitly refer to hope as an emotion, a concept that is related to affect. Altieri (2003:48), states that “Emotions are affects involving the construction of attitudes that typically establish a particular cause and so situate the agent within a narrative and generate some kind of action or identification.” Bloch (1986:11) strongly asserts that hope is a human emotion. As he states, “...the most important expectant emotion, the most authentic emotion of longing and thus of self, always remains in all of this – hope” (Bloch 1986:75). He views it as an expectant counter-emotion against fear and anxiety, calling it the most human of all mental feelings that is only accessible by

human beings (Bloch 1986:75). For Bloch (1986:113), expectant emotions and ideas are both future-orientated intentions that extend into a Not-Yet-Conscious, into the utopian or unbecome-unfulfilled field. He describes expectant emotions, such as hope, fear, anxiety and belief, as having a drive-intention that is long term, and a drive-object that does not lie ready in the already available world (Bloch 1986:74). As Webb (2007:71) notes, “For Bloch, hope is experienced as a restless, future-oriented longing for that which is missing.”

Zournazi (2002:14), an Australian writer and philosopher, does not precisely locate hope in any of the above categories, but instead presents her own engaging view. She describes hope as, “...a basic human condition that involves belief and trust in the world. It is the stuff of our dreams and desires, our ideas of freedom and justice and how we might conceive life.” For her, hope can be considered that which sustains life even in the face of despair (Zournazi 2002:15). However, she sees hope as more than simply a desire for a better life; she views it as the energy that embeds us in world, in the realm of ethics and politics (Zournazi 2002:14-15). It is this open and energetic view of hope that I find most compelling amongst the various approaches to this concept.

### *Distinguishing Hope and Optimism*

Many scholars studying hope distinguish this concept from the notion of optimism, which not only helps to refine our ideas about hope, but also suggests the ability to employ hope while presenting critical depictions of the current context and the possible problems associated with hoping. Anderson (2006b:705) notes that we should

not equate hopeful ethos with optimistic ethos, since optimism avoids encounters with the “emergence of actually existing possibilities and potentialities”, while hoping and being hopeful involve keeping openness while also establishing a measure through which we are obligated to assess and evaluate the here and now. This refers to how optimism involves a positive outlook on our current situation and our future, while hope means recognizing the challenges of the present and still aspiring for a better future. As well, Anderson (2004:751) states that hope embodies a risk that is absent in an optimistic stance, since hope is inevitably uncertain; it fades and can be disappointed.

Separating hope from optimism also allows us to consider some of the potentially negative aspects of hope. Crapanzano (2003:18) points out that while theologians and scholars such as Bloch tend to emphasize the optimism of hope, hope can actually lead to paralysis, where one is so caught up in one’s hope that nothing is done to prepare for the fulfillment of that hope. In this paralyzing hope, “One hopes – one waits – passively for hope’s object to occur, knowing realistically that its occurrence is unlikely, even more so because one does nothing to bring it about” (Crapanzano 2003:18). For example, Crapanzano (2003:18) notes that in the last years of apartheid, he witnessed waiting-induced paralysis amongst white South Africans. They felt that even if they had a solution, they could not act. They could simply wait, and were caught in the structure of waiting. Crapanzano (2003:18) states that these white South Africans wanted to survive, to preserve their wealth and status quo, but they knew this was likely impossible. As he states, “The whites were afraid, and clearly, their fear intensified their waiting, their ill-defined hope” (Crapanzano 2003.18). In his view, hope can lead us to inaction, such as

waiting, and can also lead us astray through the distortion of a sense of reality by offering us possibilities that are unlikely (Crapanzano 2003:19). As well, Nesse (1999:431) points out that much of the depression people experience is a result of the inability to give up a useless hope. He asks, “What if, instead of hope, we emphasized the futility of many efforts? What if, instead of despair, we praised sensible giving up?” (Nesse 1999:431). This suggests that it is possible to have hopes that seem so impossible that they are immobilizing and damaging to the hoper.

Similarly, Waterworth (2004:96) notes that while hope is typically associated with various ideas of good and the assumption that a hoper hopes for that which he or she judges to be subjectively and objectively good, it is possible for a person to hope for the distress or disadvantage of others. As well, even hope that is considered to be good can be manipulated and turned towards other, less positive, ends, and Mouffe finds that hope can be played in many dangerous ways (cited in Zournazi 2002:126). To Crapanzano (2003:16), “However deeply we locate hope in the hearts and minds of individuals, we have to recognize its interlocutory use and the way that use can swing back with deforming force on those hearts and minds.” Thus, distinguishing hope from optimism enables us to be critical about our current context while formulating ideas about a better future, and lets us acknowledge some of the potentially negative attributes of hope, perhaps allowing us to avoid some of these pitfalls.

### **Contextualizing Hope and Societal Hope**

Hope can be considered a universal human quality that is expressed and experienced differently depending on the context. For Webb (2007:67), hope is both biologically rooted and socially constructed. In his view, “While hope may well belong to our anthropological core, the form it takes – the mode in which it manifests – at any particular time, in any particular culture, within any particular group, is the result of a complex process of social mediation” (Webb 2007:67). According to Waterworth (2004: 6), humans hope for something in the future because of what certain things symbolize within particular communities and their practices. Certainly, Appadurai (2004:67) points out that there are aspirations about health, happiness, and the good life in all societies, but an Islamic picture of the good life is quite different from a Buddhist one, just as a Tamil peasant woman’s view of the good life is different from a cosmopolitan woman from Delhi or an equally poor Tanzanian woman. As he states, in every case, these aspirations to the good life are part of a system of ideas that locates them with a larger map of local beliefs and ideas about, “...life and death, the nature of worldly possessions, the significance of material assets over social relations, the relative illusion of social permanence for a society, the value of peace or warfare” (Appadurai 2004:67-68). Similarly, Crapanzano (2003:15) finds that hope is embedded within culturally and historically specific understanding. He notes that the categories of social analysis can never be fully separated from the values and structures of the society in which they are developed, and although we insistently place hope in the individual, we cannot remove it from social implication and engagement (Crapanzano 2003:19, 25). For Webb (2007:68),

hope can be considered socially mediated, and, “Understood in this way, different individuals and social classes, at different historical junctures, embedded in different social relations, enjoying different opportunities and facing different constraints, will experience hope in different ways.”

An example of hope as socially and contextually mediated is Ferguson’s (1999:245) exploration of African aspirations for Western modernity and global connection. He discusses the belief that some countries were behind in modernization, but were supposed to have ability to catch up (Ferguson 1999:245). Today, he finds that some ideologists of development still state this, and in the new world order, Africa is considered to be an exception (Ferguson 1999:245). Indeed, in a new global dispensation, Africa is becoming a category of abjection, and images of Africa are often associated with starvation, poverty and war, and the old colonial usage of “African” as a stigmatized race category continues (Ferguson 1999:245). He notes that in the African context, access to the Western way of life and Western goods is highly sought, and Western modernity is perceived as a desired socioeconomic condition that is in sharp contrast with their severely unequal way of life (Ferguson 2006:33). He points out that in Africa, the discourse of moving towards modernity has been a way to talk about global inequality, and aspirations for such “modern” goods as improved health care, education and housing (Ferguson 2006:32). As Ferguson (2006:32) states, “The aspiration to modernity has been an aspiration to rise in the world in economic and political terms; to improve one’s way of life, one’s standing, one’s place-in-the-world.” He notes that Africa’s participation in globalization has not simply involved uniform involvement in the world economy, but

rather, "...a matter of highly selective and spatially encapsulated forms of global connection combined with widespread disconnection and exclusion" (Ferguson 2006:14). Yet, even with this disadvantaged placement in the global economy, he notes that African peoples hope and aspire to attain global membership and a lessening of social inequality in relation to the West (Ferguson 2006:20-21). In his work, Ferguson (2006:167, 169, 174) highlights the claims of Africans and others to the rights of full membership in a world society, noting their appeals and aspirations for solidarity and political connection, along with global status and recognition.

Given the idea that hope is contextually shaped and socially mediated, Hage (2003:3) goes further to suggest that societies are mechanisms for distributing hope. One of the ways that society acts as a mechanism of hope, a mechanism that is an intrinsic quality of any society, involves, "...the production and distribution of a meaningful and dignified social life" (Hage 2003:15). In Hage's (2003:15) view, if we consider hope to be the way we build a meaningful future for ourselves, such futures are only possible within society, since society is the mechanism for distributing social opportunities for self-realization. He refers to this hope as societal hope, consisting of social routes through which individuals can define meaning for their lives, and one's sense of the possibilities available in life (Hage 2003:15, 20). He finds that this hope is distributed unequally, particularly in capitalist societies, where in certain extremes, some groups are offered no hope at all (Hage 2003:12, 17). To Hage (2003:3), the rise of neoliberal economic policy is connected to the shrinking ability of the nation-state to distribute hope, creating a defensive society whose citizens see threats everywhere. In light of this, Zournazi

(2002:16) asserts that hope must be understood in terms of both individual experience and national debates, which are shaped by an increasingly globalized world (Zournazi 2002:16).

*Hope in a Context of Neoliberal Capitalism*

Considering how one's context is viewed as shaping the hope fostered and expressed in a particular society, many scholars working on hope focus on the current context of neoliberal capitalism and the forms of hope it encourages and limits. Harvey (2000: 176) discusses the proliferation of capitalism, where the free-market fiasco, "...with its mantras of private and personal responsibility and initiative, deregulation, privatization, liberalization of markets, free trade, downsizing of government, draconian cut-backs in the welfare state and its protections, has rolled on and on." Hage (2003:18) sees the greatest casualty of neoliberal globalization as the decline of society, where the state not only no longer breathes hope into society through intervention as a welfare state, but is becoming a producer of social death, as social bodies decay in spaces of chronic poverty, unemployment and neglect. Massumi also finds the global state of affairs to be very pessimistic, "...with economic inequalities increasing year by year, with health and sanitation levels steadily decreasing in many regions, with the global effects of environmental deterioration already being felt, with conflicts among nations and peoples apparently only getting more intractable, leading to mass displacements of workers and refugees" (cited in Zournazi 2002:221). The consensus amongst these writers is that our

current situation is quite dire, begging the question of what we might be able to hope for under such conditions.

*Hoping in Capitalism: Limited Hopes and Lack of Alternatives*

In this context of rising neoliberal capitalism, there are particular hopes that are fostered and supported. Hage suggests that we consider the kind of hope that a society encourages, noting that it is possible to critique capitalism based on the kind of ideologies of hope that it promotes, which involve reducing hope to dreams for upward social mobility (cited in Zournazi 2002:152). Not only does capitalism make the ideological content of hope hegemonic so it becomes almost universally associated with dreams of better life-styles, better-paid jobs, more commodities, and so on (Hage 2003:13). It also encourages this belief in moving up in its ability to “maintain an *experience* of the *possibility* of upward social mobility” where the occasional story of people moving up becomes inspirational to a population, even though most never actually experience it. Zournazi (2002:98) states that in contemporary life, hopes and cultural aspirations are often connected to social mobility, and there is a notion that social inequality can be overcome by the drive to invest in property relations and capital. The Comaroffs (2001:2) note that the millennial capitalism of the moment, “...presents itself as a gospel of salvation; a capitalism that, if rightly harnessed, is invested with the capacity to wholly to transform the universe of the marginalized and disempowered.” In its fusing of hope and hopelessness, millennial capitalism presents itself as a world of possibility and impossibility, offering the promise of prosperity and the potential for everyone to be free

to consume and accumulate (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:24-25). As they state, “For the vast majority, however, the millennial moment passed without visible enrichment” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:25).

Others point out that the current context of neoliberal capitalism is devoid of any hope for a different or better future, and promotes the notion that there is no alternative we can hope outside of the current system. For Mouffe, “One of the reasons why I think there is no hope today for future possibility is precisely because people feel there is no alternative to the capitalist system, and even more to the neo-liberal form of capitalism which is dominant today” (cited in Zournazi 2002:135). Mouffe finds that the Left is in great part responsible for this, since they seem to have accepted this dominance of capitalism and are not thinking of different alternatives (cited in Zournazi 2002:135). In Harvey’s (2000:154) view, if the mess we are in seems to be impossible to change, it is because we feel there really is no alternative, with the notion that we are dealing with the supreme rationality of the market in opposition to the silly irrationality of anything else. Harvey (2000:155) wonders why we are so persuaded that “there is no alternative,” asking, “Is it simply that we lack the will, the courage, and the perspicacity to open up alternatives and actively pursue them?” He states that the reason can surely not be a lack of imagination, since the academy, as one example, is full of explorations of the imaginary, and the media is replete with fantasies as well as possibilities for collective communication concerning alternative worlds (Harvey 2000:155). As Harvey (2000:155) points out, “Yet none of this seems to impinge upon the terrible trajectory that daily life assumes in the material world around us.” He notes that the practices and ideology of

competitive neoliberalism do their insidious and effective work within the major institutions, such as universities and the media, that shape the imaginative context we live in, and do so with barely anyone noticing (Harvey 2000:155-156). Indeed, the notion that there is no alternative to the capitalist system and nothing new or different that can be hoped for has appeared to permeate the academy. According to Miyazaki (2006:162), “Facing the collapse of socialist regimes and other apparent manifestations of the effects of so-called globalization, social theorists have deplored their incapacity to imagine alternatives to capitalism.” Rorty (1999:232) finds that frustration and resentment have taken the place of hope amongst politically concerned academics, and Taussig suggests that there is now a strong relationship between pessimism and intellectualism, between a lack of hope and being profound (Zournazi 2002:44).

### **Renewed Interest in Hope in Social Theory**

In response to this pessimism and supposed lack of alternatives, there has been a renewed interest in the concept of hope amongst social theorists who strive to find and develop alternatives. Miyazaki (2004:1) notes the recent efforts by social theorists such as Hage (2003), Harvey (2000) and Zournazi (2002), to reclaim the category of hope. He states that “These efforts are part of divergent searches for alternative modes of critical thought that have followed the apparent decline of progressive politics and the rise of right-wing politics” (Miyazaki 2004:1). Similarly, Anderson (2006b:704) describes his appreciation of an ethos of hope as part of the recent wider devaluation of disenchantment, which had become the default mode of engagement with a world that is

considered a mess. In Mouffe's view, it is very important for people to believe that there are alternatives to the current political situation and to have hope for some kind of future (cited in Zournazi 2002:123). In general, there is a need to look forward to something and feel that there is some kind of meaning in life (cited in Zournazi 2002:123). Thus, a new socialist imaginary needs mobilization of passion in a way that differs from right-wing populism, with the very condition of this possibility being that an alternative is going to be imagined to the present neo-liberal system (Zournazi 2002:135). For Mouffe and others, recapturing hope in social theory is dependent on the possibility of finding alternatives to the system of capitalism (Miyazaki 2006:163). As well, seeking alternatives involves embracing the concept of hope and expanding our approaches to scholarly endeavors. To this, Hage states that "...one of the most important radical tasks of creative intellectuals today is to think of modes of hoping differently" (cited in Zournazi 2002:161).

### **Explorations of Hope: Searching for Alternatives to Global Capitalism**

#### *Khasnabish and Hope in Zapatismo Transnational Resonance*

Numerous scholars engaged in bringing the concept of hope into social theory and research have done so through actively seeking out and studying alternatives to the capitalist system, viewing these alternatives as forms of hope. This includes Khasnabish (2006:4), who studied the Zapatista struggle and explored why it has resonated so strongly with people outside of Mexico, and in particular, North American political activists. In his view, notions of hope are prominent in the landscape of Zapatismo

transnational resonance (Khasnabish 2006:17). In 1994, when neoliberal capitalism appeared to be uncontestedly globally ascendant and the Left appeared to be in tatters, the Zapatista uprising explosively burst through on the horizon (Khasnabish 2006:28). Khasnabish (2006:29) notes that for activists in Canada and the U.S. in his study, Zapatismo delivered a message of liberty, democracy and justice, and offered that which mainstream channels of political participation do not: hope, imagination, creativity, dialogue, poetry and space. As he states, “For activists disillusioned by the defeat of state socialism and numbed by capitalism’s ascendancy, the radically democratic and dignified spirit of Zapatismo was infectious and inspiring” (Khasnabish 2006:29-30). For Khasnabish (2006:6), this resonance points to dissatisfaction with established political practices and traditions by many people that desire meaningful economic and socio-political change, and signifies new political possibilities and potentials (Khasnabish 2006:6). Thus, he sees transnational Zapatismo resonance as representing a reimagining of political struggle, reinvigorating the search for new forms of socio-political possibilities that are not limited to variations of socialist or capitalist ideologies (Khasnabish 2006:7). It has encouraged a renewed discussion about the potential and character of political solidarity and action, revealing powerful bases of connection among diverse groups of political activists (Khasnabish 2006:7-8). Khasnabish (2006:8) finds that “Perhaps most significantly, this transnational resonance has provoked an explicit consideration of phenomena such as hope, dignity, and imagination and their relationship to radical socio-political change.”

*Tsing and the Hope of Discontinuities and Awkward Connections*

Tsing (2006: 1, 18, 273) is also interested in exploring aspirations for global connection, and she examines how activists, nature lovers, rural groups, scholars and donors came together to fight forest destruction in Indonesia, and the friction experienced in their encounters. She notes that during the 1980s and 1990s, the environmentalism movement prospered in Indonesia, which challenged state and corporate destruction of rainforests (Tsing 2005:17). This movement drew, "...social reformers of many sorts and became the vehicle for many, sometimes contradictory, hopes" (Tsing 2005:17). Even in the repressive political climate of that time, questions of freedom welled up, and ideas of human rights, indigenous rights and farmers' rights fuelled activists arguing against the hegemony of centralized development (Tsing 2005:17). Tsing (2005:18) points out that "Within the links of awkwardly transcended difference, the environmental movement has tried to offer an alternative to forest destruction and the erosion of indigenous rights." Such protest movements are significant, since only ten years ago, social analysts were impressed by the power and size of newly emerging global circulations, and thus focused on global coherence of these processes (Tsing 2005:11). However, Tsing (2005:11) states that "Now it is time to turn attention, instead, to discontinuity and awkward connection, as this proves key to emergent sources of fear and hope." In exploring such discontinuities and alternative visions, we challenge notions of all encompassing global processes, especially that of neoliberal globalization, revealing spaces of hope and possibility. By looking for these alternative hopes in awkward connections and discontinuities, Tsing (2005) sees herself as opening a space for challenging the system of

power relations in which we live. She discusses writing with a critical attitude, and being “a hair in the flour,” which is, “...a disturbance of everyday subservience and routine. A hair in the flour ruins the legitimacy of power. It is a benediction for my work and an inspiration for what I must continue to learn” (Tsing 2005:206). Writing as a “hair in the flour” involves looking for confusions, weaknesses, and gaps in business as usual (Tsing 2005:207). Tsing (2005:207) states that, in this approach, she speaks of utopian social movements, even when they are not victorious, since, “These movements keep alive our sense that the forms of hierarchy and coercion we take most for granted can yet be dislodged.” To Tsing (2005:211), showing the slippages and gaps interrupts notions of the easy unity of the market, and also reveals the creative possibilities found in social mobilization. She notes that, in speaking more about mobilizations for social justice and environmental protection than suffocating development initiatives, she does so to offer the former the opportunity to shake the hegemony of the latter (Tsing 2005:207). While acknowledging the forest industry’s destruction of the environment and people’s way of life, Tsing (2005) focuses on a movement that challenges this industry and strives for alternatives, emphasizing the hope of the situation despite the difficulties faced. In her view, “...to write as a hair in the flour means to give the mobilization against forest destruction its due, not just to praise it, but to show how it offers a practical model to oppose global business as usual” (Tsing 2005:211).

*Rorty and Hope for a Global Democratic Utopia*

Rorty (1999) also describes his hope to alter “global business as usual”, although he places this hope in changes to the political entities that mediate the activities of neoliberal globalization. For Rorty (1999:xiv), in order to counter the growing inequality present in global capitalism, we need to work towards achieving a democratic utopia. He describes his own social hope as that for a “global, cosmopolitan, democratic, egalitarian, classless, casteless society” (Rorty 1999:xii). While our chances for achieving a democratic utopia are weak, he states that this is not a reason to change our political goal, since there is nothing better that we should be doing with our lives and there is no more worthy project than this (Rorty 1999:xiv). According to Rorty (1999:233), today we have a global overclass that makes all major economic decisions independently of the legislatures and the will of the voters in any given country. The wealth this overclass has accumulated is easily used for illegal purposes, as it is legal ones (Rorty 1999:233). Since there is no global polity, the super-rich can operate without considering any interests but their own. In this context, he asks how jet-setting, cosmopolitan intellectuals might help to increase the chances of a global egalitarian utopia. For Rorty (1999:233), the most socially useful thing we can do is to continually draw the educated public’s attention to the need for a global polity that can develop some form of countervailing power to that of the super-rich. He notes that we could probably be doing more to dramatize changes in the world economy brought about by globalization, and remind others that only global political institutions are able to offset the power of that incredibly mobile and liquid capital (Rorty 1999:233-234). While he realizes that revitalizing the United Nations is

slim, he asserts that it is likely the only chance to produce anything like a just global society (Rorty 1999:234). As he states, “That movement is well suited to a utopia in which the moral identity of every human being is constituted in large part, though obviously not exclusively, by his or her sense of participation in a democratic society” (Rorty 1999:238). In this way, Rorty encourages us to look more towards the possibilities and potentials of human creations in the present and future instead of putting our hopes in transcendent or external objects (Deneen 1999:602). Thus, Rorty (1999) is critical of global capitalism, and while not exactly suggesting that we alter its basic principles, he instead focuses his hopes on human abilities to create more democratic systems of government, especially one on a global scale, to regulate the operations of global capitalism and create a more equitable world.

Similarly, Held and McGrew (2002:131) support the notion of cosmopolitan social democracy, which they view as seeking to nurture some of the important values of social democracy, including political equality, the rule of law, social justice, democratic politics, social solidarity, and economic effectiveness, while applying these values to a new global constellation of politics and economics. In their view, this project of cosmopolitan social democracy can be considered a basis for uniting around a number of issues, such as greater accountability, transparency and democracy in global governance, greater commitment to social justice in efforts for a more equitable distribution of resources, the promotion at the international level of an impartial administration of law, the protection of community at different levels, and the regulation of the global economy through public management of trade flows and global finances (Held and McGrew 2002:131). This

project requires competent, strong governments at local, national and regional levels, as well as global (Held and McGrew 2002:131). In their view, this approach provides the basis for some optimism that global social justice is more than a utopian goal (Held and McGrew 2002:131). While none of the NGO practitioners in my study described their aspirations for a global democratic institution, their hopes for liberal democracy, equality and social justice without drastically altering the economic system aligns them most closely with this hopeful vision of the future. The hopes of NGO staff and their efforts to achieve these aspirations through their NGO work are further explored in discussions regarding NGO practitioners and the aspiration to improve in Chapter Six.

#### *Zournazi and New Global Forms of Hope*

Hope is an intriguing subject for Zournazi (2002), and she has much to say about the need to find hopeful alternatives in our current economic context. In her view, hope is built on a foundation of faith and belief, as well as trust that even in uncertain times, there is a life worth living (Zournazi 2002:16). Without this hope, we live with a denial of newness and difference, where nothing is possible on a personal or political level (Zournazi 2002:16). To counter this, Zournazi (2002:17+19) urges us to engage in three courses of action: to shed light on false hope that has been propagated in the context of capitalism over the last several years, to look for new, global forms of hope, and to bring joy to critical thinking. In critiquing the hope that has emerged in capitalism, she notes that a hopeful project in these times is to reflect upon and challenge how 'progress' and new forms of capitalism direct us to false visions of the world (Zournazi 2002:18).

Zournazi (2002:18) suggests that we critically examine ourselves and what we would like our lives to be in terms of the ordinary aspects of everyday life, rather than in some ideal or future sense. For this, a spark of hope is required – not a hope that narrows our visions of the world, but one that allows for different experiences, memories, or histories to enter present conversations on freedom, revolution and our cultural senses of belonging (Zournazi 2002:18). This entails looking for new forms of hope and she asserts that “...we need to re-envisage and imagine hope as a convergence of new agendas, conversations and possibilities in everyday life and political activity” (Zournazi 2002:17). Zournazi (2002:19) encourages us to look for more global notions of hope, asking where it might lie, and what human freedom and dignity may now require (Zournazi 2002:19). This involves engaging with political and ecological questions in today’s world, and entails cultivating joy in individual life and critical thinking, since we cannot move through the desperation framing contemporary living without the experience of joy (Zournazi 2002:19). In her view, “A ‘joyful hope’ is about recognizing our hopes in daily ways – the suffering and pain that we encounter – and about the ways we can experience ‘happiness’ outside the spirit of capitalism” (Zournazi 2002:19). This enables us to keep asking what habits of thought need to be altered in our cultures, what sort of risks need to be taken for a hopeful world, and what political and ethical acts as well as responsibilities will make the world a hopeful place (Zournazi 2002:19). In her words, “...hope may be that force which keeps us moving and changing – the renewal of life at each moment, or the ‘re-enchanting’ of life and politics – so that the future may be about how we come to live and hope in the present” (Zournazi 2002:274). Zournazi’s (2002) approach, as well as

those of other scholars mentioned above, involves a critical analysis of our present situation, and a desire to explore alternative ways of being to which we can aspire.

### **Explorations of Hope: Developing Methods of Hope in Knowledge Formation**

While some scholars focus on finding and exploring hopeful alternatives to the present situation, other academics, such as Miyazaki (2004; 2006) and Harvey (2000), have focused on processes of developing forms of hope, which Miyazaki (2004) refers to as building a “method of hope.” Indeed, Miyazaki (2004: 2, 30) notes that he does not approach hope as a subject, but rather as “...a methodological problem for knowledge and, ultimately, as a method of knowledge deployed across a wide spectrum of knowledge practices, as well as of political persuasions.” In his view, any effort to reclaim the category of hope for a greater cause needs to start with an examination of the academic and other predications of knowledge on hope and vice versa (Miyazaki 2004:2). He focuses on the recent notion in anthropology that anthropological knowledge lags behind that which is emergent in the subject of study, creating a temporal incongruity (Miyazaki 2004:29) This sense of belatedness generated a hope that synchronicity between anthropological knowledge and the experiences of the subject could be achieved (Miyazaki 2004:29). In his own work, he describes the challenge of how one can approach the infinitely elusive quality of a present moment, given the impossibility of achieving analytical synchronicity. (Miyazaki 2004:11). This could be considered problematic for studying hope, since, “The retrospective treatment of hope as a subject of description forecloses the possibility of describing the prospective momentum inherent in

hope” (Miyazaki 2004:8). In other words, as soon as we approach hope retrospectively, as the end point of a process, the freshness or newness of the prospective moment that characterizes it as hopeful is lost (Miyazaki 2004:8). However, Miyazaki (2004:136) is able to find a hopeful moment in the scholarly aspiration for temporal congruity between knowledge formation and its object, that of a changing, emergent world. He sees anthropologists’ analytical impulse toward having temporal congruity as a replication of the hope that originally prompted the analytical impulse, replicating hope on a new terrain (Miyazaki 2004:130). In this way, Miyazaki (2004:24, 29) describes writers as gaining a moment of hope in their own aspirations to apprehend another moment of hope, and he states that “...hope can only be represented by further acts of hope.”

In a rather different method of hope, Harvey (2000) suggests that we learn from capitalism as a hopeful ideal that has reshaped our way of life in order to use this knowledge towards developing new forms of hope. He points out that Adam Smith’s reflections on the theory of moral sentiments led him to suggest a utopianism of process in which individual greed, desires, creativity and so on could be mobilized through the invisible hand of the perfected market, benefiting all (Harvey 2000:175). From this notion, Smith and political economists developed a political program to curb monopoly power and eliminate state regulations and interventions, except those that secured free-market institutions (Harvey 2000:175). Those in the U.S. striving to make this free-market utopia global after WWII, including both those on the right and left, deeply believed they were engaged in the struggle to create a more open, happier, and freer world (Harvey 2000:192). He points out that “They pursued with utopian conviction

policies of development, aid, secular and military assistance, and education as means towards a humanistically powered enlightenment around the world” (Harvey 2000:192). For more than twenty years, we have been pushed into accepting this utopianism of process that Smith dreamed would solve all of our ills (Harvey 2000:176). However, Harvey (2000:177,179) notes that “...the purity of any utopianism of process inevitably gets upset by its manner of spatialization,” and as already noted, free-market capitalism on the ground has had tragic results. For Harvey (2000:182, 192-193), the global expansion of free-market utopianism illustrates the possibility of a utopian mode that is spatiotemporal, unfolding as a social process and a spatial form, which gives us sense of what might be involved in this process. By viewing global capitalism as a spatiotemporal utopianism, we are better able to understand how it worked, how and why it went wrong and how its contradictions might point to possibilities for some alternative (Harvey 2000:193). Thus, we can see the shadowy forms of spatiotemporal utopianism in a study of our own historical geography as driven by the geopolitics of capitalism, and our task is to define an alternative form of spatiotemporal utopianism that is rooted in present possibilities and points towards different paths of human geographical developments (Harvey 2000:196). In examining how free-market capitalism developed as a utopian ideal on the ground, we can learn how a powerful aspiration managed to change our world, and understand the problems of its unfolding in order to generate and inform other hopeful mobilizations.

There is much we can gain from studying neoliberal capitalism, considering how much the revolutionary agenda of neoliberalism has accomplished in terms of

institutional and physical change in the last twenty years (Harvey 2000:186). Given its transformational accomplishments, Harvey (2000:186) asks, “So why, then, can we not envision equally dramatic changes (though pointing in a different direction) as we seek for alternatives?” For Harvey (2004:194-195), our alternative visions need to counteract capitalist processes by determining how to deliver an improvement in democratic forms and material well being without relying upon raw consumerism, egotistical calculation, and capital accumulation. Even though extracting utopian dreams from our minds and turning them into political mobilizations may risk frustration and disappointment of our hopes, he states “But better that, surely, than giving in to the degenerate utopianism of neoliberalism... and living in craven and supine fear of expressing and pursuing alternative desires at all” (Harvey 2000:195). Therefore, we can learn from the failure of our past utopian dreams, and pursue new hopes for our present and future.

## **Conclusion**

The literature discussed in this chapter provides the theoretical basis for the research presented in the rest of this dissertation. In this chapter, I considered the concept of civil society and the debates surrounding this matter and its expression in Africa, which have revealed the need for critical reflection on how the term is used and for what purposes, and how it might appear in non-Western contexts. I then explored the notion of governing and governmentality in relation to the efforts of states and NGOs, followed by a consideration of transnational governance.

In the next section, I explored the issue of global civil society and global interconnection. It is clear that more innovative ethnographic research into the actually-existing forms of global civil society and the NGOs and networks associated with it is needed, as is further understanding of the global connection and disconnection experienced by Africans encountering these global processes.

In the final section of this chapter, I consider the renewed discourse on hope in social theory, where one finds a variety of ideas and approaches to this concept. Some scholars have focused on hope and alternative visions as their objects of study, while others engage with ideas of how to develop processes or methods of hope through knowledge practices. These diverse ideas and insights associated with hope reveal the energetic and enthusiastic interest in this concept as a social category.

In the following chapters of this dissertation, the themes described above will inform the discussions presented, which consider the efforts of local and international NGO practitioners to achieve their aspirations for improvement in Senegal through collaborations of their NGO work.

### **Chapter Three - Methodology**

The extensive task of planning and carrying out ethnographic research is unique to each anthropological study. In this chapter, I will discuss the methods of in-depth, semi-structured interviews and participants observation employed for this research project, as well as some of the methodological issues involved in studying international NGO connections in Dakar, Senegal. I will also review the analysis techniques applied to the collected data and provide a profile of the individuals and organizations that participated in this study. This is followed by an examination of the advantages and challenges of using ethnographic research methods to study NGOs. I will begin, however, with a discussion of my early attempts at conducting research with a NGO, and the experiences that shaped the course of my subsequent fieldwork research.

#### *The Best Laid Plans...*

My initial vision of how this research project would take place was quite different from what actually materialized. I began with a very neat and tidy plan of conducting interviews and participant observation through volunteer work with an NGO based in Senegal, followed by similar techniques carried out with two of their NGO partners based outside of the country. I had long wished to engage in multi-sited research and I thought this approach would have a nice symmetry to it. However, as is often the case in research, all was not to go as planned. It all began quite promisingly when I received a positive

email response from a Senegal-based NGO, Senega<sup>67</sup>, regarding my interest in volunteering and conducting research with their organization. I had also approached other organizations with this request, but given Senega's encouraging level of interest in the research, I began to focus my efforts on trying to work with them.

Over the next five months, I sent dozens of emails to representatives of the organization trying to arrange this research. I sent, revised and re-sent requested proposals, ethics information and interview questions; I participated in phone meetings and a 1.5 hour Skype interview to be considered for a volunteer position; and once accepted as a volunteer, I filled out and sent in various forms related to this position. This had taken time, effort and a great deal of negotiation, and I felt that we were working towards a mutually acceptable agreement. This was not, unfortunately, to be the case. In retrospect, I did have some early concerns about trying to collaborate with Senega. Shortly after first approaching them for the study, a representative inquired about the ability of the NGO to monitor and edit my research output. On another occasion, I had inquired about contacting their NGO and donor partners for the research. I was then informed that if I wanted to do research with their donors, I would need to send my questions to be reviewed by Senega's executive director first, who would then put me in touch with the donors. At this point, I began to grow concerned about issues related to

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<sup>6</sup> Note that all organization and participant names, unless otherwise stated, have been changed for confidentiality purposes. Participants were assured confidentiality and protection of their identities as part of the informed consent process, and the use of pseudonyms is part of ensuring this confidentiality.

<sup>7</sup> Senega began as a local NGO, but in recent years it has opened offices and carried out projects in numerous other countries of the South, such that it can now be considered an INGO.

control over the research project. However, I felt this did not indicate a serious barrier to conducting the research, and that it was just an issue requiring negotiation.

While I had some early concerns about trying to conduct research with this NGO, I think the first major indication that the project in this form would not be possible occurred four months after first contacting the organization. After sending another revised proposal to their research coordinator, I waited for several days with no response. I then sent a follow-up email asking if there were any questions or suggestions about this proposed research. A week later, I received a confusing response: the organization did not have any questions about the research, but I should contact them if I have any questions before I leave for Senegal. This left me quite bewildered. I had been expecting feedback on this proposal and eventual approval of my project. After working a great deal on research documents and trying to foster a professional relationship with Senega, I began to grow more concerned about the prospect of working with this organization. Already, I was worried about how much time had gone by without any guarantees I could conduct research with them. I still remember my sweaty palms and racing heart as I would check my inbox for the latest email from Senega, hoping it would be good news about moving forward with the project.

This good news finally appeared to arrive at the beginning of August 2008, when I received a notice from their volunteer coordinator informing me that I had been approved as a volunteer, and we began discussing details of my travel to Dakar. I thought this finally meant I could proceed with my research and start making plans to begin my project. I had hoped to begin in August 2008, but now anticipated starting the study in

early September. I began to look into accommodations and travel to Senegal. Still, I wanted to be sure of this apparent successful breakthrough in negotiations, and I emailed the research coordinator to inform him of my acceptance as a volunteer, noting that I had hoped this also indicated acceptance of my research project. His response was distressing; not only was my research not accepted, but he also informed me that major changes in procedure would have to take place in order for the NGO to approve it. My heart sunk. After all of this time and effort, another hurdle, this time posing a real potential barrier to my project, had been presented by the NGO. After taking some time to refocus, I decided to see what I could do to accommodate these changes, and I prepared yet another proposal for them incorporating their suggestions. A short time later, I learned through contact with another Senega staff member that the research coordinator's suggested research changes were not methodologically feasible given the structure of the organization, nor in line with my research objectives of studying international connections between NGOs in Senegal. After months of emails back and forth, preparing proposals, filling out forms, and anxiously waiting for their response, I realized I had reached the end of the road with this NGO. I felt a mixture of despair and a certain sense of relief. I would no longer have to worry about appeasing this NGO and waiting for them to make decisions over my research. But I also felt a great sense of loss over how much energy I had expended in trying to work with them, and panic at the idea of not having any research plans in place.

During the next few days, I began to develop my new research strategy. Feeling discouraged by my attempt to work with one NGO and its partners, I realized the significant difficulties of being beholden to an organization that could have the power to

make major decisions about my research, including whether or not it even takes place. Consequently, I decided to concentrate on conducting interviews with the employees and volunteers with a variety of NGOs, in Dakar, in the attempt to understand the connections between local and international NGOs operating Senegal. This involved exploring the experiences and perspectives of NGO practitioners and not focusing on the participation of one specific NGO in the project. I was still open to the idea of volunteering with a NGO to conduct participant observation, but I decided to let that be a secondary focus, such that if a possible NGO candidate emerged during the research, I could pursue it, but I would not depend on it for the bulk of my data. My committee approved this new plan, and with a renewed sense of possibility and interest in the research, I finally felt I could begin taking concrete steps towards making this project a reality.

From this initial attempt to organize research plans, numerous issues related to the study of NGOs emerged that would become notable in my subsequent research experiences in this area. While matters involving control over the research were largely resolved by focusing on individual interviews with those working or volunteering with NGOs, issues involving suspicion of my motives, concerns about confidentiality, encounters with hierarchy and bureaucracy, and timing difficulties, were significant challenges to carrying out this research. These challenges will be further discussed following an overview of the methods conducted for this study.

## **Research Methodology**

### *Fieldwork Preparation in Canada*

In embarking on my renewed research strategy, I began my efforts in Canada as I started to trace connections between Senegalese NGOs and Canadian INGOs, which gave me the opportunity to learn about the goals of Canadian INGOs operating in Senegal and the local partners they work with there. This allowed me to gain greater familiarity of the NGO situation in Senegal through the experiences of Canadian NGO workers, as well as giving me an entry point into the world of NGOs in Senegal through the cultivation of contacts to seek out once in Dakar. As noted by Wallace (2006:9), in researching NGOs, “...getting access to people and documents and having sufficient interaction to understand the terrain and language of NGOs usually requires inside knowledge and connections.” Given my lack of NGO connections in Senegal, I decided to first foster contacts with Canadian INGOs in an attempt to gain knowledge and access to the NGO context in Senegal. Thus, from September 2008 to the first half of October 2008, I met and conducted informal preliminary interviews with staff from five Canadian INGOs in Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Winnipeg with activities and connections with local NGOs in Senegal. These meetings took place in order to explore their intentions and interests in Senegal, and their relationships with Senegalese NGOs. It also provided contacts to follow-up with in Senegal.

In addition, as part of my preparatory work, I conducted an informal interview with a representative from CIDA to discuss the role of Canadian aid in Africa. During this time, I also attended the 2008 Toronto Go Abroad Fair, which showcased opportunities to

work and volunteer abroad. By gathering materials, speaking to NGO representatives and attending seminars at this event, I had the chance to further explore how NGOs represent their interests and activities to the public.

*Fieldwork Methods: In-depth Interviews in Senegal*

For an eight-month period from October 2008 to June 2009, I lived and conducted fieldwork in Dakar, Senegal. This included conducting 90 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with volunteers and employees of both international and local Senegalese NGOs. In-depth, semi-structured interviews involve pre-formulated interview questions with open-ended answers and the ability to expand responses at the discretion of the interviewer and interviewee (Schensul et al. 1999:149). Schensul et al. (1999:149) find that “Semistructured interviews combine the flexibility of the unstructured, open-ended interview with the directionality and agenda of the survey instrument to produce focused, qualitative, textual data.” My decision to employ in-depth, semi-structured interviews is due to a desire for focus on key themes during the interviews, but also to allow for further elaboration and the flexibility to explore related experiences and ideas. These in-depth interviews focused on a discussion of the work of NGOs in Senegal, and volunteer and employees’ views on the relationship between international and local Senegalese NGOs, exploring the connections and partnerships between these organizations from the global North and South. These interviews also examined their perspectives on hope, including their personal hopes for the future, as well as hopes for the achievements of their NGOs and aspirations for the country of Senegal and its place in the international community.

Through these interviews, I aimed to explore three major aspects of this research: first, how NGOs operating in Senegal interact and connect with local and international partners in an attempt to achieve their short- and long-term objectives; second, how local and international NGO staff view their efforts and aspire to work through NGOs to attain their goals for their own communities and communities around the world; and third, how they view Senegal's current situation and its place in the context of global relations, and what they hope to achieve for the country by engaging with NGOs and civil society.

*Fieldwork Methods: Participant Observation in Senegal*

During my time in Senegal, I also engaged in participant observation with two different Senegalese organizations. Bernard (2006:344) describes participant observation as collecting both quantitative and qualitative data through immersing oneself in a culture and attempting to experience the lives of those you study as much as possible. A form of research that is considered the foundation of cultural anthropology, "It involves getting close to people and making them feel comfortable enough with your presence so that you can observe and record information about their lives" (Bernard 2006:342). Thus, from January 2009 to June 2009, I carried out participant-observation through part-time volunteer work with a Senegalese NGO network. I also conducted participant observation through part-time volunteer work with a local Senegalese association from February 2009 to June 2009. This involved interacting with NGO practitioners by observing and participating in meetings, workshops, planning sessions, report writing, roundtables, presentations, informal discussions, an advocacy event, and an exhibition, as well as

engaging in numerous email and phone correspondences. In doing so, my aim was to gain experience in how NGO practitioners relate to each other and carry out their work, as well as develop an understanding of how those working with these organizations attempt to achieve their goals. These experiences allowed for greater insight into the everyday activities and interactions of NGOs operating in Senegal. As Markowitz (2001:42) points out “Grounding research in the day-to-day work of NGO staff allows identification of the ways quotidian matters and interorganizational relations affect the design, presentation and implementation of projects, and the assumptions embedded within them.” In addition, this attention to situated practice provides a remedy for the generalizations made by NGO advocates and critics (Markowitz 2001:42). In her view, there is a need for local level research within NGOs, research she describes as, “...close observation of the small interactions that constitute the lived experience of promoting, accepting, and contesting modes of social change” (Markowitz 2001:42). By conducting participant-observation through volunteering with a local NGO network and a local association, I observed and became engaged in the everyday activities and working relationships of which these NGOs consist. This allowed for a better understanding of how these organizations try working together to achieve particular goals of social, political and economic development in Senegal.

In-depth interviews and participant observation are valuable anthropological tools in teasing out the relationships, experiences, and contradictions that are part of working for organizations with specific agendas. These are similar research practices to those carried about Riles (2000: xvi) in her study of transnational issue networks, which

focused on the national, regional and international NGOs and governmental agencies based in Fiji that were involved in the 1995 U.N Fourth World Conference on Women (Riles 2000:2, 12). Riles (2000:1) describes her research as involving ethnographic observation and description, as well as critical reflection. With fieldwork that entailed working with government offices, international aid agencies and NGOs, she observed and participated in the daily activities of several organizations preparing for the conference (Riles 2000:xv). Her research reveals how anthropologists are developing innovative research approaches in order to provide more in-depth, detailed accounts of the operations of NGOs and their international partners and networks, a trend I hope to contribute to through my thesis research.

#### A Note on Studying NGO Connections in Dakar

In the endeavor to study the international connections between NGOs, it may seem antithetical to have conducted the bulk of the research in one locale, in this case, the city of Dakar. However, there is much to be gained in the anthropological study of cities, and Dakar can be considered a global city that serves as a hub for NGO offices operating in West Africa, presenting a unique opportunity to explore the interactions between local NGOs and INGOs in one central location.

As noted in Chapter One, there are many INGOs and local NGOs operating in Senegal. According to a 2008 government report, there were 469 organizations registered as NGOs in Senegal: 295 national and 174 international (Ministère de la Famille, de la Solidarité Nationale de L'Entreprenariat Féminin et de la Micro Finance 2008:2). This

includes 178 national, foreign, and international NGOs that are registered as members of CONGAD (CONGAD 2009). In this context, many partnerships have been formed between local Senegalese NGOs and international organizations from a variety of countries (Michael 2004:110). International development organizations have been attracted to work with these local NGOs due to CONGAD's international reputation, which has contributed to increased interest in the NGO sector in Senegal (Michael 2004:110). In addition, the physical proximity of Senegal to Western Europe, and Senegal's attractiveness as a place to live and its cultural closeness have played a role in attracting these international organizations to the country (Michael 2004:110). As well, participants in my study also cited Senegal's political stability, in relation to those of other West African countries, as appealing to INGOs seeking less contentious places to implement development programs and locate their national and regional offices. Thus, Senegal is an attractive setting for a large number of both local and international NGOs.

As the capital of Senegal and the educational, financial and cultural centre of the country, many of these NGOs have their headquarters or main offices located in Dakar. Indeed, of the 184 foreign NGOs registered in Senegal, 100 have a headquarters agreement with the state (Kamara 2010:9). Indeed, Sassen (1998:xxii-xxiii) points out that global cities are centres for headquarter operations, and that along with the spatial dispersal of economic activities seen in processes of globalization, there have also been new forms of territorial centralization of control operations and top-level management. She notes that "National and global markets as well as globally integrated operations require central places where the work of globalization gets done" (Sassen 1998:xxiii).

While Sassen (2006:1-2) is largely referring to the economic activities of markets and industries in her discussion of global cities, I suggest that for NGO practitioners, given the confluence of INGOs and local NGOs located in this capital along with many of their country and regional headquarters and offices, Dakar can be considered a global city, and a central place where their efforts at global connection transpire.<sup>8</sup> This is perhaps made even more evident by its selection as the site of the recent World Social Forum, which was attended by 75,000 participants involved in NGOs and other civil society organizations from 132 different countries in February 2011 (World Social Forum 2010). Thus, Dakar, as a global city and focal point for NGO headquarters and offices, provides a unique space to study globalization by examining the links between a variety of local and foreign NGOs located in this West African hub. In my study, these links were followed loosely through suggestions by participants, who would often recommend that I contact their colleagues who work for NGOs in their field, or to which their NGO is connected, for future interviews. This allowed me to trace linkages between organizations and the individuals engaged in these relationships. Given the wide range in scope and interest areas of NGOs in Dakar, including the offices of international, regional, and local organizations working on such areas as women's rights, health care, agriculture, education, human rights and the environment, I was able to follow the ties between many of these entities without having to leave the city. Indeed, Markowitz (2001:40) notes that

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<sup>8</sup> Note that Sassen (2006:7) provides specific criteria as to what constitutes a global city, and this includes their role as command centres in organizing the world economy, as key marketplaces and locations for leading industries, and as major sites of production for these industries. Dakar may not qualify as a global city given these criteria, but I suggest that from the perspective of NGO practitioners, Dakar can be considered a global city that includes the offices of many local and international NGOs.

transnational processes, which have contributed to the proliferation of NGOs, can make the study of NGOs quite complicated given their seemingly deterritorialized linkages. However, she suggests that there are specific locations, temporarily bound together in these processes, and these are sites one can access for anthropological research (Markowitz 2001:40-41). The unique NGO space in Dakar allowed me to stay rooted in this one geographical area while following international connections between NGOs. The ability to conduct my research largely in one locale was greatly beneficial, not only due to the cost and time investment required of multi-sited research, which can be significant given the wide range of these international linkages, but also because it allowed me to be more engaged and invested in becoming familiar with this one site, a context in which all of my participants were also engaged. In this sense, I was able to apply a more traditional form of anthropological research – long-term immersion in one setting – to the study of global processes and international linkages by locating myself in a place where many of these connections, in this case, between local and international NGOs and practitioners, intersect. According to Gobo (2008:64), “Ethnographic sites have been globalized by connections that traverse multiple spaces and permeable and contested boundaries.” While challenges can arise for ethnographers trying to study these sites, Gobo (2008:64) points out the opportunities that also arise in placing oneself within the space and time of social actors that are ‘living the global’, which can allow researchers to demonstrate how global processes are politically and collectively constructed, and show the ways that globalization is grounded in the local setting (Gobo 2008:64). Indeed, studying processes of globalization through the examination of NGO partnerships while immersing myself in

one locale gave me the opportunity to consider how such processes are shaped by and emerge in local practices and interactions.

### *Recruitment Procedures*

For this study, I sought to interview individuals from diverse backgrounds that worked or volunteered with a wide variety of INGOs, local NGOs and associations. To accomplish this, I employed a number of recruitment techniques. I searched for NGOs online and contacted these organizations to request an interview with one of their representatives. I also asked those I interacted with through participant observation if they would consider participating in an interview for the study. As well, I employed chain referral selection, also referred to as network sampling or snowball sampling (Schensul et al. 1999:241, 269; Bernard 2006:192). In this form of sampling, key informants indicate one or two other possible informants from the population you are interested in studying (Bernard 2006:193). In my research, the initial interviewees would suggest other potential interviewees, in this case, male or female volunteers or employees working for NGOs, including those with a variety of backgrounds and experiences. These recruitment procedures were carried out repeatedly until saturation of information and ideas on relevant issues was achieved. Specific information gathered during the course of the interviews was kept confidential and not shared with those assisting in recruitment efforts, and I never revealed the names of those with whom I conducted interviews.<sup>9</sup> It

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<sup>9</sup> While some participants referred others for interviews, it was revealed to those giving referrals whether their referred individuals were subsequently contacted or participated in interviews.

should be noted that only adults (those over 18 years of age) signing a consent form detailing the research and its risks and benefits were interviewed for this research project, and interviews were recorded on audiotape with the permission of each participant.<sup>10</sup>

In terms of the recruitment of organizations I conducted participant observation with, they were selected after interviews with some of their employees and volunteers. Having learned about the work of these organizations, I then requested to conduct participant observation with them through volunteer work. With the NGO network, I submitted an informational letter to the coordinator detailing the research and the activities involved in participant observation, the risks and benefits, and the steps taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, and she agreed to this process.<sup>11</sup> When I visited the network office to volunteer and engage in participant observation, I displayed this informational letter to inform those in the office of the research I was conducting. With the Senegalese association, I emailed this same letter to the president and volunteers (this was an entirely volunteer-based organization) requesting to conduct participant observation with their organization. At their next meeting, I responded to questions about this research procedure, and they then agreed to let me conduct research with them.

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<sup>10</sup> Both English and French versions of the consent form used for this research process can be found in Appendix 1.

<sup>11</sup> Both English and French versions of the informational letter for organizations can be found in Appendix 2.

### *The Use of Interpreters*

Given that French is the official language of Senegal (BBC 2010), I attempted to improve my French skills before beginning fieldwork in Dakar. This included taking a French conversation class along with individual study. This allowed me to communicate with an adequate level of French that improved a great deal over the course of the study due to being immersed in the French language. Wolof and other local languages are also spoken throughout the country, and I had anticipated that interpreters would be hired to assist with interviews where participants preferred to communicate in a language other than French or English. However, since all participants were able to comfortably communicate in French or English, interpreters were not hired to assist in the translation of interview questions and responses during the interview process. As a result, all translation of interview materials, including those shared in this dissertation, are my own, and I have tried my best to capture the spirit of what my participants conveyed to me during the interview process.

### *Anonymity and Confidentiality*

With respect to ethical standards, I followed those of the Canadian Tri-Council guidelines by not engaging in any activity that might harm human subjects. Consent was obtained from all research subjects, and steps were taken to ensure their confidentiality and anonymity. This includes using pseudonyms for participants and their organizations, as well as disguising personal information in all interview transcripts, reports, and related research documents, including the thesis manuscript. Interview recordings were stored in

a secure location. As well, a key with codes linking subjects' true identities with their pseudonyms was created for personal reference, and this key was kept apart from the participants' data and carefully protected in a secure location. All attempts have been made to prevent unintentional or inadvertent breaches of participant confidentiality and anonymity. As a result, only I had access to subjects' identities and the information gathered from informants' interviews.

#### *Reciprocity for Participation and Participant Feedback*

In following the anthropological approach to research, I tried to generate a relationship of trust and confidence with my informants, with appreciation of the time and energy they have donated to my research project. While reviewing the consent form, I indicated to participants that if requested, I would be able to cover transportation costs incurred by participants for the interview process. Only one participant accepted this offer, and this involved a minor monetary amount agreed upon by both of us. In some cases, I was also able to provide information requested by participants, such as information on university programs and partnership possibilities in Canada. In addition, I contributed my time and energy as a volunteer with two organizations that agreed to my participant observation activities.

At the end of each interview, participants were asked if they would like to clarify or add anything to their interview and whether they had any questions or comments about the research in general. As well, all participants accepted my offer to send them a brief

report on the research findings, which will be sent to them electronically in English and French.<sup>12</sup>

### **Research Analysis**

Analysis of this research involved drawing out themes related to the aims of this study. This includes exploring the perceived problems and challenges Senegal is believed to face and the hopes of NGO practitioners for themselves and the vision they have for Senegal's future in terms of its socio-political situation and place in the world. The views of Senegalese and non-Senegalese participants working for local and international organizations were compared and the similarities and differences between their perceptions and goals were analyzed not only to indicate distinctions, but also to examine the more intricate relationships between participants, their NGO activities and their worldviews. Tams Analyser, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis program for Macintosh computers, was employed to assist with drawing out the themes of this research. There are many advantages to using qualitative data analysis software, such as the ability to easily access ethnographic notes that have been sorted by particular codes, and the opportunity to revise, rename or change codes, if necessary (Gobo 2008:253). As well, hierarchical category systems of codes can also be developed to further organize the data, and co-occurring codes can be helpful in showing relationships amongst categories (Gobo 2008:253). While such programs can be useful and speedy labeling and retrieval

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<sup>12</sup> This report will be sent to participants following input from the thesis defense process. Participants will be given the opportunity to provide feedback that will be considered for the final draft of this dissertation.

tools, they alone do not analyze or code information, and they are simply designed to expedite these tasks when researchers are working with large bodies of data (LeCompte and Schensul 1999:92). As LeCompte and Schensul 1999:92 state, “The process of coding, retrieving, and subsequently mulling over and making sense of data remains a laborious process *completely controlled* by researchers.” In this study, the analysis process began by reviewing interview transcripts and notes to search for themes and categories drawn from the research objectives, as well as issues emerging from collected data. Using Tams Analyzer, I coded these passages for the general themes they contained, followed by sub-coding certain categories where further refinement was required. In addition, I coded attributes for my participants, including their gender, nationality, and organization type, in order to compare themes across different groups. Through the analysis program, I was able to generate documents displaying the accumulated information on particular coded themes from research notes and transcripts, in addition to showing correlations of certain issues significant to this study. This assisted in the emergence of linkages and patterns, which were used to develop the arguments and ideas presented in this thesis dissertation. It also allowed for the creation of qualitative categories of participants that will be used when discussing the views and characteristics of different groups. This is done to try to make complex information more manageable, as well as to look for similarities and differences between groups of different backgrounds, based on gender, nationality, and organization type. The categories of participants discussed in this study do not signify statistically representative groups, but are a way to describe trends marking different sets of people involved in this study based on

qualitative research and analysis. Accordingly, this qualitative research is not intended to have statistical significance in regard to the population of NGO practitioners in Dakar, Senegal, but is instead a descriptive and analytical discussion of some of the issues in which they are engaged.

### **Profile of Participants and Organizations**

#### *Profile of Interview Participants*

In conducting this study, efforts were made to include interview participants from a variety of backgrounds that are engaged as volunteers or paid employees with NGOs operating in Senegal. As a result, 90 men and women from different countries, with different ages and educational and work backgrounds were included in this research with the aim of seeking a diversity of perspectives and experiences involving NGOs. The ages of the participants in this study range from 20 to 71, with 22 participants in their twenties, 20 in their thirties, 27 in their forties, nine in their fifties, six in their sixties, and one participant in her 70s. Five participants did not disclose their ages. The average age of participants in this study is 39.9 years old.

Forty men and 50 women participated in interviews. Of the women interviewed, 19 are Senegalese in nationality, eight are Canadian, nine are European, ten are American, and two are from other African countries. In addition, one woman who participated in an interview identified as Senegalese American, while another described her background as Mauritanian Senegalese. As for the men who were interviewed for the study, 31 are Senegalese, three are European, two are American, two are Canadian, and

one man identified as Senegalese Canadian, while another man described himself as Senegalese Belgian in nationality. More than half of the 90 people interviewed, 50 participants, are Senegalese, and Senegalese men, representing 31 of the 90 participants, are the largest group interviewed in the study. While these numbers are not intended to be statistically significant in terms of representing the NGO workers and volunteers in Dakar, given my experience over the course of this research visiting organizations to conduct interviews, I would suggest that Senegalese men are one of the largest groups of people involved with NGOs, both local and international, operating in Senegal.

Most of the participants in this study are very highly educated. Only three out of 90 participants have not completed high school, while two participants have no further formal training after high school; all of these participants are Senegalese in background. The rest of the eighty-five participants have pursued some form of post-secondary education, either at the university level or at another training institution. Indeed, in regard to their highest academic achievement, 23 participants have completed a bachelor's degree, 25 have completed a masters-level degree, and six have completed their PhDs. Forty participants have training in the management field, which included such areas as project and program management, human resources, finance and accounting, marketing and business administration. In this field, five have completed a bachelor's degree, five have completed a master's, and two have MBAs, while others have received diplomas or certificates in this area, or are still completing their studies. Twenty-nine participants have education backgrounds in the humanities or social sciences, including such areas as political studies, English, economics and sociology, with seven attaining a bachelor's

degree, 11 achieving a master's degree, and two completing their PhDs. Others with education in this area have only partly completed their studies or are still working on their degrees. Fifteen participants described their training as involving international studies, with more than half of these studies involving international management, while other programs focused on development and international relations. As well, eight participants have degrees in development studies, including three with bachelor degrees, three with masters, and two with PhDs in this area. Eight participants have received training in the education field, with six receiving diplomas or certificates, one who has completed a master's degree, and another participant who has completed a PhD in education. To a lesser extent, participants have post-secondary training in other areas, including health, law, agriculture, mathematics, science, social work, and computers/information technology. In addition, the participants in this study have had varied work backgrounds related to their educational training, and 22 individuals stated that they had previously worked at a different NGO before commencing their work with their current NGO.

In terms of their role with the organizations they are engaged in, 52 participants are in paid positions with NGOs, working to receive a salary or other forms of paid compensation. Those employed at international organizations include fifteen Senegalese and seventeen non-Senegalese individuals, while those employed with local organizations include sixteen Senegalese and four non-Senegalese individuals. Nine Senegalese men and one woman work as directors for local and international NGOs, and three non-Senegalese men and seven non-Senegalese woman are employed as directors mostly for INGOs. Others, both Senegalese and non-Senegalese, are mostly employed in managerial

positions at local and international organizations, while some work in such areas as coordination, accounting, and consulting.

Thirty-five participants are engaged as volunteers with these organizations, with some receiving a small indemnity for transportation and/or food and lodging, while others carry out volunteer work without any financial support. This group includes two Senegalese and nine non-Senegalese volunteers with international organizations, and eighteen Senegalese and six non-Senegalese volunteers with local organizations (local NGOs or associations). Many of the participants working as volunteers do so with local associations, and fifteen Senegalese men and women in the study were volunteering with local Senegalese associations. In addition, two participants, a young woman from France and another woman from the U.S., stated that their volunteer work with Senegalese NGOs were practicums for university-level graduate programs in development-related fields. Three participants did not make it clear whether they were engaged in paid or volunteer positions with their NGOs.

### *Profile of Organizations*

For this research, I also attempted to include participants that were working or volunteering with many different organizations, including INGOs, local NGOs and NGO networks, and local associations. The 90 participants interviewed for this study work or volunteer at 51 different organizations, 23 of which are local-level, Senegalese-based organizations. This includes eleven Senegalese associations, which are typically grassroots, community-based organizations that focus on a particular issue, such as

health, women's rights, or the welfare of youth. Twelve of these Senegalese organizations are NGOs, having been officially registered or designated as such by the government, and these are typically more professionally-organized entities that operate in Senegal, although a few have projects in other countries. Five of these 23 Senegalese organizations are networks of NGOs or associations working on a particular issue, such as health or women's rights, in Senegal.

Twenty-two of the organizations that participants are associated with are INGOs or international networks based in the U.S., Europe, or Canada, with operations in numerous countries around the world, including Senegal.<sup>13</sup> In most cases, the participants who were volunteering or working for these INGOs did so with their local offices located in Dakar.

Six organizations that participants are associated with in this study are more difficult to categorize, since in these cases, expatriates from the U.S. or Europe had founded organizations in Senegal, with largely Senegalese staff and projects directed towards the Senegalese population, while their organizations are registered in their home countries.<sup>14</sup> The complexity and uniqueness of these cases places them outside of the

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<sup>13</sup> Four of these organizations are local members of international networks. While they operate differently from the local offices of INGOs, they receive direction, funding and technical support from these networks, which more closely aligns them with other INGOs rather than local NGOs. Where appropriate, I have indicated when I am referring to a participant in one of these organizations.

<sup>14</sup> Three of these organizations are NGOs that are registered as NGOs in the US with American founders, but tend to operate with small, mostly Senegalese staff with most projects occurring within Senegal. Another three organizations are small associations with European founders that raise funds in their home countries for small projects in Senegal, which are operated by a few Senegalese staff members or volunteers.

category of local Senegalese NGO or INGO, and where appropriate to the discussion, they will be referred to as local NGOs or associations, with a distinction made with regard to their non-Senegalese affiliation.

Given the great variety of issues dealt with by NGOs in Senegal, I decided to include research participants that were involved in organizations in a variety of fields. This included organizations with projects or programs focusing on agriculture, children's rights, cultural activities and exchange, disability rights, the economy/job assistance, education, the environment, health issues, human rights, clandestine immigration, the media, political issues, women's rights, and issues concerning Senegalese youth. Many organizations work on a combination of these issues, and Michael (2004:93) points out that most NGOs in Senegal operate as generalists, working in a number of fields rather than specializing in one.

As for the organizations I conducted participant observation with, one is a network of Senegalese NGOs that focused on women's issues, and had a small staff of Senegalese women. However, as this is the office of a NGO network, I also had the opportunity to interact with those involved in its member organizations, which are Senegalese NGOs and associations promoting women's rights that are also largely staffed by Senegalese women. The second organization I volunteered with was an association of Senegalese students and artists that aimed to promote African culture and the arts, as well as African-based solutions to the problems of conflict and poverty afflicting many on the continent.

## **Methodological Considerations and Fieldwork Reflections**

### *Advantages in the Ethnographic Study of NGOs*

In conducting this research, I saw an opportunity to apply anthropological methods involving long-term, in-depth, qualitative research measures to the study of NGOs. A more enhanced anthropological contribution can be helpful in enriching the literature on NGOs through providing an examination of the ethnographic particulars involved in NGO alliances and networks (Fisher 1997:441). This approach of grounding research in the day-to-day work of NGO staff provided useful insights into these organizations and those working for them. In terms of methodology, there were many benefits to the task of studying NGOs. Many of those working or volunteering for these organizations are very well educated with post-secondary degrees. As a result, most participants had an understanding of the research endeavor and were familiar with such procedures as in-depth interviews, informed consent, techniques to ensure confidentiality, and the use of a recording device. As professionals working for organizations involved in projects for the public, these are people who are accustomed to receiving requests to participate in meetings and conferences, and none seemed particularly surprised or uneasy to be contacted by email or telephone for an interview. Many were eager to discuss their work and share the kinds of activities engaged in by their NGOs. In addition, I was often able to find information online about these NGOs, particularly the international and larger organizations, including their contact information and that of their staff members. Thus, if there were particular organizations I wanted to learn more about and wished to get in touch with, but had not yet been connected through others, searching online was another

way for me to seek participation of their staff in the study. All of these aspects facilitated the process of contacting and conducting interviews with participants in this field, in some ways making the process easier and more straightforward than working with individuals who had were unfamiliar and less comfortable with such research procedures<sup>15</sup>.

### *Challenges in the Ethnographic Study of NGOs*

While there were many advantages to studying those working with NGOs, there were also a number of challenges in trying to conduct anthropological research in this area. These challenges largely revolved around trying to use more flexible, in-depth qualitative research methods with highly structured, competitive, hierarchical, bureaucratic organizations and the orientations of individuals working for them, who often had very practical and technical education backgrounds with specific ideas on how research should be conducted and for what purpose. In addition, Mosse (2001:176) points out that tension is a commonly reported experience in the undertaking of independent ethnographic study of development organizations, particularly where it may draw attention to certain weaknesses or divergences between intention and action. Thus, organizations such as NGOs are hesitant about allowing research that could show flaws in their objectives and activities, potentially undermining their work efforts as well as their image as a legitimate provider of services to the public. This was apparent in the early

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<sup>15</sup> This observation is made in light of my previous research with immigrant women garment workers, many of whom had little experience participating in an interview or sharing their work experiences in this kind of setting, and I found it much more challenging to locate these women and explain the research framework and process of informed consent.

stages of the study, where concerns about control of the research, along with attempts at censorship and suspicion of my motives, were some of the difficulties that arose in my initial attempts to organize research activities with a NGO. Mosse (2001:177) notes that ethnographic research of organizations can modify existing research flows or create new ones that are beyond the control of management, and in such cases, it is treated as suspect, quickly loses legitimacy, and is undermined, resisted, or sometimes terminated. In an effort to avoid these hazards, I attempted to minimize problems related to control of the research by not aligning myself with one NGO, but instead focusing on the people working for these organizations and conducting interviews with them based on their views and experiences. I also found two local organizations while living in Dakar that agreed to let me conduct participant observation with them. Unlike the first NGO, these were smaller-scale organizations that had little interest in altering my research objectives or controlling the output of the study. This change in the approach to studying NGOs was beneficial in allowing me to continue the research without worrying that a large organization would try to change, censor or even shut down my study.

While issues involving the control of the research were largely addressed by the change in approach, suspicion about my motives and concerns about confidentiality continued to be issues for interview participants who were fearful about being reprimanded for speaking candidly about their NGO experiences. While I tried to reassure them that measures would be taken to protect their identities and that of their organizations, there were still some difficulties in having frank conversations about the NGO context in Senegal. Confidentiality concerns combined with the competitive nature

of NGOs vying for funds resulted in few critical statements about participants' own organizations, which were particularly absent from those working for local NGOs. I believe this stemmed from worry about their superiors finding out that they had portrayed their NGOs in an unflattering light, potentially putting their job and the reputation of the NGO at risk. This is somewhat understandable, given what Markowitz (2001:44) describes as "...a highly politicized context of increasing competition for unreliable and increasingly restricted funds." Participants' hesitation to speak critically also occurred when discussing the partners of their NGOs. People could be quite open about the general difficulties of NGO partnerships, but would rarely open up about a specific problem with a specific organization. For example, Mamadou, a young Senegalese man who helped to found a health association with one major NGO partner, had enthusiastically detailed the advantages of this partnership, and then shied away from discussing the disadvantages of this relationship. He began smiling a lot and looking away from me, suggesting we talk about it later. He then said that the advantages are more important and there are no major disadvantages to working with this NGO, and what one might call a problem could also be seen as an advantage. He smiled again, looked at me and said in English (the rest of the interview took place in French), "You can trust me," and laughed nervously at this. Sensing his great discomfort, I decided to move on to other issues. But it was apparent that he did not want to say anything negative about this partner that his association depended on for financial and technical support (INT69).

In a few cases, participants would only agree to an interview if I could assure them that I would not be informing their bosses or co-workers that they had participated

in the study. A young European woman named Angela who works for an INGO was concerned about the confidentiality of the research given that her boss had suggested I contact this young woman for an interview. She did not want her boss to know the matters discussed during the interview, let alone that she had participated in an interview. I assured her that steps would be taken to protect her identity in my research notes and thesis, and that I would not be informing her boss that an interview was conducted with her. This put me in a difficult situation when I visited her office a few days later to meet another interview participant, and I ran into her boss, a friendly older European woman who had taken an interest in my study and had put me in contact with a number of potential participants. With Angela standing nearby, this woman proceeded to ask me about the research and if I had had the opportunity to interview Angela yet. Not wanting to offend this woman, nor break rules of confidentiality, I simply stated that I had really enjoyed learning about her organization and thanked her for her assistance (INT42).

Attempting to navigate the hierarchies and bureaucratic nature of NGOs was another challenge to this research. I had tried to interview individuals in a variety of positions at the NGOs, including volunteers, program managers, directors, assistants, secretaries, and accountants, in order to get a broader perspective on the work engaged in by NGOs and their role in Senegal. However, there were cases where participants felt that I should be following the chain of command, and even while the interview was taking place, some would suggest I speak to the director instead. I still recall arriving at a Senegalese NGO to interview a program coordinator. I then learned that he was unable to make the interview, but his coworker suggested that I interview the NGO director while I

was there. After meeting with the director and requesting an interview, he made me wait for over an hour, before he then grilled me about my research and told me that this simply was not worth his time, although I could interview one of his staff, if I liked. Not only was this a way for him to reassert his rank and importance in the organization relative to that of the other employees, but it was also his reaction, I believe, to feeling insulted that I had not approached him first for an interview, but one of his subordinates.

Dealing with bureaucracy became a common frustration throughout this project, since I often had to persuade secretaries and assistants, who were essentially acting as gate-keepers, to actually allow me to speak with potential participants in order to try to set-up an interview. The challenge of navigating these bureaucracies, which Heyman (2001:240, 246) astutely describes as “instruments of power”, also arose through issues involving the control of information. During many of the interviews, people would respond to my questions by suggesting I read a report, a pamphlet, or referring me to a website, rather than answer the questions themselves. During an interview with the American coordinator of a American-founded local NGO, Sheila, an intimidating, older female participant, responded three times to different questions about her background by stating she would send me her resume, and another three times suggesting I visit the organization’s website. By the end of the interview I began to phrase questions with, “and I will be sure to check the website, but for now could you tell me...” Due to her dismissal of my questions by suggesting I review an electronic document or website, this interview was much shorter than usual; twenty minutes in length compared to an hour on average to complete (INT67). This was an extreme case, but many interviews involved instances of

being referred to electronic documents or given NGO reading materials in lieu of face-to-face responses to my questions. This reliance on referring to NGO sanctioned documents underlines Mosse's (2001:176) point that "...very few, if any, organizations are conducive to the free flow of information." In his view, organizations are in fact systems that produce and control information, and development organizations exist in a nexus of evaluation, information and external funding (Mosse 2001:176). Accordingly, he notes that "Development organizations have highly evolved mechanisms for filtering and regulating flows of information." Directing me to review documents produced, and therefore approved, by their NGOs was one way for participants to regulate the information I gathered at their workplaces.

By suggesting I consult NGO documents rather than provide their own responses, participants were also trying to reduce their time investment in the interviews. Indeed, another difficulty I encountered in this study involved timing, which was largely related to the busy schedules of those involved with NGOs. Almost one third (24/90) of the interviews I conducted involved having to wait for participants in order to start the interview. Often, these individuals were running late and did not arrive on time. However, there were also a number of cases where participants were present but preoccupied with other matters, leaving me waiting for extended periods of time in their office waiting rooms while they finished up meetings, or sometimes writing emails or having phone conversations while I sat across from them in their offices. I also experienced four no-shows for interviews. In two cases, I was able to schedule another time to meet, and in another case, I was unable to get in touch again with the INGO employee who had agreed

to meet with me. Indeed, after arranging to meet with a Senegalese woman working for a large INGO based in the U.S., she failed to arrive at our agreed upon meeting place, which was the office of an NGO her organization partnered with and where I was volunteering. When I called her, she seemed annoyed and told me she was in a meeting and very busy, but would meet with me the next day. When she did not arrive for this second meeting, I attempted to call her again, and there was no response. Clearly, she had little interest in participating in the study, perhaps due to time constraints. Indeed, with their many meetings and workshops to attend, reports to write, as well as the occasional out-of-town consultation, it could be difficult to find a time for participants to meet and sufficiently address the research questions.

It is important for me to note that my position as a relatively young female student meant that I would be considered lower in status compared to most of the highly educated NGO practitioners I interviewed, given the hierarchical ranking based on age and gender in the Senegalese context.<sup>161718</sup> However, my privilege as a white person with Canadian citizenship also shaped my interactions with Senegalese participants. For example, during my interview with Khady, a middle-aged Senegalese woman who works for a local

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<sup>16</sup> At the time of the research, I was 26 years old, while the majority of my participants (78/90) were more advanced in age.

<sup>17</sup> In discussing the politics of Senegalese urban youth, Diouf (1996:225, 226) points out that in African contexts, the subordination and deference of youth to their generational and social seniors is a strong traditional value.

<sup>18</sup> According to Gellar (1996:153, 155), while Senegalese women have made great strides towards equality, particularly in urban settings, there are still barriers preventing their equal legal status, and strong traditionalist elements continue to view men as the natural leaders in family and society.

human rights NGO, she responded to a question about globalization by remarking that there was a disparity in the ability to travel and visit other countries. She noted that Europeans and Americans could travel easily and visit Africa without a visa, while Africans face tighter visa restrictions to visit Europe or work in Canada and the U.S. She noted that she felt pessimistic about her economic situation in Senegal and hoped to move to the U.S. with her children. In this discussion, Khady seemed to underscore my privileged and taken-for-granted ability to travel to Senegal due to my Canadian citizenship in contrast to the restrictions she and other Senegalese citizens encounter (INT34).

In addition, although I found most people I contacted were interested in meeting with me, I think occasionally this was because they thought I would be able to link them to a Canadian funding source or potential partners, or that the research would have overt practical advantages for their organization. Certainly, sometimes participants made assumptions about my ability to connect them to resources based on my research and Canadian nationality. On one occasion, I contacted Amina, the Senegalese president of a local health NGO with membership in an international network, to arrange an interview, explaining that I was studying NGO partnerships. She invited me to tour their office and meet some of the staff. I expressed interest in this and also asked if I could do an interview with her, to which she agreed. When I arrived for the interview, Amina had the executive director of the NGO join us in their conference room, and they both sat down and took out notebooks and pens. I was rather confused about what they were expecting, since I had said I was interested in conducting an interview with Amina, and I decided to

explain once again that I am a student conducting research and here to do an interview. Amina expressed to me that they are very interested in partnerships, and then proceeded to tell me about the activities of the organization. I thanked her and then stated again that I was here to conduct an interview for my research. She asked me the kind of questions I would be asking, and I gave her an overview of the issues I intended to discuss. At this point, Amina told me I could commence the interview with her executive director. He agreed to this and said he did not mind if Amina stayed during the interview. Once the interview was over, Amina stepped in again, and began asking me about what kind of partnerships I may be able to help them with, whether they could organize something with my university, or another organization with which I might be involved. Despite my assertion that I had little to offer in the way of partnerships and was not associated with any Canadian INGOs, she persisted in trying to find a beneficial connection for her organizations through her interaction with me (INT81).<sup>19</sup>

Given that I was not an important figure in the NGO world, combined with their busy work schedules, often meant that interviews were interrupted by participants answering phone calls, text messages and emails, having visits from colleagues, and accepting the occasional delivery of tea. Having waited thirty minutes for him to arrive, Abdou, a Senegalese coordinator of a local NGO, walked into his office and greeted me. As I began to explain the consent form to him, he then interrupted me and said, “I need coffee first, ok?” He left to get his coffee, and I could hear him chatting with the secretary

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<sup>19</sup> Given the NGO’s focus on health issues, I did send the president contact information for a Canadian university that seeks overseas volunteer placements for health care students. I am unaware as to whether this has led to any form of collaboration between these organizations.

for a while in the reception area. Five to ten minutes later he returned. We finished reviewing the consent form and then began the interview. Seventeen minutes into the interview, he received a text message and proceeded to respond to it, telling me it was a work colleague. Several minutes later, he received a phone call and began conversing with the person on the other line while I sat there and waited. After a minute or so, he got up and left his office to continue his phone call, returning a few minutes later. We continued the interview, but shortly thereafter Abdou began to sort through some papers and seemed quite distracted, giving brief, vague responses to my questions. Less than two minutes later, the interview was finished (INT87). Certainly, over the course of this study I learned quickly that I had to make the most of the time given to me, since it was often clear that my research was not a high priority for participants given their own pressing work agendas. In my research, I encountered a variety of methodological issues, and while challenging at times, these experiences also gave me valuable insight into the approaches and operations of NGOs and their staff.

## **Conclusion**

Fieldwork is not to be entered into lightly, and a great deal of planning, organizing and strategizing is necessary in the development of research projects. However, despite this preparation, one cannot anticipate all of the challenges and frustrations, as well as advantages and good fortune that one will encounter in the field. Through this research, I gained an appreciation for the complexity of studying NGO practitioners, NGOs, and their transnational linkages, in addition to having the extraordinary experience of being

immersed in the complex and cosmopolitan West African city of Dakar, Senegal. The methodological procedures and encounters reviewed here are the basis of my study, and they shape the findings that will be further explored and investigated in the following chapters of this thesis dissertation.

## Chapter Four – Local and International NGO Partnerships in Senegal

*“Because when you have a project, you hope you find a partner and that the project will happen. You always hope for a partner.” – Yacine, a Senegalese secretary for a local women’s association.*

### **A Partnership Encounter**

*It is early January and my first official day of volunteering with the NGO network, WNGO, which focuses on a variety of issues pertaining to women. I had already discussed my research with the Senegalese coordinator of WNGO, and she had agreed to let me visit the office over the next few months to work on translating some of their funding requests and other documents from French to English. I arrive at the small yellow office building set inconspicuously amongst other houses in a residential area and enter through the side door, walking past the tiled kitchen area and into the large conference room. Sitting around the rectangular tables are a group of loudly talking and laughing Senegalese women, all wearing colourful boubous. There are big sheets of paper with notes written in marker posted on the wall, and it appears to be a meeting, although it is quite noisy and rowdy. I get the attention of the coordinator, a friendly middle-aged Senegalese woman. She tells me that they are in the middle of workshop by an American woman sent by an INGO to provide training on a number of areas, and they are just taking a break. The coordinator introduces me to the American trainer, a middle-aged white woman who is also dressed in a flowery boubou. The trainer tells me she will be in the country for a month and a half, providing a number of training sessions for WNGO over this period. The break is almost over, and I decide to sit in on the workshop, which involves preparing for a project on women’s rights. The room becomes quieter as people settle into their seats with booklets in front of them, and the coordinator asks me to introduce myself to the group. I tell them I am a Canadian student here to do my doctoral research in anthropology on NGO partnerships. I will do interviews, and also volunteer with WNGO to better understand how NGOs function here. I said that WNGO is a very important NGO in Senegal, and that it is a pleasure to work here. Several of the women smile and say welcome.*

*The trainer begins writing in marker on the large sheets of paper on the wall, asking the group of Senegalese women from the NGO to give input on different issues regarding a women’s rights project they are working on. The women around me make comments and suggestions and the trainer writes these down, sometimes asking for clarification or suggesting that some points be moved under different headings.*

*A short time later, the trainer says that they have discussed the needs, gaps, and the strategies of the project, and the WNGO members start flipping through their training booklets. They decide to spend the next ten minutes discussing and reviewing the strategy in smaller groups, and then rejoining the larger group to share their ideas by writing them on the sheets of papers on the wall.*

*As they break off into smaller groups, the trainer walks around making sure the WNGO members understand what to do. One woman tells her she is confused, and the trainer tries to re-explain the process. The women are quiet, and they seem to be unsure of how to proceed. The trainer reiterates that they are to discuss the how, with whom, what resources, and what results they want for the strategy. Now the trainer has left the room, and the women are discussing the issue. There are some murmurs, and some women are getting up and leaving. One Senegalese woman goes up to the sheet of paper to look at what is written there. Eventually, more women go up to the front of the room and write their points on the papers posted on the wall. Then there is a brief lull with people milling about and chatting with each other. I'm not quite sure what is going on and if the training session is still taking place. Then a Senegalese woman begins to present the points discussed in her group, reading the points she has written on one of the sheets of paper at the front. She talks about strategies for awareness including translating texts into national languages, the resources needed for their projects and the results they hope to attain. Three more of these mini-presentations take place and we clap after each one. The trainer states that this is very important work, and she is proud of all of them for working and being motivated. She says that it's hard to conceptualize these things, and this has been an exercise of conceptualizing. She finds it very interesting, and she needs to do a review of their important work in this workshop. This process allows for dialogue, and they can implement a plan of action from this consultation. They can establish partnerships with local groups and develop a network of partners.*

*The trainer and the group of women begin discussing the timing of the next workshop, which concerns communication, and they agree to meet on the following Friday at 9:30 am. The women from the WNGO say merci and get up to leave, chatting with their colleagues. It is 5:00pm, and the workshop is over. I chat with the trainer for a few minutes while preparing to leave, and she tells me that the workshop today was to help those in WNGO that are interested in starting a particular project on women's rights to discuss what is needed and how to set it up. In this project, there is a need to connect women with the appropriate partners and services. The trainer says that her background is in networking, and that is what she is helping with here.*

*I found it to be an interesting experience to sit in on this workshop and observe the dynamic between the staff of WNGO and the trainer. This sharing of technical expertise is but one form of partnership, however, as will now be further explored in this chapter.*

## **Introduction**

In an increasingly globalized world, the number and variety of connections formed between civil society groups has grown substantially. Organizations mobilized by similar concerns seek to join forces with each other to strengthen their ability to improve

political and socio-economic conditions worldwide. In Senegal, local NGOs seek support for their community projects from large, well-funded international organizations that can provide necessary material resources, expertise and international connections. In return, these international organizations view Senegalese NGOs as providing the knowledge and experience they need to localize their directives and connect with the local population. While they acknowledge that much can be gained from these partnerships, these relationships sometimes involve tensions, frictions, and power imbalances as both sides try to bring together sometimes incommensurate organizational strategies and structures, as well as conflicting personalities and interests. In this chapter, I explore the global/local nexus formed by the interactions between the practitioners of local Senegalese NGOs and INGOs. Through a consideration of the literature on global civil society and North-South NGO partnerships, I will explore the connections that have developed between local and international NGO partners. This involves an examination of how and why they engage in these relationships, the experiences of individuals involved in partnerships, perceived organizational benefits and challenges, a discussion of organizational dependence and power dynamics, and a consideration of NGO concerns about the future of their work in Senegal. Thus, this chapter will explore the complex relationships that exist between these organizations and the individuals composing them as they pursue their visions for change in Senegal in a context of growing global interconnections that are fraught with both risk and possibility.

### **Global Civil Society and NGOs**

International and local organizations are increasingly seeing the need for collaboration, acknowledging that they have many shared goals and interests, and seeking to combine their strengths to improve conditions for different populations. Kaldor (2003:81) points out that most NGOs and social movements, even those with a national focus, have transnational connections. The growing importance of connections between international NGOs and local civil society has garnered attention by many scholars in recent years. Local actors are increasingly well connected and worldly, linking their struggles with transnational interests (Ferguson 2006:107). In these ties developed between international and local NGOs, local NGOs can be utilized to overcome impediments to development, and INGOs can work as intermediaries in facilitating the work of local NGOs (Fisher 1997:444). Keane's (2003:11, 17) work on global civil society envisions this interrelated non-governmental constellation of networks and actors as extending both underneath and across state boundaries, while encompassing both the potential benefits and hazards of interconnection. He sees this global civil society as a bottom-up transnational order, in which there is a realization that people are implicated in transnational webs of interdependence that are imbued with both opportunity and danger (Keane 2003:17). It involves the unprecedented growing sense within the public and NGO sector that that civilians have obligations to assist other civilians whether or not they live inside the same borders (Keane 2003:17, 35). This certainly includes growing connections between international organizations and local civil society in Africa to assist with the difficulties facing many on this continent.

## **NGOs and Partnerships**

Partnership is a common practice in the efforts of organizations seeking collaboration as a means of achieving their objectives. Given the wide variety of relationships formed between NGOs that are described as partnerships, it is useful to employ Darlow and Newby's (1997:74) basic approach to the term. In their view, "A partnership may simply be defined as an arrangement existing between two or more organisations in a commonly defined goal" (Darlow and Newby 1997:74). Today, the notion of partnership has come to play a central role in the work of NGOs, such that Lister (2000:236) states, "Partnership as a concept dominates the social policy field and has been readily incorporated into NGO practice and rhetoric." While NGO partnerships are not an entirely new phenomenon, the nature of their relationship has changed over time. Many Southern NGOs emerged in the 1960s and 70s from earlier social movements, some of whom were supported with funding, and occasionally technical assistance, by Northern organizations (Mawdsley et al. 2005:77). According to Mawdsley et al. (2005:77), "Often these relationships were highly personal in nature, and finances and procedures tended to be more informally regulated than at present." However, while Northern INGOs continue to operate and have a presence in the South, there has been a growing emphasis on their support for the work of Southern NGOs. For Hearn (2007:1099, 1101), this is in part due to concern by the end of the 1980s that a heavy white foreign presence of international financial institutions and INGOs in Africa was politically unstable given its overtones of colonialism. As a result, in the 1990s, a trend of donors directly funding local Southern NGOs emerged, and Hearn (2007: 1101) states

that INGOs "...soon found a legitimate role in the form of 'capacity building', transforming themselves into organizational consultants building up voluntary sector and thereby 'social capital' in the global South." In addition, in the growing focus on civil society and its democratizing potential, national NGOs were conceived of as important members of this third sector (Hearn 2007:1101). As a result of this support and focus on local NGOs, Mawdsley et al. (2005:78) describe, "...the emergence of a new generation of Southern NGOs", which they characterize as employing educated, middle-class and urban-based women and men, while the scope of NGOs has moved beyond disaster response and relief to include service delivery, and more recently, policy analysis and advocacy. As well, Northern NGOs have increasingly moved away from direct implementation of development projects towards acting as providers of technical and financial support for Southern partners (Mawdsley et al. 2005:78). Indeed, Northern-based INGOs continue to play a role in supplying financial assistance for local NGOs, as noted by Wallace et al.'s (2006:12) discussion of the aid chain, which refers to, "...the series of organizations and actors involved in the process of moving funds from their initial institutional source to be spent on behalf of the targeted beneficiaries in the recipient area, and the associated processes of accounting to donors for the use of these funds." While noting that most aid chains are quite complex and involve multiple actors at different levels, they provide a general example of funds flowing from a donor to a Northern INGO, which is passed on to the INGO's field office in the South, which is then dispensed to a local NGO (Wallace et al. 2006:12).

This basic structure of the flow of funding and support between organizations can be found in the Senegalese context, where INGOs are investing in and forming partnerships with local Senegalese NGOs (Michael 2004:99). While local civil society has long played a significant role in Senegal, since the 1970s, NGOs have been growing in both numbers and influence, and in the last ten years, they have increasingly been sought to assist with development in a context of state disengagement and decentralization (Michael 2004:92). Given the increasing poverty levels in the country, it is likely that Senegalese NGOs will find their role continuing to grow in the future (Michael 2004:92). This includes partnering with Northern INGOs in the country. Indeed, most operational INGOs in Senegal are involved in partnerships with local NGOs, due to pressure from donor agencies and CONGAD (Michael 2004: 98, 100).

While there are many case studies of partnerships, such as Michael's (2004) work, Morse and McNamara (2006:323) point out that there are few studies seeking to analyze the motivations driving the formation of partnerships, with consideration of how these partnerships function and what benefits may result from them. In an effort to contribute to this area of study, I will now discuss how and why these partnership ties develop, and the interactions that take place in these relationships.

## **Perspectives on NGO Partnerships**

### *Motivations for Forming Partnerships*

Generally, NGO partnerships are commonplace in Senegal and most local and international NGOs have numerous different partners at different levels. Increasingly,

such connections are sought by both sides, speaking to processes of localization by international entities and the international ties and funds sought by local associations. Indeed, Ferguson (2006:107) asks if we can learn to conceive of a grassroots that is not communal, local and authentic, but also connected, worldly and opportunistic. For Senegalese NGOs, it is often imperative to find external funding for their activities, given that they lack adequate financial support for their efforts in Senegal (INT16). Thus, they seek support from aid agencies, private donors, and INGOs from the North that have funds available for local initiatives. Many depend on this funding for their projects and programs, and often, their ability to cover their basic operating costs. As Hudock (1995:660) states, “NNGOs are the organizations from which SNGOs extract the majority of resources needed for organizational survival.”<sup>20</sup> Indeed, the staff of local NGOs frequently point out that they would be unable to carry out projects or perhaps even to exist as organizations without this funding from their INGO partners. As noted by Mariam, a Senegalese woman who works for a local NGO, they need funds from their international partners because this is how they live, how they function, and how they pay for their activities (INT29).

Such financial connections are not a new phenomenon in Senegal. According to Issa, the Senegalese representative of a NGO network that includes members from the North and South, partnerships between these organizations have occurred for a long time. He noted that Senegalese and non-Senegalese NGOs will work together in consortiums

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<sup>20</sup> NNGO refers to Northern NGO; SNGO refers to Southern NGO. As stated in the Chapter One, I interchangeably use NNGO with INGO, and SNGO with local NGO unless otherwise noted.

on such issues as education, health and water. In doing so, they hope to have a better impact. Issa pointed out that Northern NGOs make an effort to work with local NGOs, and there are financial mechanisms that favor this practice (INT85). Indeed, according to the coordinator of an INGO that has been seeking funds from aid agencies such as CIDA, “Now these aid agencies, it is almost a requirement of funding that you are collaborating with partners, whether they are international partners or whether they locally-based” (INT39).

Certainly, it is often in the best interest of INGOs to partner with local NGOs since they find that increasingly aid agencies are asking for such partnerships as a funding requirement. For example, CIDA’s Partners for Development Program is described as funding proposals submitted by Canadian organizations engaged in development activities overseas (CIDA 2010). These proposals are selected based their adherence to several guidelines, including an emphasis on working with local partners. This is evident in the program’s requirement that the proposals of Canadian organizations follow several principles, including that of development effectiveness, which involves, “Greater coordination and collaboration among partners and other actors in the field to improve synergies” (CIDA 2010). As well, organizations are required to respond to their local partners’ priorities and ensure that projects are “locally-owned”, in part by providing training so that local organizations have the ability to take a leadership role in the development and delivery of these projects (CIDA 2010). CIDA’s focus on Canadian organizations working with local groups is not a new stipulation, although a CIDA representative informed me that the emphasis on partners has become stronger over the

last ten years. He noted that in the process of providing funding, the Canadian INGO signs a contribution agreement with CIDA, and a similar agreement is signed between the Canadian INGO and its local partner. The Canadian INGO then is accountable to CIDA, and CIDA lets Canadian INGOs monitor their local partners (INT CIDA).

In addition to the financial incentive, ties also begin between NGOs out of a mutual desire to improve and expand their programs to aid the population. They seek to share experiences and work together to find solutions. As stated by Tania, a Dutch woman who works an INGO working in the field of children's issues, "In our community development work, you can never be out there in the community on your own, reinventing the wheel, doing the same programs as somebody else. It makes much more sense to combine your resources and work together" (INT39).

The desire to connect with other NGOs is based on the idea that by working in synergy with more initiatives, they can reach more of the population more effectively. According to Ibrahim, a Senegalese NGO worker, agents of development communicate with each other about their work and recognize that they cannot do it alone; together, their efforts have more strength and force. His particular NGO specializes in several areas, including reproductive health, but they often work with NGOs that focus on other areas. If they require assistance with a program, they can find other organizations to help them, and vice versa. This can be helpful in increasing the breadth of projects. Ibrahim pointed out that if his NGO is working on a campaign to fight malaria and their goal is to reach two million people, it would not be able to accomplish this on its own. It would need to collaborate with NGOs in other regions to assist with this campaign. Connecting with

other organizations is necessary to reach more people and thus be more effective in their programs than they could be alone (INT14). This resonates with the findings of Morse and McNamara (2006:323) who state that “There are a number of rationales for the desirability of partnership, but at its simplest it could be a matter of maximizing the probability of success in a development intervention.” Indeed, Issa, another Senegalese NGO employee, emphasized the importance of partnerships, noting that “Each time the resources of organizations are shared, the capacity to accompany the community in their development efforts is reinforced. It is very important for people to think together, work together, and to assist the community together in order to reinforce the influence and impact of the actions of civil society” (INT85). This exchange of resources not only includes financial support, but also the sharing of experience and knowledge through assistance with technical support, identifying best practices, and the development of human resources and lobbying activities. For the paid and volunteer staff of both local and international NGOs, there appear to be many reasons for engaging in partnerships with other NGOs, although this seeming readiness to participate in partnerships was often offset by concerns about the potential difficulties experienced in forging and maintaining such relationships, as will later be discussed.

### *The Formation and Functioning of NGO Partnerships*

#### Financial Partnerships

Given the importance of working with other NGOs, it follows that there are certain processes involved in attempting to find appropriate partners. This often involves

defining what kind of relationship is sought with other organizations, with an emphasis on working with groups that share the same vision and goals. The process of seeking partners tends to be a very structured and organized endeavor, although there are cases where fortuitous encounters have resulted in continued support and connection between organizations. Typically, the most controlled process for developing partnerships is that of funding relationships between NGOs.

Frequently, having themselves received funding from an aid agency or private source, INGOs will announce that they have funding available for a campaign on a particular issue or area, such as women's economic development, agricultural cooperatives or reproductive health. They send out requests for proposals, sometimes by directly contacting local NGOs working in a particular field or announcing it in the media, seeking to provide funds to organizations with experience and technical knowledge in the relevant area (INT79; INT87). As noted by the accountant of one local NGO, interested local organizations will respond to these requests by drafting a proposal for a project or program in a competitive process where the INGO decides with whom it prefers to work (INT29). According to a director for an American INGO, his organization prefers to partner with local NGOs and associations that work on the ground. These organizations seek financial assistance from his INGO, and determining which partner to work with depends on several factors, including if the organization shares the same mission, if the organization is representative of a population, and if his INGO is able to assist with the needs of that local organization (INT23). Once a financial partner is

selected, an agreement is then drawn up between the organizations to describe in detail the vision, objectives and specific roles and tasks involved in the partnership.

Mamadou, a young Senegalese student working for a British INGO elaborated on the process of finding NGO partners. If his INGO wants to intervene in a new area, such as Foundioune, a town in the Sine Saloum delta region of Senegal, first it will conduct a study on what the poverty situation is like in the region. To intervene in Foundioune, the INGO will explore if there are NGOs or local associations that are able to work there; they will consider these organizations and prepare an evaluation, posing questions and interviewing these potential partners. His INGO will look at how these groups are organized, if they are well structured and have good management of their finances. Based on this evaluation, the INGO will then choose their partner(s) for a particular project in Foundioune. A Memorandum of Understanding detailing the conditions to be respected will be signed by both parties. In this contract, it will state that the INGO is responsible for all of the financing for the functioning of the local partner and the project, including fees for the office, water, electricity, the telephone, etc. As well, the INGO provides some funds to motivate personnel at the local organization. Mamadou noted that this is not actually a salary, since it is too complicated to set up the salaries legally in Senegal. The money provided by his INGO motivates local staff to work better. Now, this local partner is responsible for carrying out the project in Foundioune, with the INGO providing funds and acting as a supervisor (INT50).

Sharing a similar vision and objectives were typically the criteria considered by local organizations in deciding which requests for proposals to respond to, although the

time and resources to prepare proposals also shaped their ability to apply for these funds. Adjji, a young Senegalese woman, works as an accountant for a Senegalese human rights NGO. She noted that there were many calls for proposals for her NGO to respond to, and while there is often little time, it tries to respond frequently. However, in deciding which contracts to apply for, the NGO must consider if it meets the conditions imposed by these potential partners. If not, it will move on to considering other partners (INT89).

While most financial partnerships begin through local NGOs responding to calls for proposals by INGOs, there are a few other processes that should be noted. For example, there are also cases of long-standing relationships between INGOs and local organizations, and a history of working together beneficially in the past can increase the likelihood of future partnerships. According to the director of a local NGO network, a few larger, more established local NGOs have developed long term relationships with their INGO partners, such that when the local organization develops their strategic plans defining their actions for the next several years, these plans will be presented to INGO partners, who will decide in which areas they are able to provide financial and/or technical support (INT85). In some instances, the large aid agencies, such as USAID, will also directly seek local NGOs to fund for projects, and occasionally INGOs will provide funds for local associations (INT79; INT3; INT10). More commonly, however, local NGOs seek the financial support of INGOs through a competitive process of proposal submissions, and having gained this funding, they carry out the financed projects, often through the involvement of local associations, which they may also assist with technical and financial assistance.

In terms of how financial partnerships function, most funding partnerships are built on commitment to a project or program, after which the partner relationship is up for renegotiation. This type of project-based relationship typically entails INGOs having some collaboration with the local operational NGOs on the project planning stage, while it provides the funds and the local NGO executes the project. They then act as donor agencies themselves, dispersing funds in discrete amounts over a period of time to their local NGO partners, while expecting to receive regular updates on the progress of the work. As noted by Mariam, a Senegalese woman working as an accountant for a local NGO, if their project proposal is accepted by an INGO, they get a letter from the organization that describes the model of pay to be given. For example, twenty percent of the funds might be given over a time period and the donors want progress reports on how the money is being spent. So when required, she prepares the financial reports and the coordinator writes the narrative of the report explaining the actions that took place. The donor inspects the report to see if the project is going well, and the donor decides whether to renew the funding or stop the funding and find another NGO. She noted that her NGO has never had problems with losing their funding in this way (INT29). Indeed, in their description of the flow of aid funding, Wallace et al. (2006:12) state that “Typically, proposals come up the aid chain to donors, funding and funding conditions go down the chain and later, reports come back up.” It should be noted that if the INGO perceives its funding conditions for a project to be well met and finds it works well with the local NGO, this creates the possibility of future partnerships. Thus, there is a great deal of

pressure to meet expectations in order to keep funds coming in for the current and future activities of the local NGO.

Generally, the role of the INGO donor is to provide funding for projects, and to also follow-up with monitoring and evaluation of the project, which can involve actually sending an INGO representative to visit the project site and verify the activities (INT83). However, in this funding relationship, there is a certain amount of variability depending on the organizations concerned, involving different degrees of involvement of INGOs in the planning and monitoring stages of projects. Indeed, some INGO practitioners, such as Moustafa, noted that they make efforts to have local partners participate in their long-term planning of activities, trying to make it a more interactive process rather than independently determining their priorities and dictating them to their local partners (INT38). As well, the director of a local NGO noted that some of their American INGO partners provide funding without directly being involved with the projects. Through dialogue, these partners help them develop their thinking about what they are doing, influencing the projects, but not being directly involved in them. In his view, this is a whole different kind of partnership, given the greater autonomy afforded his NGO (INT45). While there is some variation in the way that financial partnerships operate in Senegal, as described above, the basic form in which these partnerships take place in Senegal tend to involve larger organizations providing funds and essentially acting as project subcontractors for smaller organizations in the country.

#### Other Partnerships: Technical Support and Expertise

When raising the issue of partnerships with NGO practitioners in Senegal, financial partnerships were the most commonly discussed relationship between NGOs. However, many other types of partnerships also take place between NGOs, both local and international. These most commonly involve technical support and assistance, in addition to collaboration on projects and participation in networks and consortiums. These partnerships tend to begin somewhat differently than financial partnerships. For example, Arame, the coordinator of a women's NGO, noted that staff from different NGOs meet at forums based on issues related to their work and discuss their areas of interest to see how they might collaborate (INT16). Sometimes Internet research is conducted to learn more about potential partners, which can result in meetings with actors working in the same zone to see if they have similar concerns and can work together and/or assist each other in their efforts (INT16; INT10). As noted by an administrator at a local NGO that is part of an international network, "We are all here in Senegal, and the problems of Senegal concern us all. Each one seeks to know what others are doing, and if another NGO did this, or is working on the same things as we are, we call them and say we should meet or say we should work together. And we sign a partnership contract" (INT14). Often, local organizations frequently approach larger, international organizations for assistance with training and materials, such as when Samba, the president of a local association assisting youth in rural communities, requests financial, material and training support from INGOs for his projects. He pointed out that he also sends requests for medical support, and the

previous year, a Belgian NGO provided medications for a village where his association operates (INT83).

The technical assistance provided to local NGOs by INGOs is sometimes described as capacity building. According to Fanany et al. (2010:156), “While there are now many definitions of capacity building, in its most general sense the term refers to the process of developing skills, abilities, behaviours and resources within a group so that members can take control of their wellbeing and future directions.” With the aim of developing robust and sustainable systems (Potter and Brough 2004:337), capacity building is often identified with the resourcing and skilling of institutions and organizations (Fanany et al. 2010:156).<sup>21</sup> In my study, building the capacity of local NGOs sometimes occurs through donating funds and materials, but more typically through the sharing of experiences and expertise of INGO representatives, who provide training in such areas as computer skills, management techniques, basic accounting, and transparent governance. Indeed, Ife (2010:77) notes, “Training is, in many accounts of capacity building, the principle method to be employed. As well, Hudock (1995: 660) points out that NNGOs are the organizations principally involved in initiatives of capacity building for SNGOs. In this aspect of partnership, an individual may be sent to Senegal by the INGO to share their expertise on a particular issue about which the local NGO would like to know more. For example, in the partnership encounter described at the beginning of this chapter, an American expert in issues involving networking and communications was sent by an INGO to share knowledge on this topic, as well as advocacy techniques, with a local

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<sup>21</sup> The issue of capacity building with organizations and communities is further discussed in Chapter Five.

women's organization (INT24). In these cases, the INGO will send experts to share their skills with the local NGO staff through a variety of workshops, training sessions, meetings, roundtables and consultations. Julie, a middle-aged Canadian woman, was sent as a volunteer by an American INGO to teach basic accounting to representatives of a Senegalese women's association over a four-week period. This Senegalese association focuses on women's economic empowerment by assisting women in developing their own enterprises in such areas as the production and sale of fruit, vegetables, juice, cereals, and fabric. The women Julie trains in basic accounting are then expected to take this knowledge and share it with other members of this association, thus increasing the ability of the organization to manage their finances (INT19). Ife (2010: 77) describes this process as an aspect of capacity building where individuals are trained to then train others in a "train the trainer" approach. In addition, some INGOs provide assistance with capacity development through long-term volunteer placements within the local NGO itself. For example, there are several Canadian INGOs in Senegal involved in local partnerships that do not develop or run any of their own projects on the ground; they function solely to reinforce the capacity of their partner organizations to develop and manage their projects. They do this by sending volunteers with a certain knowledge or skill set to act as consultants and assist the local NGO over a period of one to two years. For example, one Canadian man volunteering with an INGO noted that he was sent to assist one of their local partners. He described his work as helping this local organization become better organized by using his background in computers and accounting to help them improve their computer systems, accounting, and proposal writing, and to assist

with capacity building (INT4). Other forms of partnership vary with the focus and activities of the organizations, but it can involve membership in networks at international, national and local levels with organizations of similar interests (INT86). As well, NGOs partner through joint efforts to organize demonstrations (INT77), coordinate and participate in workshops, presentations, and advocacy events (INT83, INT14) and collaborate on student exchanges, such as when local groups connect with overseas institutions to develop educational and cultural exchange programs (INT13).

#### *Variation and Complexity in Partnerships*

In this discussion of the functioning of NGO partnerships, I have presented a very simplified and generalized account of these relationships, which tend to operate as top-down, hierarchical relationships that largely involve financial support and efforts at capacity building through the transfer of funds, materials and expertise. This corresponds with Sarr's (2006:109, 111) study of the financial situation of NGOs in Senegal, where a 2004 survey of 135 organizations found that 41.6% received financial support from organizational partners and 43.8% received other forms of financial aid, such as subsidies, aid and gifts, while 43% received technical support in the form of training and equipment. While financial support and capacity building or technical training can be considered the principle forms of NGO partnerships in Senegal, when considering the actual, everyday interactions between NGOs and those working with them, it becomes apparent that there is a great deal of diversity in how these organizations connect with each other. Morse and McNamara (2006:327) point out that in practice, organizations

may engage in a variety of partnerships concerning multiple projects and/or programs. NGOs work with organizations at different levels, providing and receiving funding, training, and services, while collaborating on activities and supporting each other's initiatives. For example, Muhammad, a Senegalese program manager for an INGO largely operating in West Africa, described the wide array of NGO partners with whom his organization works. He noted that his INGO, which works in a variety of areas, such as agriculture, politics, and economic issues, has many different NGO partners. He described three main types of partners: strategic partners that share the same vision and cooperate on projects; partners that provide financial and institutional support; and operational partners they support by providing information, such as associations of grassroots agricultural producers. He noted that they also work with strong traditional groups such as the Muslim brotherhoods and their leaders, and see if they can develop partnerships with them. In working with a partner, his NGO has a contact person that relays information and advice between the organizations. In his own work, Muhammad meets their partners at workshops, and connects with them through the Internet, telephone, Skype, and mailing lists. It is this personal experience and interaction through organizational partnerships that will be further explored in the next section.

### *Personal Experiences with Partnerships*

It should be noted that while the literature on partnerships tends to focus on the interaction of organizations, these organizations are composed of individuals, and it is their personal experiences and expectations that shape these interactions. There is an

awareness of the primacy of personal relationships by those working on development NGO issues (Mawdsley et al. 2005:77), but approaches to analyzing inter-institutional relationships tend to ignore the role of individuals (Lister 2000:227). This is unfortunate, given that attention to the experiences of individuals engaged in NGO partnerships can reveal the dynamics underlying these relationships. Wallace et al. (2006:4) point out that individuals engaged in different points of the aid chain experience it differently; depending on the existing power relations, some find room to maneuver and negotiate, while others find very little. At one level, unequal power may not seem to be a major concern and relationships may be experienced as compatible, while it may seem restricting and coercive at another level in the aid chain where power relationships are more unequal (Wallace et al. 2006:4). In some cases, research participants in my study discussed the tensions and frustrations they encountered in their relations with partners. A variety of factors seemed to influence this, including differences related to gender, culture, and power that shape these hierarchical relationships. According to Awa, an older Senegalese woman volunteering as an administrator for a local women's association, the INGOs they partner with sometimes send volunteers to work with them. Some of these volunteers adapt and do well with her association. However, there are other volunteers that seem to have problems here and find it difficult living in Senegal, and they do not do their work. Living in Africa is a different experience, and in one case, a female volunteer from an INGO lived with an association member and did whatever she wanted, going out at any hour of the night. Both the member and Awa looked down on this behaviour, and considered it inappropriate in this context. She described this friction involving culturally

unacceptable behaviour as one of the challenges of partnerships (INT8). Indeed, while Senegal is a secular state with a certain amount of religious and ethnic tolerance (Gellar 2005:162), it is 95 percent Muslim (Ba 2006), and the behaviour of women, even those from foreign countries, is frowned upon if it does not adhere to certain rules and customs, including not staying out late at night.

Volunteers also described the tensions of navigating the relationship between INGOs and local NGOs. For example, Jeanne, a middle-aged Canadian woman, had been in Senegal for over a year, volunteering for an INGO by providing training for a local Senegalese organization. She found it was sometimes difficult working with local partners in a different culture, with different work approaches and means. Her volunteer work involves assisting a local partner on a project concerning information technology. She noted that it was sometimes challenging to deal with her INGO's expectations of what was to be accomplished and her ability to complete these tasks within the context of fewer material and financial resources provided by the local organization (INT6).

Similarly, Alex, a young Canadian man volunteering for an INGO by working with a local association, found that the partnership arrangement sometimes caused certain complications. While he has a responsibility to the local organization, providing assistance with lobbying, accounting and capacity building, the INGO that sent him to Senegal also is sort of his boss, and he has to see them every two or three weeks to report on the situation. He said it makes the situation "heavier", and there are two work environments to manage at the same time – two bosses with two different visions. Generally, however, he said he'd had a good experience thus far, and was happy for the

opportunity to work in another culture. He said that you have to adapt here, because while you think your way is the right way, in fact, you are not right because it is not your culture. He said that the help he brings is small, and he is not sure he will help very much through his volunteer work. So far he thinks he has contributed to the organization, since they now know their accounting on a daily basis due to his work. He is scared that when he leaves, they will give up the efficient use of computers and go back to the old ways of using paper for accounting purposes. In his view, some things might not succeed, but he might help with the five or six people around him, and they help him. He said this experience changes a person. It makes you more tolerant, you learn about another culture, and you appreciate how welcoming local people are. Alex noted that he likes to travel, and is it great to see the world (INT4).

However, others did not have such a positive experience with partnerships. For Abdoulaye, an older Senegalese man volunteering with a local NGO that focuses on conflict-resolution, the search for partners can be very frustrating. He said that one of the biggest disappointments they face in their organization is when a partner they agree to work with informs them at the last moment that they no longer have funds for the project. He also described visiting the U.S. with one of their INGO partners to seek more financial partners, which he referred to as “going into the forest to look for money.” In his view, while everyone agreed that his NGO is doing good work, no one put their hands in their pockets. This is also the case with another project on promoting peace amongst youth. While many agree it is a good project, his NGO has yet to obtain funds for it. He said that this is because no one is interested in writing cheques. It is up to his organization to invite

and meet with donors and partners that may be interested in participating. However, he believes they will succeed, perhaps by approaching potential partners in different fields, such as the environment, culture, or education, and maybe a consortium of partners will help to fund the project (INT86). Thus, the individuals involved in these organizations can play a role in shaping their agendas and the actions taken by the NGOs, such as Abdoulaye's decision to find a number of financial partners for his project. While much of the NGO literature focuses on theory involving organizational issues of institutional strengthening and capacity building, Lister (2000:237) suggests that NGO theory would benefit from a more actor-oriented approach, which is the approach I have endeavored to take in this research project.

### **Perceived Benefits and Challenges of Partnerships**

#### *Partnership Benefits*

In discussing their relationships with each other, the staff of both INGOs and local NGOs find that there are certain benefits, as well as challenges, involved in these partnerships. One of the most significant benefits for INGOs working with local NGOs involves collaborating with those who know the needs of the community and how to work in the local context. As noted by an employee for an American-founded local NGO, working with local NGOs allows messages to be delivered at a grassroots level and they can be made more culturally appropriate, and thus, effective. As well, INGOs can exploit the relationships and reputation of local organizations that are favorable to them for working in a particular community (INT44). INGO practitioners recognize that in

attempting to work in a particular area, it is beneficial to have the local connections, expertise and knowledge of the socio-political context that local NGOs can provide. As noted by Nancy, an INGO program manager, “The advantages I think are that the partners that are in the field – the staff that are in the field – have a much better understanding of the context. They have a long term – I think that my INGO will always be here, but we will not always be present in every one of these communities. So I think local partners have a commitment and an investment in the communities they serve, so it is a way to tap into that commitment and reach people more quickly than trying to enter a community and not be a known entity at all, and have to gain people’s trust and learn what the needs are” (INT58). Hudock (1995:660) notes that NNGOs receive knowledge of the local socio-economic situation from SNGOs, who also provide connections to grassroots organizations. By gaining local knowledge and contacts, NNGOs are able to strengthen their in-country links (Hudock 1995:660). Acknowledging that local NGOs have a certain familiarity and connection with the local population, INGOs often seek to support the projects of local counterparts by sharing their international expertise in management and specialty areas with the local NGO.

Another key advantage of partnership involves the perspective that by supporting and reinforcing the capacity of local NGOs, INGO practitioners are ensuring the continuation of assistance to the population by these local organizations once they leave. With local ties and interests, the local NGOs are likely to continue to work for the benefit of their communities should the INGO decide to no longer operate in the area (INT38).

As for local NGOs, their staff describes benefitting from the training and expertise shared by their partners who assist in reinforcing their capacity as NGOs. In addition, they value the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences with other organizations, and, as noted by Ami, a Senegalese volunteer with a local NGO that is part of an international network, sometimes they are invited by their partners to participate in international conferences with the chance to meet other groups connected with their partners (INT9). In these exchanges, they are able to gain knowledge from other groups, but also impart their experiences from the context in Senegal. Local NGOs and associations not only benefit from these efforts at reinforcing their capacity and engaging in exchanges, they also are then able to associate their organization with a larger, more influential partner on the global stage, increasing their profile, developing credibility, and building their reputation both locally and on a world scale, making them potentially more attractive for other partners and donors in the future (INT28; INT21). In developing these strategic linkages, Ferguson (2006:111) notes that local actors are connecting their local struggles with “transnationally distributed fields of interest and power.” Finally, as has already been noted, for Senegalese NGOs, the clearest benefit of partnerships with INGOs is that of financial support, which allows them to pay their staff and operational fees, and to carry out their projects; essentially, to continue to exist as service-providing NGOs.

Through partnerships, both local and international NGOs have the opportunity to harmonize their work, and build linkages and synergies, thereby being more effective in achieving their goals, which very generally involve improving the lives of the people of

Senegal (INT40). According to Lister (2000:228) "...North-South partnerships are currently seen to enable more efficient use of scarce resources, increased sustainability and improved beneficiary participation in development activities." Certainly, as noted by Bill, an employee of an American-founded local NGO, partnerships expand their reach and resources to do what they want to do, bringing in other perspectives and enriching thinking. In his view, no one is sufficient unto themselves. With partnerships, you also get feedback on your activities and approaches. He said that with a good partner, it is a fun and stimulating relationship; both grow and do good things (INT45).

### *Partnership Challenges*

There were, however, numerous challenges to partnerships with local NGOs mentioned by those working for INGOs. Maintaining control over projects was cited as a challenge, given discrepancies between the program activities funded by the INGOs and the actual activities carried out by their local partners. Sandra, an INGO director, described training local NGOs to carry out particular projects, and finding that the NGOs were not following the dictates of the program. She said that as a result of this, the activities of these local NGOs cost three times more than expected and did not have good results. Consequently, her organization has decided to carry out the projects itself, and not train other local NGOs to do them. She said, "We had a big fall out because of that kind of thing... We were accused of trying to tell them what to do. So then this is when we sort of realized, look, we can't tell other NGOs what to do. But if we want to show what our program is, then we need to do it in the right way. So we'll do our program...when we go

into a country, we will show how our program should be done. We will not say to an NGO 'Here, do whatever you want to do'. We know it doesn't work like that" (INT33). While INGOs can benefit from the reputations of their local partners, the opposite is also true; there is the risk that if a grassroots NGO cannot be transparent with their financial situation or has a programming problem, this can damage the reputation of their bigger partners and negatively reflect on these international organizations. As one woman working for an Austrian NGO stated, "It takes a lifetime to build a reputation and it can be destroyed overnight" (INT39). Certainly, while gaining from the strengths of local partners, it was also noted that their problems and issues could also become those of their INGO partners.

Both local NGOs and INGOs can encounter difficulties trying to work together through disparate orientations in their goals and approaches to projects. This can be problematic when trying to harmonize an intervention. Local NGO staff described their concerns regarding when partners deliberately try to impose their own priorities and dictate the activities of others in the attempt to get what they want done whether or not it is included in the goals or skill set of their partners (INT45). Given the asymmetrical power relationships that exist between these organizations, Lister (2000:235) states that "...it can be questioned whether there is a genuine sharing of skills, responsibility and accountability, and also whether these relationships create the type of synergy which is considered to characterize genuine partnership." As well, while a principle benefit of partnerships is the ability to accomplish more than individual organizations working alone due to a reduction in work duplication (Darlow and Newby 1997:74), NGO staff

noted that partnerships necessarily entail more bureaucracy in order to manage them. This requires greater inputs of time, energy and resources given by local NGOs and INGOs, which are not always in great supply for these organizations. For example, preparing proposals for funding in the attempt to develop financial partnerships can be a lengthy and expensive process for the staff of local NGOs, especially for smaller organizations with stretched resources given that there is no guarantee for success in this highly competitive context. As noted by the director of an American-founded local NGO, responding to requests for proposals is both costly and time-consuming. They have done it a few times, but have not been so successful at it. But they are a small organization. It takes a lot of investment of time and effort (INT45). As well, Hudock (1995: 662) notes, "...the more dependent a SNGO is on numerous actors in the external environment, the more that SNGO must concentrate its energies and resources managing the demands of these actors and interactions with them." This pulls SNGOs away from their own agendas and can prevent them from effectively and efficiently functioning as development organizations (Hudock 1995:662). Certainly, for the staff of numerous local NGOs, the ability to pursue their own agendas is of great concern, and one of the greatest challenges they perceive in partnering with INGOs involves issues of financial dependence and the autonomy and sustainability of their organizations. It is this matter that will be further explored in the following section.

### **Power Dynamics: Concerns about Financial Dependence**

While financial support is considered the most substantial benefit of partnerships for local NGOs, this financial dependence on international partners is also viewed as one of their most daunting challenges (INT29). Sarr (2006:111) points out that unlike NGOs in the West, Senegalese NGOs do not have sympathizers or members in their home country that regularly participate in funding their activities, and few attempt to raise funds from within their organizations. Rather, they depend on the Senegalese state and external private or public partners for financial aid, which severely limits their autonomous development (Sarr 2006:111). In my study, participants voiced their concern that this financial dependence affects their ability to maintain control of local projects. It also threatens the durability and sustainability of projects once that funding is no longer available, raising questions about the long-term effectiveness of some of these initiatives. Funding partners have the ability to stop funds for programs and projects when they are not pleased with the progress or at their own discretion. This leads to a great deal of uncertainty for local NGOs and pressure to produce results and follow the dictates of their INGO partner. As Sarr (2006:112) notes in her description of the power of financial partners, “Senegalese NGOs are kept in leash by the power of money.” She describes financial partners as exerting control over receiving NGOs through compulsory reports and evaluations of how the financial aid is used (Sarr 2006:112). INGOs not only have the power of funding, but also superior communication channels and connections to global knowledge networks, and they often use this power to set the conditions and terms of funding and accountability for local partners (Wallace 2006:4-5). For instance, Abdou,

the Senegalese director of an American-founded local NGO commented that each partner has their own reality, their own objectives, demands, and personality. Sometimes in partnerships, one is very limited. The partner wants you to do something specific, and they want to do the rest. It is not always possible to follow actions goal by goal (INT49). As noted by a Senegalese man working for another American-founded local NGO, on the ground, they can encounter difficulties in implementing the program, and if they do not overcome these obstacles, their partner will stop the funding (INT46). According to Hudock (1995:656), given that organizations require resources, in order to survive they must interact with those who control these resources. This renders organizations dependent on their environment since the control of these resources is located outside of their organization (Hudock 1995:656). As she states, “While no organization is entirely self-sufficient, some exist in more dependable environments than others. Organizations experience uncertainty when those controlling resources are undependable... This uncertainty threatens an organization’s effectiveness and even survival” (Hudock 1995:656).

It is these issues that pervaded the thoughts of those working in the Senegalese NGO sector. Ami, a Senegalese woman in her thirties, volunteers and works with several organizations, including an American educational institution, a Senegalese sustainable development NGO, and a microfinance institution providing loans to Senegalese entrepreneurs. She noted that when her sustainable development NGO tries to develop projects, it requires the means to obtain goods. It finds partners with money for projects. Often, the Northern partners finance and provide the means for the Southern partners’

projects. In her view, this should involve giving something concrete, not just money. The North helps the South, and often the South has the idea it wants to implement. She said that for her, it was not just about the North giving money, since there is a Chinese proverb that when you teach someone how to fish it is better than just giving them a fish. North partners also give expertise. Ami's view corresponds with the project of capacity building, which employs a 'helping people to help themselves' approach involving the transfer of skills and knowledge along with local control and participation (Kenny and Clarke 2010:4). In addition, Ami noted that it should not only be North supporting South, but Southern partners supporting Southern partners, and Northern partners supporting Northern partners, highlighting the need to reconsider hierarchical organizational relationships. For Ami, it can be an unfortunate situation when an NGO thinks they are helping, giving money, but instead it creates dependence, and if the money stops flowing, there is nothing. She said that lots of NGOs come and give money, but when the money stops, the project stops (INT9).

The power dynamics at play between local NGOs and INGOs are also apparent to the staff of INGOs. According to Hudock (1995:663), they are generally aware of the power of NNGOs in relation to SNGOs and that SNGOs are in a disadvantaged position as a result. However, they are not necessarily sympathetic to this situation, and some INGO staff in my study view local NGOs as entangled in a context of aid dependency that they have, in part, encouraged and pursued. For Alex, an INGO volunteer assisting a Senegalese association, the problem of dependence on the external funding of partners was in part due to the orientation of local organizations. In his view, the country has

gotten used to receiving foreign money, and the Senegalese government seemed to think it was easier to look for finances than to organize the population. He said that many NGOs here feel the same way, and they also make a career out of donations. However, they are only able to help a few people given the poor exchange rate. Alex stated that these NGOs do the same as the government; they go to Europe, North America, and Asia to find money. It is easy for an organization to get money in Senegal because it is so stable. Some abuse this situation. For example, one can create an organization to get funding. Then one can live well and buy nice clothes, a nice car, etc. However, the organization's project is not sustainable without foreign money (INT4). Certainly, there are scholars who agree with the assessment that the flow of funding from North to South has created a situation of dependency for NGOs in countries of the South. For Hearn (2007:1107-1108), it is a complex, two-way process where, "Foreign aid to Southern NGOs has created a social group that is dependent on external resources and patronage and in return is central to and popularizes Northern development policy." Local NGOs are dependent on this flow of external funding, which encourages them to follow the conditions and development agendas of their Northern INGO partners who access and distribute funding from larger aid agencies. Sarr (2006:112) finds that since local NGOs are unable to guarantee funds for their own projects or other autonomous activities, they tend to be focused on finding funding rather than finding appropriate partners. They can find themselves giving priority to issues of other institutions instead of working on more relevant concerns for national development, or abandoning projects that are not on a donor's agenda (Sarr 2006:112).

*Financial Dependence: Alternative Encounters*

Their unequal abilities to control resources are some of the main forces shaping partnerships between local NGOs and INGOs. As Hudock (1995: 657) states, “Control over resources provides organizations with power over those organizations seeking access to that resource.” However, it should be noted there are some cases in my research where local NGOs are not bound to the INGOs funding them, and have a degree of autonomy. A middle-aged Senegalese man with a background in law noted that his local organization, which trains local government actors, had backed out of project developed with an American INGO when it decided to change the terms of the contract (INT79). Rather than participate in a project with terms they disagree with, they terminated this agreement. As Lister (2000:5) notes, “Resistance shows that NGOs are not simply clones of the aid industry and they can take independent action in opposition to the dominant development paradigms.” Thus, African NGO independence, autonomy and subversion of donor agendas do exist, despite the structural constraints these NGOs face (Hearn 2007:1104). Indeed, in the case of a local women’s association, the administrator noted that due to their desire to prioritize working on women’s economic issues, they experienced conflict with an INGO partner that wanted them to develop a project focusing on violence against women. As a result, the association ended the partnership and found another INGO partner for their economic projects (INT8). Interestingly, Michael (2004:96) has suggested that Senegalese NGOs have a relatively powerful position with their INGO partners compared to the NGOs of other African countries, given that they are able to turn down donor funding. This is not because they are not in need of funding, but because

Senegal receives a great deal of official development assistance, with many donors and INGOs investing in local NGOs, such that local NGOs are able to find funding sources elsewhere if one source offers unfavorable terms (Michael 2004:97). However, while there might be a number of funding sources available, they are mostly external international organizations, and the external environment can be quite unstable and undependable (Sarr 2006:110, 114). As Sarr (2006:114) states, "...for now, NGOs remain overwhelmingly dependent on external funding, especially international donors," and international support and solidarity is far from guaranteed.

Certainly, there are further nuances to consider in this discussion of power and dependence in partnerships between local NGOs and INGOs. While power is considered to rest with donors and NNGOs due to their control of financial resources, it should be noted that NNGOs are also dependent on donors for these resources (Lister 2000:232), which can also be unreliable. Indeed, in the middle of an interview with Jean-Marc, a French director of an INGO country office, he received a phone call from a staff member. He chatted on the phone for several minutes, and I heard him comment about his surprise at the "bad news" before he hung up the phone and continued answering my questions. At the end of the interview, we discussed the impact of the financial crisis on NGOs in Senegal, and he informed me that the phone call earlier had been about a huge government grant from USAID they were expecting. He explained that he had just learned that they lost this funding, and he remarked that competition was becoming fiercer due to the growing scarcity of funds. Thus, INGOs also face financial uncertainty, and Hudock (1995:665, f.n.10) points out that most NNGOs also rely on resources from

undependable external environments, involving official aid agencies, governments, income generating projects and the public (Hudock 1995:665, f.n.10). While these environments are more dependable and stable than those of SNGOs, they can still be unreliable, which hinders the ability of NNGOs to predictably interact with SNGOs (Hudock 1995:665, f.n.10). Thus, INGOs can be caught in the middle as receivers and distributors of funding, and the unpredictability that INGOs encounter in securing resources is passed along to the local NGOs they support.

While local NGOs and organizations can be considered institutionally, organizationally and financially weak, these local groups are aware of this situation (Sarr 2006:112). In my study, this resulted in efforts by some to avoid the unpredictability and conditionality of financial partnerships altogether. Babacar, a young Senegalese founder of a local association working on projects integrating education, culture and media, noted his desire for the organization to remain financially autonomous. For his recently formed association, he is seeking structural partners, not financial partners, since he does not want the organization to be limited or dependent on a financial partner. He prefers to have a structural partner to reinforce their efforts. For example, he would like a partner to help reinforce their work, assist with materials, and help them with finding their own meeting space. The rest they can do themselves. They have human resources. He does not want to enter into a situation where his association works for a partner. They do not want to create different objectives because of a partnership (INT32).

Similarly, the American director of an American-founded local NGO pointed out their desire not to engage in a financial relationship with local partners, such as

associations. He noted that his organization does not provide funding to its local organizational partners, half-jokingly stating that this, "...is one of the strengths of the organization, because money is the devil." In his view, money can falsify relationships whereas a technical assistance relationship is very real. He claimed that "When money comes in, people start posturing and positioning in order to acquire that money. And the funding sort of deforms the natural relationship. So we've tended to avoid funding and to concentrate on different forms of technical assistance, on networking. We do a lot of networking, helping groups get in touch with other groups they need in order to function better. Documentation, organizational development, and then actual technical communication training and information and knowledge strengthening on health related subjects... That whole package instead of fundraising has been our main focus" (INT45). Thus, some have attempted to bypass the negative aspects of financial dependence by removing the funding aspect from the partnership altogether.

*Power Dynamics: Critique of Partnerships*

Given the concerns about financial dependence and the power differentials experienced by those engaged in NGO partnerships, a critical literature has developed related to this field. This includes some of the literature mentioned above that describes and analyzes the interactions and resource dependence between local NGOs and INGOs. For Michael (2004:4), the presence of INGOs in Africa has played a role in preventing NGOs in the South from gaining power. Further, North-South partnerships have been criticized as being an idea imposed by the North, tied with the need for Northern NGOs

and aid agencies to establish legitimacy for their work in the South and demonstrate their role in bringing ‘added value’ to the development process (Lister 2000:229). Some scholars go further with their critiques of partnership. Wallace et al. (2006:2) point out that too often, aid follows routes and involves practices that both mirror and reinforce structural inequalities, the same inequalities that it seeks to challenge. Building on Ferguson (1990), Lister (2000:235) states that “It is my contention that one of the instrument effects of the discourse of partnership is the adaptation of the power framework and the creation of a slightly changed reality, which serves to hide the fundamental power asymmetries within development activities and essentially maintain the status quo.” In Lister’s (2000:235) view, given the context of an increasingly capable and vociferous Southern voice, NNGOs and donors have adopted a discourse of partnership and the concept of capacity building with the aim of maintaining stability by incorporating this voice into dominant structures. However, there are tensions evident in this practice of partnership and capacity building given the emerging competition between partners as local NGOs seek funding sources traditionally the domain of INGOs. This was the situation described by Erica, an American director of an INGO, who noted that eight years ago, it began a partnership with a small local health NGO. This NGO is now a key actor at the national level, and lately, she found their relationship with them has been a little frustrating. This was because this NGO is now able to compete with her INGO for funding. She felt that her organization needed to come to terms with this, and view it as an achievement, not as a frustration. Still, her organization no longer has the biggest budget amongst their partners in this field due to capacity building and other

donors coming in, and this affects the psyche of her staff. They need to feel that they are doing as much as they can and continue to be seen and treated as a key partner with something to offer (INT61). Thus, greater tensions may emerge as these partnerships mature and local organizations are increasingly able to compete for funds with INGOs, suggesting that in the future, it may be difficult to continue this discourse and practice of partnerships and capacity building as they now occur.

Given these critical assessments of partnerships, some suggest the need for a change in approach to these relationships. Lister (2000:237) notes that collaboration between organizations should not necessarily be considered a partnership, and they take time and effort to develop and maintain. In her view, for the ties between organizations to be effective, they must be carefully managed (Lister 2000:237). There needs to be a clear understanding between partners of what partnership entails, and its affects on practice (Lister 2000:237). According to Michael (2004:3), “For too long, the international development community has accepted the reality of unequal power relationships between the North and the South.” However, it has been suggested that NNGO partners can play a role in addressing these power imbalances. For Hudock (1995:665), NNGOs can assist in strengthening the capacity of SNGOs to effectively interact with their external environment, and can attempt to decrease their control of SNGOs by re-examining and changing the roles they tend to play in terms of access and control of resources in these relationships. Hudock (1995:665) sees the potential advantages of capacity building programs if they are able to strengthen the management capabilities of SNGOs, giving them more leverage in their interactions with other organizations. She points out that a

critical issue in partnerships involves what happens to SNGOs when NNGOs disengage (Hudock 1995:665). In her view, “NNGOs should be clear about their intentions before interacting with SNGOs and be as forthcoming as possible about the resource availability and duration of the relationship” (Hudock 1995:665). Indeed, she highlights the importance of access to information about partners, given that the survival of a SNGO depends not only on their own capacities, but also on their knowledge of NNGOs. Thus, by openly providing information to SNGOs, NNGOs can play a role in enhancing the capacity of their local partners, and attempt to remedy the disadvantaged position of SNGOs in partnership interactions (Hudock 1995:663,665). Interestingly, none of these scholars suggest the dissolution of North-South partnerships as a possible solution, suggesting that despite the challenges, they still view these NGO partnerships as potentially providing substantial benefits.

### **Future NGO Challenges: the Financial Crisis**

Given the growing world financial crisis emerging during the course of this research, discussions with NGO staff often led to the future of NGOs themselves in Senegal. Many anticipate a decrease in international funding with both private and public sectors more reluctant to donate to NGOs. Given their dependence on this funding, this decrease causes them to worry about being able to implement their programs. A Senegalese manager an American-founded local NGO described the financial crisis as “poison” for the NGOs, stating that most NGOs cannot function without the funding of international organizations. Without this, NGOs will disappear (INT41). As Hudock

(1995:663) point out, NGOs entangled in vulnerable webs of interdependence are unable to deal with unforeseen shocks to the system.

Certainly, some NGO practitioners have noted that the financial crisis has already had an impact in Senegal, including those that have already felt the effects on their operations. For example, the employee of a large British INGO described an upcoming meeting where they would discuss the possibility of closing offices and laying people off due to the expected drop in funding (INT38). Another large European INGO has decided to slow down the activities of its eight-year plan due to economic uncertainty, stopping all new construction on their current projects (INT39). Abdou, the Senegalese director of a local NGO, anticipated a period of crisis for local organizations in terms of continuing their operations with less financial support from their international partners (INT49). In Hudock's (1995:662) view, "The greater the level of connectedness, the more uncertain and unstable the environment for that organization." Given the dependence of local NGOs and INGOs on external financing, there was generally a great sense of anxiety about the negative effect of the financial crisis on access to funds. Feeling quite pessimistic about the situation, Fatima, a program director for an INGO, noted that donors would now be more demanding with reports to justify funds, and require greater accountability. In her view, finding funds will be more difficult, and in Senegal, INGOs give funds to local NGOs, so if they have less, there is less for local organizations. She said that NGOs are dependent on public aid, and if there is no longer aid, they will not pursue their activities for change. Everyone will say they are unable to do anything because there is no money. She is worried that with less money, there will be no action by

NGOs, since they think they need money to do things, and without it, they do nothing (INT63).

Despite the anticipated difficulties, there are others who view the crisis as an opportunity to review the expenditures and practices of their NGOs. A young American woman named Tina who volunteers for a Senegalese NGO described the situation as a way to effectively pick out those NGOs who have ingenuity and those do not. She cited her NGO as an example of this. The decrease in their funds due to the financial crisis has put their community projects in jeopardy. To deal with this situation, they have recently decided to open a cultural centre offering language and cultural programs as another source of revenue. She notes that in this challenging financial situation, her NGO is diversifying, and it is important to be able to adapt (INT35). Indeed, Sarr (2006:112) points out that “NGOs know they can no longer count solely on public funding. Some NGOs diversify their funding sources by mobilizing local resources...” While they lack expertise in these areas, she notes that there numerous fundraising activities possible for them, including using profits earned from their own economic activities, seeking sponsorship by private enterprises, and using artists or singers to organize fundraising events for their development programs (Sarr 2006:112-113). As well, some local NGOs, such as that of Abdoulaye, discussed above, pursue a strategy of seeking multiple donors for the same project rather than relying on one large funding commitment from one donor. To this, Hudock (1995:661) points out that “...one way organizations may avoid external control is by fostering multiple actor linkages to garner critical resources.” For one young Senegalese NGO employee, it is more about how you use the funding you can

access, not about how much of it there is (INT40). Another local NGO worker, Issatou, shared this viewpoint. She is an older Senegalese woman volunteering as the secretary general of a women's association, and she noted that the financial crisis is difficult for NGOs, since they depend somewhat on their international partners. However, in her view, NGOs here also have accomplishments, and they should know how to capitalize on all of their abilities to effectively deal with the crisis. They need to evaluate the situation, manage their resources well, and continue to work. As well, they need to not rely on international development partners all of the time. They should know how to create resources for themselves (INT30). This perspective underlines Sarr's (2006:114) assessment of the NGO situation in Senegal, which tellingly predates the financial crisis. As she states, "Ultimately NGOs must work towards mobilizing their social bases and strengthening alternative sources of funding in order to achieve maximum financial autonomy even while requiring international support" (Sarr 2006:114). Clearly, the current financial crisis will push NGOs in Senegal to reconsider their dependence on external funding partners, and the role they wish to play in this aid chain of unequal interconnection and interdependence.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discussed how partnerships between INGOs and local NGOs are part of the constellation of global civil society connections being formed between non-governmental actors. Partnerships have come to play a significant role in the work of NGOs, as is the case for many NGOs operating in Senegal, who seek greater connections

to financial resources, as well as local and international realms of influence and knowledge. These partnerships tend to involve financial and/or technical support flowing from INGOs to local NGOs and associations, although there is some variation in these relationships as NGOs work with different organizations at different levels. In discussing these partnerships, I also describe some of the personal experiences of NGO practitioners engaged in these relationships to highlight how individual actors can shape the complex interactions between organizations. While there are many benefits to NGO partnerships, including sharing resources, knowledge and contacts, along with the coordination and continuation of projects, there are also some significant challenges. These include concerns about control over projects, asymmetrical power relationships, and the potential for financial dependence. As a result, some NGOs have sought greater financial autonomy from their more powerful INGO partners. Both INGOs and local NGOs, however, are bound up in systems of unreliable funding that make their continued existence uncertain.

In the critical literature on NGO partnerships, the unequal relationship between NGOs from the North and South are highlighted, while it is suggested that Northern INGOs are applied as a stabilizing force for the increasingly vocal Southern NGO voice. Some critics have suggested the need for greater attention to addressing these power imbalances and creating more openness between NGO partners. As well, in considering the connections and contestations of Senegalese and international organizations aspiring to improve the socio-economic situation in Senegal, it becomes more evident that this increasing interconnection between them brings many advantages, but also the potential

for greater fragility, as weaknesses at one scale may quickly be transmitted to others. This can be seen with the financial crisis, which affects not only the larger, international organizations, but also the local actors that are particularly dependent on these INGOs for external financial resources. Thus, while the NGO sector in Senegal, and indeed the country itself, are increasingly pursuing and becoming engaged in these international interconnections, they experience both the associated benefits, risks and constraints in this global intersection of development.

## Chapter Five - Inside NGOs: Critiques, Concerns and Capacity

### Building

#### Danica and the Children's Centre

*I met Danica through an acquaintance that suggested I contact her association. After arranging to meet up over email, we agreed to meet at a bank near her building, and then walk over to her office for the interview. A young, white woman from Germany, she has light-blond hair and a tan that is more red than bronze because of her pale skin. Deciding that it is easier for both of us to speak in English, we chat along with each other as we walk down the narrow sandy street to her office, a tall, narrow pink building with young Senegalese children playing and running around in the front. Danica decides to give me a brief tour of the centre where she volunteers with the 60-80 street children who visit every day. Approximately 60 of the children who stop by the centre are talibé, who are mostly boys between the ages of 5-18 who are sent by their families to Dakar to study with marabouts, or Muslim religious teachers. These talibé often end up begging on the street for money given that some of these marabouts are financially unable or unwilling to provide for all of their needs.<sup>22</sup> Another group of children that use the centre's services are those with single mothers who have to work during the day. The centre is an initiative of an association developed by a German woman, but today it is run by both Senegalese and non-Senegalese staff.*

*On our tour, Danica shows me a small room where kids nap and have lessons, as well as a small office area with papers and boxes scattered on and around a wooden desk with a computer. Danica says it is always a bit messy like this because they do not have enough space. On the other side of the hallway, there is a roofless room that is for taking care of wounds and treating health problems, since street children tend to have skin and feet problems given that few have shoes or shoes that fit well, and they often sleep on the ground. Next to this room is a shower room so that they can wash themselves and brush their teeth. We then visit the kitchen, which has a large tile counter and a gas cooker on the floor. Here, they prepare breakfast and lunch for the street children who stop in everyday. Then Danica and I walk up some stairs to the roof where they have a room designed like a thatch hut that she says is new and supposed to be used for lessons and/or workshops. At the centre, they provide classes teaching French and math and have workshops involving colouring, football etc. They might sometimes go on excursions,*

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<sup>22</sup> Perry (2004) provides a thoughtful discussion on the efforts of NGOs and global civil society regarding talibés in Senegal and the discourses they produce on children's rights. She suggests that while these organizations tend to use depoliticizing and technocratic language in the attempt to avoid accusations of cultural imperialism, underpinning the talibé movement are ethnocentric views highly critical of marabouts and those supporting this practice.

*such as visiting the beach. Sometimes the centre gives children new clothing and toothbrushes. The centre is closed at around 6:00pm; the kids do not sleep there overnight.*

*Danica is very engaging and interested in talking about her volunteer work. In Germany, Danica studied international development and she wanted to work in humanitarian action, but she could not find employment in this sector. She decided she needed more experience working in this area in order to get a job, so she decided to volunteer abroad. Through some relatives, she got in contact with a small German organization that runs this centre for street children in Dakar, and she has been volunteering here for the last six months.*

*During the interview, I ask about the goals of the association, and Danica tells me that through the centre, they seek to improve the lives and well being of talibé and street children. Their aim is to offer a better life and education, preparing them for a better future and helping them escape poverty. While Danica is very forthcoming about her work, I notice that she sometimes pauses or glances away from me when she responds to my questions, and I begin to feel like there is something more to her experience, something bothering her, that we are not discussing. Closer to the end of the interview, her conflicted feelings about her work are finally expressed. She tells me she gets the feeling of having to accept the situation the way it is, such as with children being beaten, which is often a problem experienced by street children, including some talibés. On this issue, she shares with me that “...the only thing we can do is we take care of wounds, but that doesn't really change something. It's really hard. And although we really try to speak with the marabouts and to really change something, it's really hard to change something. And sometimes [we're] a little bit afraid of – ok, we are offering food to children, maybe a little of education, but it does it really help? Does it really change something? For one point of view, I think ok, I know it's going slowly, and you need to accept that it takes time. But from another point of view, I'm sometimes a little bit afraid – like, ok, maybe we should really work in another way to really change something. But it's really hard, because this system with the marabout is just so traditional. But, from another point of view, I also think it's not possible to just arrive here and say “ok people, change this.” Of course, that's not possible. You have to really take care and take into account the local point of view, the cultural setting. These kinds of things. But...it's from two points of view. From one point of view, you are like “ok, what am I doing? I'm taking care of a wound.” And afterwards, he's going back to the marabout, and the marabout beats him again. So what did I change? So that's a little bit – but that's more from me, personally.” She tells me that last week, she was cleaning the wounds of a talibé after he was beaten by a marabout. Danica was upset and frustrated to find later that this same boy continues to be beaten. She wonders if she is really helping. She said that they sometimes talk to the guardians of these children and tell them not to hit the kids, but to give them a time out instead. But they tell the guardians that if they have to hit, they should hit them on their hands, not the back of their necks, since hitting on the back of the neck can be fatal. As she says this, we both sort of grimace. I comment that it must be hard to have to say this. She said yes, but it can kill a child if they are hit on the back of their neck.*

*At the end of the interview, Danica adds that there are some aspects of her volunteer work that she feels positive about. For example, when it was cold at night a few months ago, the kids were cold in the morning, and it was nice to give them hot tea and warm clothing. She says that in class, you can see their development and that they learn, and you are doing something for them, something they can use for their future. She notes that education is important for development of the future. She then tells me, “Ok, maybe it’s not that much, but at least they are learning something, and I really think it’s something they can use afterwards for their future” (INT60).*

## **Introduction**

While those engaged in NGO work were often proud of the achievements and aims of their organizations and hopeful for the future of their organizations and that of Senegal, there were frequently concerns and questions raised about the management of NGOs in the country. Given the recent critical portrayals of NGOs in the academic literature, it is useful to explore the critical views of those actually engaged in NGO work. In this chapter, I consider the discourses of NGO staff, focusing on their critiques and concerns, as well as significant themes associated with their NGO work in Senegal, including the bureaucracy and hierarchy of NGOs, the desire to incorporate private-sector activities, and the emphasis on capacity building and the authority of experts. By engaging with their critiques of NGO work, I aim to delve more deeply into their perceptions and approaches to this field. I find that concerns about the proper management of organizations and the population are a focal point for NGO staff who function as management experts, focusing on awareness and capacity building activities to assist local populations in improving their ability to manage their lives and livelihoods.

### **Scholarly Critiques of NGOs**

In much of the recent academic literature, particularly that stemming from authors in the fields of sociology, political science, critical theory, and international development, discourse on the work of NGOs overseas has been highly critical. Scholarly discourse involving the analysis and critique of NGOs is a relatively new phenomenon. Hearn (2007:1096) points out that until the mid-1990s, the literature on NGOs included little from independent academics, and mostly involved contributions from the development policy-making community and NGO practitioners discussing their alternative efforts involving “bottom-up” development. In the mid-1990s, literature critical of NGOs started to emerge, and a substantial critical literature had been established by the mid-2000s (Hearn 2007:1096). However, Hearn (2007:1096) points out that this criticism remains under-theorized, and continues to be an outside perspective in a discourse that is relatively hegemonic.

The critiques of NGOs in the academic literature can be particularly scathing, ranging from discussions about their depoliticizing nature, to comparison of their work to that of missionaries and colonial powers. Scholars such as Petras (1999:429, 434), a sociologist, have described NGOs as working to depoliticize situations in favour of molding the population into ignoring systemic causes of inequality and poverty. In his view, like past agents of imperial ruling classes, NGOs are a new social institution engaged in the control and ideological mystification of exploited people (Petras 1999:429). For Petras (1999:434), NGOs focus their efforts on local activities, and their empowerment never reaches beyond using limited resources to influence small areas of

social life within the conditions sanctioned by the macro-economy and neoliberal state. As he states, “Their ideology and practice diverts attention from the sources and solutions of poverty (looking downward and inward instead of upward and outward).” As well, he accuses NGOs of accomplishing little of their proposed claims that they fight inequality and poverty, citing a direct relationship between the decline in living standards and the growth of NGOs (Petras 1999:430). Consequently, he asserts that “...the proliferation of NGOs has not reduced structural unemployment, massive displacements of peasants, nor provided livable wage levels for the growing army of informal workers” (Petras 1999:430).

Scholarly views of those working for the organizations are equally negative. Petras (1999:43) describes NGO directors as driving expensive SUVs and living in fashionable homes tended by servants and gardeners, while they spend more time at international conferences on poverty rather than visiting the small villages they aim to assist (Petras 1999:430). Hanlon (2004:382) also notes that the elite in aid recipient countries have financially benefited from the administration of aid, a group that includes consultants, local aid agency staff, government officials, and the staff of NGOs engaged in contracts with international agencies. Such views have led some to suggest that NGO practitioners represent the “new compradores”, an analytic category created by radical scholars in the 1960s and 1970s to refer to the Southern bourgeoisie that depend on the international bourgeoisie for their position and resources (Hearn 2007:1098). In this sense, the comprador operates in the interests of international capitalism, while working against the interests of the local popular classes (Hearn 2007:1098).

Similarly, some scholars have compared the work of NGOs to that of missionaries during previous eras. Manji and O’Coill (2002:568) describe NGOs in Africa as continuing the work of voluntary organizations and missionaries during Europe’s colonization of Africa. In their view, NGOs contribute marginally to the fight against poverty, while significantly undermining the efforts of African people to free themselves from social, economic and political oppression (Manji and O’Coill 2002:586). They note that “Development NGOs have become an integral, and necessary, part of a system that sacrifices respect for justice and rights. They have taken the ‘missionary position’—service delivery, running projects that are motivated by charity, pity and doing things for people (implicitly who can’t do it for themselves), albeit with the verbiage of participatory approaches” (Manji and O’Coill 2002:581). Still, they suggest that the co-optation of NGOs to the neoliberal cause was not intentional or a purposeful plan, but rather a coincidence in ideologies (Manji and O’Coill 2002:581).

The perspective that NGOs are operating as missionaries for Western agendas supports the notion that NGO work is simply a more recent form of colonialism, although perhaps even more insidious given its message of fighting against poverty. For Petras (1999:434), this new colonialism can be seen in how NGO projects are designed to meet the priorities and guidelines of imperial institutions and centres, and then “sold” to communities (Petras 1999:434). Evaluations are then carried out for, and sometimes by, these imperial institutions. As he states, “Shifts of funding priorities or bad evaluations result in the dumping of groups, communities, farmers and cooperatives. Everybody is increasingly disciplined to comply with the donor’s demands and their project evaluators”

(Petras 1999:434).

Such critiques of NGOs, aid, and development work have led some to suggest alternatives, from providing the poor with small amounts of money (Hanlon 2004), to phasing out aid entirely (Moyo 2009). None of the NGO staff in my study described such strategies as viable alternatives, although many did share their concerns about NGO work in Senegal.

## **NGO Staff Critiques and Concerns**

### *Critiques of the NGO System*

The NGO staff participating in this study shared many criticisms of the NGO context in Senegal. Much of this criticism, however, focused on problems of poor management and corruption, either described as a general problem or viewed as a challenge of partnering with other NGOs. Rarely did participants cite concerns about the operations of their own NGOs, which, as previously stated, is likely due to concerns about negatively portraying their organization to an outsider, and apprehension related to breaches in confidentiality and possible disciplinary action. As well, participants occasionally discussed issues such as the strict conditions set by donors and NGO partners, or the potential for foreign aid to cause dependency, as noted in Chapter Four. However, criticism rarely went further to include a critical reflection concerning the nature of NGOs as agents of improvement and their role in the current socio-economic and political context. It should be noted that there were several cases where individuals did share their concerns about these areas, and some of the issues they raised will now be

explored.

Those few who did reflect on the problematic nature of NGOs tended to focus on the challenges of having a significant impact, the limits of NGO interventions, and issues of accountability. Indeed, as shown in Danica's account at the beginning of this chapter, some NGO practitioners discussed their frustration with the difficulty of having real political impact or creating significant change in people's lives through their NGO work. This made Danica question the effectiveness of her organization and its ability to really change the lives of street children beyond offering some comfort and respite during this vulnerable time in their lives. To a certain extent, the challenges of making a significant and sustainable impact on the population are directly related to the short-term approach taken by many NGOs. Some participants were skeptical about the degree of long-term impact that NGOs can create through the limited focus of their projects. Andrea is a young American woman studying international development, and she was volunteering with a local NGO in order to gain experience in this area. She noted that NGOs tend to operate more on a year-to-year basis or the time that it takes to complete the projects. However, she pointed out that development does not happen in one or two years; it can take ten or twenty years. She hopes organizations can last that long (INT54). Ebrahim (2003:2) defends NGOs for their short-term focus, pointing out that international funders encourage this by implementing short-term reporting mechanisms for NGOs with the aim of monitoring the impacts of their work and having financial accountability. However, he notes that "...monitoring systems are a source of considerable tension between NGOs and their funders, since funders often wish to see evidence of quick 'success' in the programs

they fund, even though poverty alleviation and social change are likely to be slow processes” (Ebrahim 2003:2).

The current system of financial aid involving brief interventions by outside organizations was also criticized by Janice, an older, outspoken American woman who has lived in Senegal for the last eleven years. Now working as a director of a Senegalese NGO, she was quite critical of the NGO development situation in Senegal, and the focus of NGOs on acquiring funding. In her view, “NGOs now operate sort of like seals leaping for fish of doubtful quality to keep funding for programs that are designed in ways that don’t work. I’m not sure how useful the whole – see, the whole paradigm is... this fraudulent myth that if you put in a little aid and you disappear, something is going to continue after you’re gone.” Janice noted that no one would buy this in industrialized countries, where everything has a follow-up and a follow-on, and government agencies are set up to continue projects on a permanent basis. She was concerned about the sustainability of projects, noting that NGOs often do not sufficiently organize local communities to continue their programs. As she stated, “I think the NGO paradigm is made to self-destruct...I think this NGO/aid paradigm, and to be here for 2, 3, 4 years and then to expect people to do anything whatsoever on their own, is a bunch of crap. And I think that most of the NGOs are so used to it that they think like that, just like most Americans think that they have to consume to keep the economy going. Paradigms don’t work. So we’re working on some others.” Janice also pointed out that NGO work is mostly top-down, with big NGOs choosing where they work and not allowing local people decide if they want to work with them (INT53). Thus, Janice was skeptical of the

ability of local groups to continue projects imposed on them by these outside interests. Concerns about the sustainability of projects funded by international organizations and dependence on financial aid are further discussed in Chapter Four.

Indeed, some NGO practitioners grapple with the issue of local responsibility for projects. As noted by one American woman volunteering with a Senegalese NGO, an issue of major concern for NGOs involves the matter of their accountability. This is because there is always a question of who the NGO is accountable to – the funder, the organization, or the clients (INT54). For those providing academic critique of NGOs, the answer to this question is clear. According to Kamat (2004:156), unlike state bureaucracies and governments, no mechanisms are in place to make NGOs accountable to the people they aim to serve. In fact, Petras (1999:433) explicitly states that “Their programs are not accountable to local people but to overseas donors who "review" and "oversee" the performance of the NGOs according to their criteria and interests.” He also points out that one of the key tasks of self-appointed NGO officials is to design proposals in order to secure funding, which often involves determining the issues of highest interest to Western funding elites, and using this information to shape their proposals (Petras 1999:433). In this way, the work of NGOs may not be considered accountable to the local population they propose to assist. This is refuted by the participants in my study who highlighted how their organizations encourage the involvement of the local population, which contrasts with the efforts of the state. This view is further explored in Chapter Seven, which discusses the interaction between NGOs and the Senegalese state.

On a few occasions, participants also conveyed a great deal of cynicism about the

role of NGOs generally, providing a similar assessment to those critical scholars noted above. A young American man, Jeff, had been working for nine months for a Senegalese NGO that promotes democracy, peace, culture and creativity. He had heard about the organization through a colleague, and thought it seemed like a good opportunity, a chance to learn French, and an interesting international work experience. However, he said he does not have an interest in continuing to work with NGOs in the development field, because he does not like the language and the politicking. He does not want work for something that might be a new missionary with a new bent and new clothes. He then noted that this is not everyone; there are also good people working there (INT66). Jeff's views contrast with the perspectives shared by most of the other participants in the study, who certainly raised their concerns about NGO work, but tended to limit them to criticisms about the mismanagement of the organizations, not about the purpose and aims of NGOs generally.

#### *Critiques of Mismanagement, Corruption, and Duplication of Projects*

In my discussions with NGO practitioners in Senegal, it was apparent that many are quite critical of NGO work. However, much of this criticism focuses on problems related to the poor management of NGOs themselves, and not of the actual system of NGOs and their goals of progress, improvement and development. In their critical discussions, NGO staff tended to concentrate on the poor structure or capacity of some organizations, problems with corruption and greed, and duplication of projects. Criticisms about mismanagement tended to be shared by the staff of INGOs and larger organizations, who

complained about the weak management of smaller NGOs and associations. Indeed, the European coordinator of an environment INGO described the challenges of working with some local NGOs, since “There are many NGOs here without enough structure that are not solid enough. Or they aren’t... not poorly managed, but managed without management techniques, and this creates a fragility.” He noted that his INGO needs to be careful who they work with, given that if they reinforce the capacity of a local NGO and two or three years later it is no longer functioning, then his NGO has lost both time and money invested in this organization (INT74). In addition, the management problems cited for NGOs in Senegal were also related to accounting problems and mishandling of finances. Moustafa, a Senegalese program director for a large INGO, noted that a disadvantage of NGO partnerships is that some organizations do not manage their funds well; they do not have a system of accounting, and there are risks with this. For his INGO, this is one of the biggest problems in partnering with other NGOs (INT38).

Going beyond concerns about weak management techniques and structures, in my study, NGO practitioners also discussed problems with corruption in the NGO context, in some cases accusing other NGOs of improper practices. A middle-aged Canadian woman working for an education INGO described her frustration with a local NGO that also works on education issues. In her view, despite having a good project, this local NGO mishandles the generous funding it receives from European donors. She pointed out not all of these funds go into NGO activities, but sometimes into people’s pockets, including the director, so that they have nice cars and houses (INT13). According to a young American woman volunteering for an INGO that partners with local microfinance

institutions, one of the biggest disadvantages of working with other NGOs in this field is transparency. She said they do their best for due diligence with people on the ground, and making sure people (i.e. the staff) are not stealing, but it still happens (INT55). Janice, who has been working with both local and international NGOs in Senegal for the last 30 years, also described corruption as a problem for organizations in Senegal, stating that she did not know any local NGOs that are using funds honestly, but that this was due to many pressures that prevent them from doing so. She commented that these NGOs do not want people looking more closely into what they do (INT53).

While some accused local NGOs of dishonesty, Northern INGOs were also viewed by some as taking advantage of the situation of poor local populations. For Babacar, the Senegalese president of a local association, “There are NGOs visiting Senegal to fight poverty, and they are very rich and arrogant. This is quite a contrast, since these are NGOs fighting poverty, and they have lots of money, lots of means, and they live in palaces” (INT32). Similarly, Lise, a young French woman working for an INGO, acknowledged that there are little NGOs that have less administration, more freedom and work more with the grassroots, while some NGOs are rich and just live the good life (INT5).

Indeed, discussions about corruption in the NGO field tended to revolve around ideas that some people working with NGOs were doing so out of greed, and not necessarily to assist Senegalese communities. These were the views expressed by Fatima, a young African woman who works as a program manager for a children’s rights INGO. I arranged to meet her at her office, which was located in a beige building that was quite

large and airy, with a guard booth on the front lawn, a high wall around it, a wide hallway inside, and a very large conference room with several desks. At the end of this room was her spacious office, containing a tidy desk with a computer. During the interview, Fatima was quite critical of the mismanagement of local NGOs in Senegal. She shared her concerns about NGO staff focusing more on receiving funds than improving their organizations through programs offered by her INGO. As she noted, “If you give a workshop for NGOs, the NGO staff wait to receive a per diem. They always want a per diem. If they are not given this, oh la la. Each time you do the evaluation form, they say that the per diem was not very much, and they should increase it. Instead of looking at it as it is something to help us think better about how we can take charge, it is instead, ok, we are organizing because we can have a per diem” (INT63). Given the high unemployment rates in Dakar, as discussed in Chapter One, and the growing uncertainty surrounding funding for NGOs and their staff, the emphasis on individual acquisition of funds may reflect an interest in financially supporting oneself, one’s family, and one’s social networks, in which many Senegalese participate.<sup>23</sup> As well, a focus on obtaining per diems provided by large, relatively wealthy INGOs for local NGO staff it is likely associated with Senegalese communal values involving sharing and helping others in need (see Gellar 1995:119).

The motives of other NGO practitioners were also questioned when participants discussed the competitive work environment of NGOs and how larger NGOs had a tendency to attract staff from smaller organizations given the higher status and income

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<sup>23</sup> Further discussion of the financial challenges facing NGOs can be found in Chapter Four.

they were able to provide. Participants shared a variety of these accounts, including: local association members leaving to work with NGOs because they could make more money; a local NGO director quitting in order to work as the national coordinator of a partner INGO; and INGO staff using their training to find work at a UN agency, which pays more than the NGOs (INT4, 33, 42). This was considered problematic, since smaller organizations are losing talented, educated and experienced staff members to larger organizations that are able to provide higher incomes.

On several occasions, participants commented about the large number of NGOs operating in Senegal, and there were concerns about the duplication of projects. Participants noted that there are problems with the duplication of funds for the same projects with the same targets, and efforts should be made to harmonize these projects (INT79). According to a Senegalese woman volunteering with local NGO, there are many NGOs in Senegal doing the same work, and they should network and combine their work to maximize their efforts (INT26). Indeed, Michael (2004:93) notes that the NGO sector in Senegal experiences a high degree of duplication and overlap of mission, which is related to the efforts of NGOs to work across a variety of fields rather than focusing on and specializing in one.

The duplication of projects was also an issue raised by Andrea. She noted that NGO duplication of projects was not a problem found only in Senegal, but a difficulty for NGOs generally, which is connected to their efforts for organizational continuity. She pointed out that there are NGOs that want to combat river blindness; however, a cure exists, and so there is no reason for these NGOs to continue existing, unless it is to ensure

people get the medication they need. Instead, the NGOs look to start other programs. She mentioned one INGO that has the goal of assisting during natural disasters, particularly in the Middle East. Now they also have microfinance and health programs. As stated by Andrea:

What is that? If your goal is to eradicate something, a problem, or help with an issue, you should do this until it is resolved, and not take on other projects. That's why there are thousands of NGOs all doing the same work in the same country. It doesn't make sense. They either should work together or merge together. There is less being done with so many NGOs. In a lot of villages, people are unsure which NGO to work with, so they do what they are told, not wanting to disappoint anyone or chase off help they are receiving. It's a really, really complicated web; everyone wants to survive, but not everyone can. (INT54)

In this context, Andrea views the duplication of projects by different NGOs as compounded by local communities having difficulty refusing the involvement of NGOs. In Senegalese society, individuals participate in numerous solidarity networks that provide some social and economic security (Gellar 1995:119). This includes INGOs, local NGOs and other associations that provide social ties to assist with certain needs and/or to help with specific problems (Gellar 1995:119). Given the importance of these connections with influential individuals and organizations, which may provide a safety net in times of need, local communities are unlikely to turn them away. As well, for Andrea, NGOs are mismanaged both by not working collaboratively with others, and by trying to prolong the survival of the organization by seeking out new projects in areas in which they lack experience and expertise. However, it should be noted that bureaucratic organizations such as NGOs often grow and take on new mandates, missions, and responsibilities in ways not considered by their original founders (Barnett and Finnemore 2004:3). The bureaucratic environment of NGOs will now be further explored.

## **NGO Critiques: Bureaucracy and Hierarchy**

### *Encounters with NGO Bureaucracy*

One of the common complaints participants made about NGO work concerns the excessive amount of bureaucracy and hierarchy found in these organizations. Crewe and Harrison (1998:50) note that development organizations are characteristic of bureaucracies, citing Weber's view of bureaucratic function and form involving a stress on rationality, modernity and hierarchy. Certainly, Weber's work on bureaucracy shapes much of our understanding of this concept today, and Wallis (1989:2) describes how in a context of growing capitalism in Europe and North America, Weber observed an emerging new form of organization he termed 'bureaucracy'. Weber described a process where older types of organization based on tradition and custom were being displaced by a new efficient system where the 'bureau' or office is in the dominant position (Wallis 1989:2). According to Wallis (1989:2), "In contrast to earlier forms of administration, bureaucracy is based upon what Weber terms *legal rational authority*. In more detailed terms, this means a set of rules and administrative structures which closely control the action of the employees of the organization." Bureaucracy involves the services of trained officials who are hired based on their experience and qualifications rather than political affiliation or family connections, and they occupy certain positions in the organizational hierarchy while having a specific list of duties for which they are responsible, while not being responsible for duties not on this list (Wallis 1989:3,4). For Ringer (2004:220), Weber views bureaucracy as "domination by means of specialized knowledge", which accounts for its emphasis on rationality, and entails the technical mastery of officials and

their control of relevant documents. While Weber noted the positive aspects of bureaucracy, describing it as an efficient way to achieve goals (Wallis 1989:10) and praising its emphasis on impersonality and merit principles, he was also critical of its potential to foster inflexibility and emphasize social distances between officials in an organization (Ringer 2004:220, 223, 224). Today, bureaucracy has negative connotations, suggesting slow-moving organizations, often associated with governments, that serve the public with disdain, incompetence and deliberate obstruction (Wallis 1989:1). This more critical view of bureaucracy has been used to criticize the state, which is viewed as bureaucratic, inefficient and self-interested, while NGOs, considered relatively unbureaucratic, as viewed as worthy of greater financial support and as an integral part of political reform (Wallis 1989:79; Allen 1997:336). While I do not propose that NGOs are as bureaucratic as the state, my experiences and those of my participants suggest that as development organizations employing experts in management and technical specialties that seek to serve the public through their specialized knowledge and efforts to conform to structures imposed by donor organizations, NGOs are, in fact, bureaucratic entities.<sup>24</sup>

In Chapter Three, which discusses research methodology, I noted some of my observations and experiences with the bureaucratic character of NGOs in my interviews with participants. This included being handed documents in response to questions, negotiating meetings through secretaries, being referred to speak to others in the NGO

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<sup>24</sup> Given the variation of structure and size amongst NGOs and associations, as noted in Chapter One, these organizations should not be considered uniformly bureaucratic. INGOs, which tend to have larger staff, greater hierarchy and more formal organizational structure, are often more bureaucratic in their functioning than local NGOs and associations. As well, local associations with little formal structure and fewer staff members may function with significantly less bureaucracy than larger local NGOs and INGOs.

who were considered more specialized in certain matters, and being chastised for not following the proper chain of command. One of my most frustrating experiences with NGO bureaucracy, also discussed in Chapter Three, involved my attempts to volunteer and conduct participant observation with an NGO operating in Senegal. I was not surprised to learn of the similar challenges, Heather, a retired American health-care worker, faced when also trying to volunteer with an NGO here. She informed me that her current volunteer placement with an INGO in Senegal was actually her second choice. Her first choice had been to volunteer with a different INGO, but she had to agree to at least six months of volunteer work, and by the time they informed her of the volunteer assignment, she was no longer able to take off the minimum amount of time required. As a result, she moved on to her second choice, applying to volunteer with an American INGO, Americaid. This INGO matches its volunteers with other organizations around the world, where they are typically asked to provide some form of technical assistance. Heather encouraged her recruitment officer to see if the INGO HealthAfrica, which operates in Senegal and several other African countries, can use someone with her health care skills. Time passed, and she recalled that there were many phone calls and emails. At one point, she was brought into the conversation, and she had a three-way conference call with Americaid and HealthAfrica to discuss what was possible. They were not certain, and there were a lot of maybes. With Americaid, it was a little tricky in some spots, and somewhat sensitive. Heather thought this could go on a long time and was impatient. Finally, she suggested that she go to HealthAfrica in Senegal and try to sort out the details on the ground, and they agreed to this. When she arrived, she had to sign a lot of

documents with Americaid and HealthAfrica about behaviour, security and safety. She jokingly remarked, “Everyone must have lawyers,” and then commented, “You know, I think it’s the nature of organizations these days to be covering their ass. And there are a lot of documents to sign and action plans to write, and it’s...bureaucracy times two. And I’ve been involved with organizations (in the past) that are solid and do good work, but bureaucracy is not that high on their list. But, I just have to – it’s the reality.”

Other participants also shared their frustration with what they described as the excessive bureaucracy of NGOs (INT56). Barnett and Finnemore (2004:3) note that “Bureaucracy is a distinctive social form of authority with its own internal logic and behavioral proclivities.” Bureaucracies exercise power through their ability to make impersonal rules, and then use these rules to regulate, as well as construct, the social world (Barnett and Finnemore 2004:3). These impersonal rules can cause problems, including obsession with these rules at the expense of primary goals, resulting in self-defeating and inefficient outcomes (Barnett and Finnemore 2004:3). One of the perceived inefficient outcomes of the bureaucracy of NGOs involves the view that some NGOs spend more of their funds on administration than assisting the populations they claim to help. In my study, participants typically directed these accusations towards other NGOs. For example, a Senegalese director of an INGO commented that there are many NGOs in Senegal, and due to the high costs of administration, there are not a lot of funds left for helping the population (INT27). Similarly, the coordinator of a local association noted that his organization chose not to become an NGO with its structure, since their preference is to give the maximum amount of the funds they receive to the population and

not to personnel (INT73). These views are not far from those of Petras (1999:433), who describes the grassroots population as objects of NGO hierarchy. In his view, this population rarely sees the money brought in by NGOs, nor do they receive the salaries or perks of the NGO staff representing them (Petras 1999:433).

In a rare example of a participant criticizing their own NGO, Nancy, an American woman working as a program manager for an INGO, stated that while her organization tries to have their funds go to the project beneficiaries, there is a system to support with funds. Having worked with the organization for the last five years, she noted that if the funding is cut for her INGO, the most affected people will not be poor families, but the local office staff, most of whom are middle-class Senegalese people. She commented that she is not saying NGOs should not work, and her organization tries to fund local partners. She pointed out that at least her INGO is not as bureaucratic as a UN agency that is bogged down with international staff costs (INT58). Reflecting on the issue of bureaucracy, a young European woman working as an INGO funding coordinator noted that the bureaucracy and legalistic aspects of NGO work made it more cumbersome and less focused. Her INGO has developed a toolkit with templates and information, and the goal of this is to try to make this work more efficient and effective, and to improve the quality. She commented that systems develop their own dynamics and they need to see how this can be reduced. It is a learning process to learn the bureaucratic system of an organization (INT42).

It should be noted that much of the bureaucracy associated with the administration of NGOs is due to the requirements of donors and financial partners. A great deal of the

work that participants were engaged in involved preparing proposals and budgets, participating in meetings, developing agreements and contracts, conducting project evaluations and writing reports. Marie, a French student completing her practicum by volunteering with a local NGO, noted that her six-month placement consisted of writing funding proposals, and that was really all she did (INT21). Indeed, in my own volunteer experiences with a local NGO, essentially all of my work consisted of translating funding proposals and mission statements from French to English. While this work can be uninspiring, such documents are necessary in order to access financial aid. Indeed, Wallace et al. (2006:2) note that aid is increasingly managed in a bureaucratic way in an effort by donors to tightly control and account for finances and intricate processes of social change. This bureaucratic approach to funding is reflected in the structure and work of NGOs as they seek to meet the conditions set by their donors.

#### *Encounters with NGO Hierarchy*

One of the main characteristics of bureaucracy, besides rationality and the creation of standardized rules of action, is the division of labour (Barnett and Finnemore 2004:8), which is evident in the hierarchical organization of departments and positions within NGOs. In discussing hierarchy, Wallis (1989:3) states that “This means that there are various layers of administration with lower positions under the control and supervision of higher ones.” This can be seen in the elaborate “organigrams” of NGOs that chart that illustrate the hierarchical offices of their organizational structure. When I asked participants about how their NGOs were organized or structured, I was occasionally

offered one of these organigrams as a way to simplify their response. I was given one of these diagrams by the president of SenHealth, a Senegalese health NGO with a focus on providing health programs to women and youth. In their organigram, a hierarchical chart displays a series of boxes with arrows pointing vertically downward, and sometimes horizontally, to other boxes containing the names of positions or departments in the organization. For SenHealth, this involves a board of directors at the top, which includes the participation of the executive director, who oversees a program assistant and the director of research, monitoring and evaluation. The executive director also oversees the director of administration and finance, placed lower down the page, which includes the departments of IT, finance, logistics and human resources. At the same level as the finance director is the program director, who oversees the manager of projects, the manager of youth projects, and the manager of projects in specialized zones. The hierarchy of roles likely extends further, given that SenHealth is also a member of an international health network and actively works with local associations.

One way that the hierarchy of these organizations is expressed is through the power dynamics evident between NGO staff. As noted by Wallis (1989:3), “Individuals occupy positions *within the hierarchy*, and they are normally expected to ‘know their place’.” Thus, those with higher positions in the hierarchy are in a more powerful position than their colleagues, and this power differential was often expressed to assert one’s dominant position. I observed this dynamic often in my fieldwork while volunteering for a local association. Even though the president of this group described himself as “a moral president” who shares the power in the organization, I noticed him asserting his own

ideas over others frequently, in addition to chastising certain members in front of the group, and tightly controlling access to the funds available for projects. Similarly, a young American volunteer working with a local NGO noted that while the Senegalese director of this organization was very nice and told her to come talk to him whenever she wanted, she found that he was very much in charge, and at meetings he would tell the staff, “This is what we’re doing,” and that was the end of discussion (INT56). Directors, holding the dominant position in their organizations, wield the most power in these dynamics with other staff members. Indeed, Petras (1999:433) states that despite their rhetoric of being grassroots, democratic organizations, NGOs are hierarchical, and directors have total control of projects, as well as hiring and firing.

The hierarchical context of NGOs also was apparent during research interviews. On another occasion, I visited a local women’s association to conduct an interview with the organization’s secretary, a young Senegalese woman named Yacine. I had met her several days before when I arrived at her office to interview the president of the association, who is an older Senegalese woman, and Yacine had chatted with me while we sat in the small conference room, waiting for the president to arrive. She agreed to meet with me later that week for an interview, and I had looked forward to getting her perspective on the association’s work. This proved more challenging than I had anticipated, however. Fifteen minutes into my interview with Yacine, the president breezed into the office, greeted me and then left to work in another room. During the following hour, the president repeatedly interrupted the interview, calling the secretary out to assist her on three separate occasions, despite the fact it was clear that she and I were engaged in an

interview (INT31). It would have been unthinkable for the secretary to do the same to this president during her interview several days earlier. In this way, the president expressed her power in the relationship with her secretary, and it was also an indication of her annoyance that I would waste my time interviewing someone in a subordinate position when I had already spoken to her, the president. A young American man working for a local NGO revealed to me during an interview that that he also felt put in his place everyday by others at his NGO, especially the general manager, a Senegalese man, who pulls rank on him. His perspective on the hierarchy of the NGO workplace is that “It’s about place, age, insecurity, power – not about me. It’s also about gender roles, etc.” (INT66).

For some, their dominant position in the hierarchy is a source of pride. Mamadou, a young Senegalese man working in finance and administration for a British INGO, described being in charge of all project relations involving logistics and procurement. He made a point of noting that two people report to him, and he reports to the director. Mamadou then clarified this by stating that the director also needs to run things by him and he is a co-signer for cheques, and so in fact, he is actually in co-management with the director (INT50). Still, it should be noted that some directors were unhappy with the amount of hierarchy in their organizations and wished to change the situation. Jean-Marc, a French director of the local office of an INGO, said that he has worked with this organization for the last five years, and he wants to set an example of a good leader – to be accessible and to show a different example of a what a director can be. He wants to help people to think of leadership in a different way, and not that it involves sitting at the

top of a pyramid, lording over people. He hopes to exemplify a form of leadership based on listening, discussion, and debate. This is one of his major objectives with his organization (INT65). In a similar way, a Senegalese man, Abdou, who had recently taken over the director position from an American man at his local NGO, described encouraging a less hierarchical work environment. He said there is only one difference between how he works and how the former director worked. The former director placed himself as higher up than the rest of the staff, and Abdou tries to work as a team with the other office members. He tries to work in collegiality, and they meet together to make decisions (INT49). Perhaps this is an indication that there is a shift towards reexamining the hierarchical structure engaged in by many NGOs in Senegal.

### **NGO Critiques: Business Approaches for Development**

#### *Adopting a Business Approach to NGOs*

Given the concerns raised about the excessive bureaucracy and hierarchy found in NGO contexts, some NGO staff have argued that NGOs would be better run as for-profit businesses. Following this reasoning, it was suggested that for-profit organizations are more efficient, and thus if NGOs were run more like corporations, they too would be more efficient (INT70). Andrea, a young American woman, was volunteering with a local NGO as part of her practicum on international development, and she also had very strong views on this issue. As she said, “The major problem I have with NGOs is that they run on the notion that they are not-for-profit, and therefore they think they don’t need to act as a for-profit business. But NGOs look for funding and while they don’t sell a product,

they need to realize the product they sell is themselves and their work.” In her view, NGOs need business sense and to act as a for-profit organization. She hopes that “...they come to the realization they need to be run like a business, not just an organization to help people; anyone can help anyone. That’s easy. But being self-sufficient, having transparent financial statements, etc., [that is important].”

Certainly, greater self-sufficiency was considered a one of the benefits of NGOs adopting a business model in their approach. Mentioning the recent financial crisis, Andrea noted that with fewer funds “...NGOs need to act and function like businesses versus waiting to be financed by handouts and grants. There will be less money for NGOs from the government as it gives money to banks and bailout programs. There are countries that are dependant on NGOs to take over social programs they should be providing, and they will suffer in the long run – NGOs will suffer.” As a result, NGOs need to find a way to have a more reliable way to access funds (INT54). Abdoulaye, the Senegalese director of a local NGO, lamented the ability of donors to stop their funding and the lack of recourse available to his NGO in these instances. He considered this a drawback of volunteer work, but surmised that if it were a business, they would be able to generate funds through other activities (INT86). However, some local NGOs have in fact decided to pursue such activities; a number of local NGOs have developed small income-generating businesses to supplement their development projects. For example, one local NGO provides language and cultural programs to visiting university students, as well as offering training sessions for banks and other NGOs. According to the director, these activities are income generating, and this model allows the organization to survive when

others fail. In this way, “It allows us to continue when there is no funding and not a lot are able to carry on” (INT45). Other NGOs were planning on or already generating funds through providing cultural workshops and classes, selling crafts and food items, and running a small Internet café.

Interestingly, while not all NGOs engaged in profit-generating activities, the techniques and language of the private sector world have appeared to permeate their workplaces. Crewe and Harrison (1998:150-151) discuss the recent trend in the NGO sector towards employing business plans, and using the language and ideas from the fields of marketing and public relations. Indeed, in my study, a young African woman working as a human resources coordinator for a large European INGO noted that she had recently participated in a two-day training session on the recruitment, training, and integration of new coworkers. The person who led the session was from the private sector as were all of the other participants (INT48). NGO staff discussed bringing their business knowledge and experience to their work with NGOs. According to Tania, an older Dutch woman who is a coordinator of fund development for her INGO, she uses her business background to get involved in the region where she works, and brings business strategies to the benefit of the INGO. With a background in economics, accounting and marketing, she had worked in the private sector for a number of years, before switching to work with NGOs ten years ago. In her current INGO position, she is engaged in the brand development process of the organization’s worldwide funding campaign. As well, she recruits and builds the capacity of fundraisers in different countries, since they need both

passion and professionalism from their fundraising staff. NGOs are often associated with poor people, but in her view, more and more NGOs need to be professional (INT39).

Similarly, Patricia, a Canadian woman volunteering at a local NGO, described hoping to bring what she learned in business to NGOs and businesses abroad. She took a six-month leave of absence from her corporate job to volunteer overseas, and she wants to use her business and information technology skills to help with what they need. She is looking at their IT structure and business operations, and may help with marketing strategies, promotions, technical operations, and project management in order to get them organized for the future (INT43). I found it interesting that Patricia talked about NGO partners working together like a “distribution channel”, given that other NGO staff also employed business lingo to describe their NGO work, including such marketing phrases as “unique selling point” or USP, and the “added value” of their work (INT70). For Keane (2003:91), the line supposedly separating the NGO and corporate worlds dissolves when one considers that “Some NGOs... even explicitly model themselves on business enterprises by developing commercial departments, head-hunters, media sections and private fund-raising and investment strategies.”

The business activities and discourses engaged in by NGO practitioners is indicative of the way that private-sector approaches are being incorporated into the NGO world in an attempt to become more efficient, effective and professional organizations in order to compete for funding in an increasingly competitive NGO context. Indeed, a number of participants commented on the competition for funding amongst NGOs in Senegal. For example, Lise, a French woman working for an INGO stated that there is

jealousy between Senegalese NGOs if one is given funding from a donor or changes donors. She said that this was the fault of Northern donors, such as USAID, that give funding to one NGO and cause competition (INT5). It was also noted that smaller NGOs and associations have a more difficult time getting funding, since funding partners often want to work with experienced and established NGOs, and thus, it was the same organizations that continued to receive funding (INT16). In order to compete for funding in this context, NGOs have employed business strategies and approaches to appeal to donors seeking an effective and efficient use of their funds. Wallace et al. (2006:2) point to an increasing reliance on management ideology and models in the procedures and conditions of aid, which in turn affects the development practice of NGOs. Clearly, the management focus in the disbursement of aid is being reflected in how NGOs portray and perceive their activities, with the aim of trying to sustain themselves in a competitive context of unreliable funding.

A few participants, however, were annoyed with the business approach and related jargon employed by NGOs. This includes Jeff, who was frustrated that the staff of his local NGO seemed to be more focused on the bottom line than the creative and cultural aims they espouse. Jeff said that it is often very difficult for him to get the cooperation of people inside the NGO for creative events he wants to plan for local and international artists. In his view, there is a certain opinion about art in the organization, and this is a major obstacle. There is a perspective that creating art does not do anything, and that it is a waste of time; at least, this is the general manager's view. Jeff feels pinned in the corner, because as an artist himself, he is not important. He noted that the NGO

would not spend out of their own pocket for a bunch of artists “talking nonsense.” In order to get their cooperation for planning a creative event, he then has to provide “fancy advertising lingo”, like telling them that artwork produced can be sold to international businesses. As he commented, “That’s the institutional speak that needs to be said. That they’re turning out stuff to sell it. And it makes money. Here’s why. This changes the relationship; now you are important because you can make money. If you don’t make money, you’re useless.” (INT66). Similarly, Marie, a young French woman completing a master’s degree on the management of humanitarian projects, commented that “With capitalism and neoliberalism and individualism, people are only thinking about money – it’s depressing. There are people in NGOs that also only think of money, and for me, to be human is the most important thing. It is disappointing also to see many NGOs in Senegal competing for money. It is too bad” (INT21). Certainly, it would be misleading to suggest that all NGO staff are solely business-oriented or seek the integration of non-profit and for-profit operations. However, it does appear to be an emerging issue that may gain momentum given the growing concerns and criticism about the effectiveness and sustainability of NGOs.

*Private and Public: Charity through Capitalism*

The preference for NGOs to operate as for-profit businesses went beyond simply incorporating a few business practices for some participants. For Mamadou, job creation is an important aspect of development, an area he felt businesses were more proficient at than NGOs. He currently works for a European INGO, but he was unsure about

continuing to work with NGOs, since he may decide to work in the private sector, given that he “prefers development that creates businesses, allowing people to work.” He said that you can create enterprises with development, and the benefit is that it is used for development, and at the same time, it creates jobs. He prefers where organizations create enterprises for local populations, such as for transformation of agricultural products, where the organization generates money, injects it in development, and it is a continual process. The advantage is that with NGOs, you find funds for development; with the private sector, you create industries and jobs, and this decreases unemployment and brings revenue for people. In his view, it is the best way to participate in development. It brings together the private system and the system of NGOs. It is the system that is the most complete. By bringing work opportunities to people in Senegal through businesses, it will decrease unemployment, and the rest of the population will benefit from the surplus generated since it will go towards development projects, and help develop the country through paying taxes (INT50).

Regan is a young American woman who had completed a degree in international studies and political science. For over ten months, she tried to find a job with a microfinance organization, but having no success, she decided to take a corporate job in human resources. When she heard about opportunities to volunteer with a microfinance INGO, she jumped at the chance to get experience in this field, since it is impossible to get a microfinance job without it. Regan was one of the few to share her philosophical perspectives with me on how the current economic system connects with her NGO work. She said she is interested in the intersection between capitalism and compassion, noting

that “This can take many forms. It is a new sector. An example is people investing money into a pharmaceutical company to develop medicines sold cheaper in developing countries.” I asked if it was about using capitalism for good, and she said yes, and there is a lot of potential and ways to do that. Regan pointed out that there are many smart people who care a lot about the same things she cares about, and programs on social capitalism and social enterprise are popping up at some of the best universities. I commented that it was interesting that Regan was one of my first participants to talk about the economic system. She said, “It’s hard to criticize it because that’s the way it is; there have always been poor people – there were people in tribes at the bottom. There is potential to change. I hope...I believe there is something in humans that is capable of transcending that.” Regan noted that she is intrigued by microfinance, because it is a systematic change, stating that “It really is on the borderline between capitalism and charity” (INT55).

For Regan and others, NGOs can be seen as helping marginalized groups deal with their situations of poverty by, to a certain extent, softening the blow of neoliberal capitalism through small-scale income-generating activities such as microfinance initiatives. In a neoliberal context of increasingly deregulated market economies, citizens are encouraged to acquire an entrepreneurial identity, and the efforts of NGOs are restricted to the managerial tasks of trying to improve the capacity of the poor to compete in this global marketplace (Kamat 2004:164, 171). This diverts attention away from the sources and possible solutions of poverty, (Petras 1999:434), and Kamat (2004:169) states that “The individual is posited as both the problem and the solution to poverty rather than as an issue of the state's redistribution policies or global trade policies.”

Indeed, microfinance programs are popular amongst donor agencies, given that the state is no longer responsible for job-creation activities, and poor populations are expected to build their own capacities for livelihood security, which becomes a matter of optimally using one's own resources and abilities (Kamat 2004:169). The emphasis on the need for individual responsibility and management rather than confronting economic inequality is evident in the "capacity building" activities engaged in by many of the NGOs in Senegal. A significant number of NGO staff in this study emphasized their efforts to reinforce the capacity of smaller organizations and the local population, which suggests a current lack of capacity to manage their situation, a deficiency that requires assistance through awareness building and training in management and technical skills. This focus on reinforcing capacity and the role of experts is explored in the following section.

### **NGOs: Capacity Building Experts**

#### *Reinforcing the Capacity of Local Groups and Populations*

It is evident that NGO staff can be quite critical of NGO work. However, most of this critique was directed at the poor management of other NGOs operating in Senegal. Perhaps this is unsurprising given that the general focus of NGOs today involves helping people to manage themselves better, and they are largely staffed by management experts, or experts in such areas as health, children, human rights, or the environment who specialize in the proper management of these fields. One of the targets of this intervention involves smaller local NGOs and associations that work more closely with the population. As noted in Chapter Four, an important aspect of the partnership relationship with other

NGOs involves efforts to reinforce their organizational capacity. With the aims of sustainability and self-determination, capacity building has been applied to a range of entities, including individuals, communities and organizations (Fanany et al. 2010:158). While capacity building emerged in the early 1990s as a central tenet of development initiatives (Kenny and Clarke 2010:5), it continues to be a rather ill defined and amorphous concept and practice, and in real world settings, a wide range of approaches to capacity building are implemented (Morgan 1999:16,19). Indeed, Fanany et al. (2010:158) point out that there are different methods involved in capacity building, and although training in technical skills is probably its most well-known method, capacity building can also involve the provision of resources, knowledge and contacts, which can enhance social connections and assist with effective organization. In my study, participants used capacity building to describe a process where larger organizations, such as INGOs and large local NGOs, share expertise and training on technical and managerial issues with smaller partner organizations, such as small local NGOs, associations and cooperatives. In doing so, the aim is to help these organizations play their role more effectively on the ground (INT20). According to one INGO director, they seek, "...to achieve strengthening the capacity and confidence of partners to do their work," and to help these partners, "...to increase the quality of the work they do" (INT61). Frequently, the capacity of local organizations was considered to be quite weak by the staff of INGOs, who viewed local NGOs and associations as not having enough structure and lacking proper management.<sup>25</sup> Reinforcing the capacity of local NGOs and associations

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<sup>25</sup> This desire for greater management and structure seems at odds with the criticism NGO practitioners

involves the idea that by helping these organizations to manage themselves better, they will be able to more effectively work in their communities. As well, it will allow them to have greater access to funds from donors by operating more professionally and being able to meet rigorous donor standards for proposals and reports. As noted by a Senegalese NGO director, local associations often have difficulty writing project proposals with the specifications required by donors, which include a description of the objectives, results, budget and execution, system of follow up and evaluation. His organization tries to help them with this (INT88). As noted in Chapter Four, perhaps it is in the best interest of Northern INGOs to question the management abilities of their local NGO partners, thus proving that they still have an important role to play in the South through reinforcing the capacity of these Southern organizations. Of course, larger local NGOs also claim that they provide an important service through building the capacity of smaller associations and organizations.

In describing the work of their NGOs, participants frequently described “reinforcing the capacity” or “building the capacity” of the populations with whom they worked. As stated by Clarke (2010:112), “Capacity building is now regarded as a central tenet of sustaining the impact of development interventions over the longer term. The premise of capacity building is based upon expanding community participation and enhancing local skills and expertise in areas of perceived deficit.” Indeed, capacity building programs seek to improve technical competence, teach organizational skills,

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have of bureaucracy within their organizations. This tension likely exists due to the management expertise and training of many NGO practitioners who see greater management as the solution to organizational problems, while also working in an environment that supports NGOs based on the perception they are less bureaucratic and more efficient than the state.

facilitate self-help, and provide resources, which are intended to assist communities in taking charge of their own affairs, responding effectively to change, and raising their standard of living (Fanany et al. 2010:157). While there is concern about the ability of capacity building to attain such goals, Fanany et al. (2010:157) notes that “Whether the goal of a development programme is to strengthen inner urban communities, facilitate social inclusion, tackle the spread of HIV/AIDS, build roads, or enhance civil society institutions in general, development projects have increasingly involved some form of capacity building.” Certainly, in my research, participants described building or reinforcing the capacity of a variety of different target groups, including women (in terms of fighting violence and having rights respected), local farmers (in terms of diversifying their crops), local youth (in terms of employment), and local communities (with respect to their ability manage their own finances) (INT10, 11, 14, 30, 34). Training tends to be the principle method of capacity building (Ife 2010:77), and much of the capacity building described in my study involves the education and training of the target population. For example, one of my participants, Abdou, is the director of a local education NGO that trains local communities. He said that they do literacy training, as well as training on management, resource management, and conflict management. They develop training programs to reinforce communication capacity in leadership and management. He noted that they do not build wells or buildings - they provide training (INT49). Nancy, an American woman working with an INGO, pointed out that her organization gives people training on how to set up savings groups, so that people save and lend their own money at their own interest rates which goes back to them. Nancy remarked that her NGO does not

give money or food for the project, but gives a skill set. A woman receiving the training said to her that the project offers more than any money could bring into the community. The community gains the capacity to save, plan, and manage their own finances. Nancy noted that there are even many people in the U.S. who do not have this skill (INT58).

A notable aspect of capacity building is the view that certain capacities or skills are deficient and require reinforcement. As stated by Ife (2010:68), “The idea of capacity building conveys the idea of potential; if a community has ‘capacity’ it presumably has some potential to do, achieve or accomplish something... The assumption, therefore, is that there is a deficit; the community in question is seen as lacking something, vaguely labeled as ‘capacity’, which needs to be ‘built’.” The recognition that a community is lacking in some way is one of the first steps of designing and implementing a development intervention. According to Li (2007:7), in order to determine the objectives of specific programs, deficiencies to be corrected must first be identified. Thus, the community may be viewed as lacking capacity, perhaps in the form of knowledge, management or resources. Next, information needs to be assembled on these issues, and techniques have to be developed to address such issues (Li 2007:7). In this process, the expertise of improvement trustees engaged in development is confirmed, as they are considered to have both the capacity to identify the deficits of others and develop techniques to address them (Li 2007:7).

A key component of reinforcing capacity involves awareness building and “sensitization” of the population to key issues affecting their self-management. In terms of capacity building efforts, Morgan (1999:23) considers awareness to be a capacity along

with other technical abilities, noting that it plays a significant role in energizing collective action. For my research participants, many different awareness building activities were described, including NGOs providing or developing theatre groups, radio shows, films, TV programs, and training sessions in such areas as youth reproductive health, illegal immigration, cultural conservation, and proper nutrition. Babacar, a young Senegalese man who is the president of a cultural association, said that his organization hopes to reinforce the capacity of the population with training, sensitizing them to a variety of issues affecting Africa. In his view, “With information, people can get involved, and fight against poverty, war, children in precarious situations, and the education gap. I hope that we can liberate the population. When people are well-informed, they can change the situation.” In his opinion, this does not require a lot of financial help. As he noted, “With quality human resources, you can change the situation.” He then added that he preferred to say “improve” rather than “change” the situation – to improve the situation with information, in such areas as education, culture, health, and media (INT32). As one young American volunteer noted, members of her NGO transmit information to the villagers they work with, “Because if people are poor, what they’re poorest in is usually information” (INT35). Indeed, Li (2007:16) points out that NGOs operate by educating the desires of the target population, and trying to reform their behaviours and practices.

While many participants described their NGO work as reinforcing capacity through education, training and awareness building, a few portrayed this work as “empowerment” of local communities. For Bill, a local NGO director, this is what they attempt to do in development, “To empower people to show them their rights, their skills, what they can

do to touch people in a way that encourages people to act and bring change about and improvement, and greater humanity, and a concern for others and greater awareness” (INT45). In another case, a British INGO director noted that her NGO focuses on empowering communities to develop themselves and to do their own development. She had heard of numerous development project failures in Senegal, but thought that this was not the fault of the local communities, who needed to be equipped to manage development. She recalled one village where health and other development projects were to be implemented, but the villagers were not literate and could not do a budget. So she started working on developing a program for learning, leading them to do many things they could never do before. Thus, people need to be prepared and empowered to engage in their development. In her view, “What people need is they need to know how to organize first and plan and do this democratically, and also understand basic principles of management and group leadership skills.” As a result, her NGO has designed a program based on these principles that prepares communities for development, and it is to be the foundation on which people build other projects (INT33). However, there is criticism that the small-scale focus of NGO work involving empowerment means that there is little influence outside of small areas of social life, and that this activity occurs within the conditions allowed by the macro-economy and the neoliberal state, without actually challenging these conditions and structures (Petras 1999:434).

This idea of “reinforcing capacity” was prevalent in my discussions with NGO staff. This included several participants who discussed efforts to reinforce the capacity of their own NGO staff, and in one case, a Senegalese man working for an INGO who said

he hopes to reinforce his own capacity, so that he can work more to diminish poverty, and give more to those who need his talent and strength (INT14). Interestingly, this desire to build capacity resonates with Appadurai's (2004:69) discussion of how civil society groups are engaged in building the "capacity to aspire." For Appadurai (2004:69), the poor have less capacity than the privileged to navigate their futures given their lack of opportunities to experiment with and document possible futures, since poverty diminishes the circumstances in which such wishing, planning and hoping occur. He suggests that development agents increase the capacity to aspire amongst the poor by encouraging exercises in local learning and teaching in order to increase the poor's ability to develop a better understanding of the connections between specific goals and more inclusive contexts and norms (Appadurai 2004:70, 83). Kamat (2004:168) is critical of this perspective, and suggests that NGOs have been shifting away from political organization and education of the poor, along with programs that involve structural analysis of inequality and power, and moving towards a technical managerial solution to problems of poverty using technical assessments of the needs and capacities of communities. In this neoliberal focus on the individual needs and capacities of the poor, the political and social causes of poverty are minimized (Kamat 2004:169). As noted by Kenny and Clarke (2010:8), capacity building, "...ignores the fact that the very reason why some communities have difficulties in 'developing' is not their lack of capacity, but the structural, political and resource impediments in their way." As well, they point out that capacity building can be problematic when external experts fail to understand that all communities have capacities already, such that these community assets are ignored, along

with what these professional capacity builders they might be able to learn themselves from this population (Kenny and Clarke 2010:8).

*NGOs and the Role of Experts*

A focus on capacity building in the NGO context has resulted in a system involving a chain of larger organizations sharing their expertise and reinforcing the capacity of smaller organizations – from INGOs, to local NGOs, to local associations – with the aim of reinforcing the capacity of their target communities. In this hierarchical chain, it is a case of experts sharing their knowledge with those considered to have less expertise, reinforcing the authority of larger INGOs over smaller local organizations and the population. Indeed, the director of one INGO noted that she is American, and the rest of the staff is Senegalese, but they are paid better than those at local NGOs. She said that they are at another level and after time, they have a different perspective. This is why she feels that partnerships with local organizations are extremely important, since it allows them, “...to continue to have a relationship with local NGOs and a local reality.” In her view, given that her INGO has a role of providing technical assistance, this naturally puts her staff at a different level. She commented that since her staff need to be experts, they are necessarily removed from the local partners with whom they work (INT61). Thus, their expertise separates them from not just the “local reality” but from the lesser experts of local NGOs. According to a Senegalese member of a local association, he wants to reinforce the capacity of the population by giving them information. He and his fellow association members, most of whom are university students, have education, and they

give this knowledge to people through presentations and training workshops (INT32). As noted in Chapter Three, the participants in this study tended to be highly educated professionals, most of who have expertise in human resources management, or a specialized field such as health, the environment, sociology, economics or finance. They use their expertise in these areas to build the capacity of other organizations and the local population. According to Li (2007:5), development trustees are defined by claims of knowing how other people should live, what they need, and what is best for them, with the aim of enhancing the capacity of others to act, and to direct this action. While NGO staff may have benevolent intentions involving improving the world, Li (2007:5) points out that, "...the claim to expertise in optimizing the lives of others is a claim to power, one that merits careful scrutiny" (Li 2007:5). Indeed, Ebrahim (2003:11) notes that for Foucault, knowledge and expertise in a particular field can be used as a tool for domination, and thus an exercise of power. Given their status and role as experts, NGO practitioners are in a position imbued with power, which they seek to exercise over the populations they intend to assist. Their focus is on the management of organizations and local people, and they try to use their expertise to build the capacities of others who seemingly lack their knowledge, experience and abilities.

## **Conclusion**

Today, there are many critiques and criticisms of NGO work overseas. This includes suggestions from some scholars that NGOs are depoliticizing, that they are engaged in the control of exploited people and do little to address structural issues, and

that they are comparable to missionaries promoting Western agendas. Some of the criticisms aimed at NGOs stem from NGO practitioners themselves, including a number of participants in my study who engaged with concerns about the problematic role of NGOs themselves, such as those who discussed the challenges of creating real change, having a lasting and significant impact on the population, and providing accountability to different stakeholders. Most NGO practitioners, however, focused their critique on the mismanagement of other NGOs in their field. They tended to emphasize the problems of corruption, duplication of projects, excessive bureaucracy and hierarchy, and a lack of efficiency and self-sufficiency that is found in for-profit enterprises. Given their interest in the greater self-sufficiency and efficiency they believe is found in the for-profit sector, some NGOs have engaged in profit-generating activities and businesses discourses in managing their NGOs. While some NGO practitioners were frustrated with this increasing reliance on business models, others supported the notion of merging capitalism and compassion, which corresponds with views of NGOs as improving the capacity of populations to survive and compete in a context of neoliberal globalization. With an emphasis on capacity building among other NGOs and local communities, it has been suggested that NGOs tend to focus more on reinforcing individual capacities that are perceived to be deficient than appreciating the assets of these groups. NGOs tend to concentrate on improving populations through the application of their expertise, rather than trying to engage with larger structural forces that shape the conditions of poverty experienced by many of the people they aim to assist. Despite these concerns and criticisms, NGO practitioners continue to be hopeful about the work of their organizations

and aspire to contribute to the improvement of Senegal, issues that will be explored in Chapter Six.

## Chapter Six - The Aspiration to Improve:

### Encountering Hope in NGO Work

#### Celeste's Dream

*It's a hot, sunny afternoon, and I'm sitting with Celeste and two other friends at a local beach in Dakar. Celeste is a young French woman who has spent the last year volunteering with a French INGO that partners with local NGOs. Today, we're sunning ourselves after a quick swim, trying to politely discourage persistent vendors of jewelry, woodcarvings and fruit from sitting beside us and displaying their wares. The beach is very popular, with young Senegalese children running in and out of the water, while American teenagers are huddled in a group, being trained in surfing techniques by a local surf school. Celeste and I start chatting, and she tells me that she has been having bad dreams recently. In particular, there is one really bad dream that she keeps having over and over again. In this dream, she is walking along a beach, and she comes across a cave. Inside the cave, she can see two people, an old man and an old woman. The old woman is dying and the old man is already dead. Despite this grave situation, she continues to walk past the cave. When she is one hundred meters away from the cave, she stops, and the realization that the woman in the cave needs help seems to really hit her. She decides that she must do something, and she runs back to the cave to find the old woman. She then holds the dying woman in her arms, and this woman starts to shrink, until she disappears into nothingness. Celeste is despondent in this dream about her inability to help. She tells me that her experiences in Senegal have made her feel like she has lost a piece of herself. She feels like she has become numb to human suffering, and it upsets her to think that she is no longer responsive to the needs of others.*

*Sitting next to her on the sand, I feel my eyes starting to well up with tears. Celeste's description of her dream moves me a great deal. It so accurately represents the sense of loss I had been feeling for the last several months; a feeling I had not been able to comprehend or rationalize. I now see that the hope I had expected to encounter with NGOs during my research has been replaced with a sense of disappointment and helplessness, recognizing the incredible difficulties facing the people of Senegal, and the seeming inability of NGOs, and myself, to fully address these issues. The result was to walk around with blinders on, to ignore the distress of others around me since I no longer felt that I could have any discernable impact on this situation of poverty and precariousness affecting millions of people.*

#### Introduction

The aspiration for a better world provides powerful motivation for NGO staff engaged in development work. Having explored some of the critical perspectives of NGO

practitioners with respect to NGO culture, as well as the functioning and power dynamics of NGO partnerships, I turn now to further explore the approaches and aspirations of these participants to their NGO work. This includes examining their motivations for becoming involved with NGOs, their understandings of the concept of hope, and their hopes for what can be accomplished by working with NGOs in Senegal. I also consider the hopefulness, in addition to the frustration and disappointment, they experience in conducting this work as they sometimes face seemingly insurmountable challenges. In seeking to understand the aspirations of people engaged in NGOs, it is my aim to gain insight into why these individuals have become involved in the NGO arena of Senegal, what they endeavor to achieve through their work, and how this has been shaped by long-term objectives of improvement. Despite the critiques of academics and even of those working in this field, as discussed in Chapter Five, many NGO practitioners are drawn to their work of improvement and are committed to its goals of developing the country of Senegal. I argue that for NGO staff, NGOs are a context encompassing a complex intermingling of hope, frustration, possibility and despair.

### **Exploring Aspiration and Development**

Aspirations for the future are an integral aspect of the development project, involving hopes of betterment for impoverished populations. Development discourses arose after WWII and related efforts of reconstruction to involve visions of equality and progress in the world. While problematic for a number of reasons, NGOs continue to be engaged in this worldview of improvement, and their position in the politics of creating

social change involves working within the current system to make small advancements that build up over time. In this context, hope is a significant element driving those engaged in NGOs to pursue their agendas of future improvement and progress.

### *Emergence of the Dream of Development*

The dream of development involves aspirations for improvement of conditions in parts of the world considered to be impoverished and less developed than their Western counterparts. For Escobar (1995:vii), the dream of development became an integral aspect of the cultural, socioeconomic and political life of the period following WWII. He points out that Truman's post WWII vision involved bringing about the necessary conditions to widely produce the features characterizing the "advanced" societies of that period, including high levels of urbanization and industrialization, adoption of modern education, the technicalization of agriculture, and the rapid increase in material production and standards of living (Escobar 1995:4-5). This was to be achieved through science, capital and technology, and Escobar (1995:4-5) notes that, in this vision, "Only in this way could the American dream of peace and abundance be extended to all the peoples of the planet."

These mid-20<sup>th</sup> century projects of modernization and development, which arose as part of the Western response to post-WWII reconstruction, emphasize equality as a measure of social welfare (Appadurai 2007:31). However, this pursuit of equality through development has been criticized as a pursuit of Western lifestyles, given that industrialized nations of Europe and North America are considered the models for societies of Africa, Asia and Latin America, with the notion that these societies need to

catch up and perhaps become like these industrialized nations (Escobar 1995:vii). In Escobar's (1995:vii) view, "Development was and continues to be – although less convincingly so as the years go by and its promises go unfulfilled – the magic formula." For Appadurai (2007:31), these new disciplines of development and modernization, along with an ideology of human rights, have formed the basis of the politics of hope, which is now viewed as the closing of the gap between the wealthy and poor in all societies. He sees the politics of hope as emerging from the space between two divergent ideologies of social transformation that have emerged (Appadurai 2007:30). This includes messianic, utopian, and millenarian movements for change which inflate hope into hyperconviction, and the politics of pragmatism, prudence and policy, emphasizing planned change such that hope is constrained by the calculations of possibility (Appadurai 2007:30). With this perspective, Appadurai (2007:33) states that "Hope now is a collectively mobilized resource that defines a new terrain between the temptations of utopia and the arrogance of technocratic solutions to change." In his view, one can best see the politics of hope in the explosion of civil society movements, including organizations, networks, and alliances engaged in programs to assist the poor and disenfranchised (Appadurai 2007:33). This includes NGOs, who have taken up the development project and applied their visions of planned gradual change throughout the world.

#### *NGOs and Development in Africa*

This explosive growth in civil society organizations has been particularly notable in the African context, where there has been a dramatic increase in the presence of Western

and local NGOs (Manji and O’Coill 2002:568). The emerging discourse of development following WWII became the rationale for two different types or groups of voluntary organization that became engaged in development work in Africa. The first group includes charitable bodies and overseas missionary societies present in Africa before countries achieved independence, while the second group consists of war charities that had formed to deal with the human impact of conflict in Europe and had no prior involvement in the colonies (Manji and O’Coill 2002:572). This first group, associated with the racist colonial regimes they had often supported, faced potential demise with the rise of anti-colonial movements (Manji and O’Coill 2002: 570-572). As a result, they transformed themselves by gradually replacing their white staff with educated Africans, and altering their ideological position, replacing overt racism with the new discourse of development that had begun to emerge in the international arena (Manji and O’Coill 2002: 572). This new approach seemed to imply an aspect of emancipation, suggesting the prospect of progress, which would benefit all (Manji and O’Coill 2002:572). As for the second group – the war charities – with the winding down of their operations in Europe, some decided to expand into new continents and engage in new activities, driven by both a desire for organizational survival and ideological beliefs of liberal internationalism (Manji and O’Coill 2002: 572-573). In this context, they enthusiastically embraced the discourse of development, and as Manji and O’Coill (2002:573) state, “They were seduced by arguments about development as a more noble pursuit than humanitarian relief alone, since it was said the former addressed the long-term causes of poverty, whereas the latter merely dealt with short-term symptoms.”

With the victory over colonialism and its related upheavals, Western NGOs became idealistic and enthusiastic about “bringing development to the people” in these countries with newfound independence (Manji and O’Coill 2002:574). During the 1980s and 1990s when NGOs began playing a central role in development, they were greeted as the panacea to forms of top-down development, and the path to empowerment for the poor (Hearn 2007:1096). In a critical perspective, however, Manji and O’Coill (2002:574) point out that the emerging dominant development discourse was problematic in how it was not framed in a language of justice and emancipation, but rather, expressed in a language of neutrality, technical expertise, charity and a deep paternalism. This discourse continues to reproduce social hierarchies in its definition of non-Western people in terms of their perceived deviation from Western cultural standards (Manji and O’Coill 2002:574). As Manji and O’Coill (2002: 574) state, “On this basis, the so-called ‘developing world’ and its inhabitants were (and still are) described only in terms of what they are not. They are chaotic not ordered, traditional not modern, corrupt not honest, under-developed not developed, irrational not rational, lacking in all of those things the West presumes itself to be.” According to Galvan (2004:8), in Africa, the assumed inevitability of the project of modernization, which includes infrastructure development, the accepted logic of the decentralized free market, and the universal expansion of electoral democracy and human rights, have meant that most activists and scholars unquestioningly turn from the so-called traditional past towards a progressive and transcendent modernization. However, despite these presumptions of improvement, Manji and O’Coill (2002:567) point out that in this framework of development, levels of

inequality have increased worldwide, and many post-colonial countries have seen their real per capita GDP fall, while welfare gains attained since independence in areas such as health, education and food consumption have now been reversed (Manji and O’Coill 2002:567). Due to these failures, Manji and O’Coill (2002:582) assert that if NGOs want to support the emancipation of humankind, their work must take place in the political domain, involving the support of social movements seeking to challenge a social system that benefits only a few while impoverishing many. However, this will be a challenging choice to make, since funding support is not likely to be forthcoming for this struggle towards emancipation (Manji and O’Coill 2002:583).

Given that some now see the hope for the poor as lying in the new social movements that exist outside the dominance of development agendas set by the institutions of powerful industrialized countries, this has become difficult terrain for NGOs to navigate (Wallace et al. 2006: 27). While in the past they were often viewed as the alternative voice advocating for the poor against neoliberal approaches, in recent times, NGOs tend to find themselves distanced from the new social movements supporting these aims (Wallace et al. 2006:27). Wallace et al. (2006:27) note that many NGOs have concerns about globalization and the proliferation of World Bank and IMF economic paradigms. However, this is a difficult context for NGOs who are trying to engage in this alternate paradigm while continuing to work as formal development organizations. In light of this, Wallace et al. (2006:28) note that few NGOs are actually engaged in fundamentally questioning the current economic model encouraged by the West and its ability to address the needs of the poor in Africa (Wallace et al. 2006:28).

*NGOs and Aspirations for Improvement*

Despite the criticism and challenges they face, many of those engaged in NGO work continue to hope that their efforts in development will result in improving the living conditions of the populations they aim to assist. A unique aspect of hope is its future orientation; the objective of hope lies in the future, while the act of hope for this objective occurs in the present (Waterworth 2004:6). This hope is present in the work of NGO practitioners, who actively engage in current development projects with the aim of producing positive change for the future. Courville and Piper (2004:42) note that by its very nature, NGO activism focuses on change. These scholars view hope as a “powerful resource for social change”, given that it can provide motivation for this change and a belief that an alternative future is possible (Courville and Piper 2004:42). However, they stress that this hope must be directed through concrete action that is aimed towards empowering the poor and marginalized (Courville and Piper 2004:42). In their view, NGOs are able to harness hope through their actions to assist others, and, “These actions can lead to an enabling form of power whereby participation in NGO-created activities can help marginalized people expand their networks, build capacity, and gain new skills – and ultimately, empower them” (Courville and Piper 2004:57). NGO activism in social-change processes necessarily includes a vision bringing together ideas for improvement, and hope that such ideas can be realized (Courville and Piper 2004:58). Indeed, Courville and Piper (2004:51) point out that hope is embedded in a worldview that considers betterment, development and change as both possible and positive aims to pursue. In light

of this particular worldview involving the worthy cause of development and improvement, I turn now to further explore the motivations for individuals to engage in NGO work in Senegal.

### **Motivations for NGO Work**

In order to better understand why certain people become involved with NGOs in Senegal, it is useful to consider the motivations that have brought them to this field. Those working with NGOs have a reputation for being highly motivated (Morse and McNamara 2006:322), and Wallace et al. (2006:5) state that NGO work entails a commitment to change that involves more than good intentions to include efforts to create change in an accountable and professional manner, which is led by a vision of positive change. This commitment is often based on beliefs in equality, justice, participation and inclusion, and involves a desire for marginalized people to have access to resources and have their voices heard (Wallace et al. 2006:5). However, it should be noted that motivations are inevitably very complex, and there is a great deal of variation for the specific motivations of NGO workers (Townsend and Townsend 2004:275). In my study, the motivations for engaging in NGO work in Senegal varied widely amongst NGO staff. There are generally three broad themes for these motivations, which include a general desire to help other people, an interest in assisting the Senegalese population, and personal reasons involving individual interests and benefits.

#### *Helping Others*

Approximately half of the participants in this study described their motivation for starting their work with their current NGOs as related to a desire to generally help others, usually with respect to a particular area of concern. This includes having an interest in working on issues of children's rights, the environment, women's equality, human rights and poverty. These participants, including work and volunteer staff, and individuals with a range of ages and backgrounds working at a variety of different organizations, generally described an interest in working to improve a particular area that is also a focus of the NGO for whom they work. For example, of the seven participants who described an interest in working for women's rights and equality, six worked or volunteered with NGOs that focus on women's issues. Similarly, all four of the NGO practitioners who noted their desire to work with NGOs in order to improve the rights of children were currently working or volunteering with organizations that addressed issues affecting children or youth. For instance, Fatima, an African woman, had previously worked with an INGO providing emergency assistance. A coworker left to work at an INGO that focuses on children's issues, and encouraged Fatima to join her at this organization. For the last ten years she has moved from program assistant to director of programs at this INGO. She said that her motivation for working with this organization is due to her love of children. Also, she sees that kids have to confront many problems. They are people without rights, considered the property of the family. Many of the problems that adults have start when they are children and few give them the consideration they deserve. For her, it is a priority to work in the area of children's rights since it is an area that is not

often given priority (INT63). Thus, her desire to help children in general motivated her to find work with her current organization.

For sixteen participants, most of whom are non-Senegalese, their NGO work was motivated by a desire to work in the development field in order to help others. For some, this interest began at a young age. One young Canadian woman volunteering with a Canadian INGO described wanting to go to Africa since the age of five, and envisioning herself as having an international job, such as one with Médecins Sans Frontières, wearing the garb and the boots and army kit associated with it (INT2). Similarly, when asked about her motivations for volunteering with an NGO, an American woman noted that when she was little, she told her mother she wanted to be a philanthropist when she grows up. She said that she has always wanted to help people (INT55). Others were motivated to participate in NGOs because they found development work to be rewarding. Henry, a Canadian man who now works as the director of a Canadian INGO, stated that he started working for this organization because he saw it as an opportunity to do work that is gratifying. He stated, “I have a marked interest in doing this kind of work. People work in international development because they can work against poverty, injustice, and exclusion. It is good to do something and it is useful for an important cause. It is good to do something concrete” (INT3).

### *Helping Senegal*

Another theme in the motivations for beginning one's work with an NGO involves a desire to help the Senegalese population with certain issues, which was mentioned by a

third of participants. This includes an interest in helping with economic, health, and educational challenges, and improving human rights, particularly those involving women and youth. For example, several participants described a desire to help Senegal with its issues of poverty. Adama, an older Senegalese man working as an NGO network coordinator, said he was motivated to engage in this work because he wants to change the social situation for the better and to help youth. He wants to help the country move from underdevelopment to become developed (INT15). As for Ibou, a Senegalese program manager for a local health NGO, he became motivated to work in this field when he met someone who was HIV positive. He put himself in the place of this person and considered how difficult this must be for the family. It was a trigger for him. It made him more aware of the difficulty of this situation, and he wanted to do something to help with the knowledge of the Senegalese population regarding reproductive health and AIDS (INT46).

For some, their motivation for becoming involved in an NGO was to try to help Senegal generally, and this was noted by both Senegalese and non-Senegalese staff. A young Senegalese man, Georges, works as a program manager for a local NGO that is part of an international NGO network. In terms of his motivation for his work with this organization, he said that he wants to serve his country and community, including the weakest of the population (INT12). A middle-aged Canadian woman who was experiencing her first overseas volunteer experience with an INGO said she decided to volunteer because it is important for her to see how people live here in Senegal, and to see what she can bring and what they can bring to her. In an age of over-consumption and

consumerism, people do not think about helping others, but she has always tried to be helpful to others (INT19).

It should be noted that two-thirds of participants who described their motivation for NGO work in Senegal as involving a desire to help with this country's development are Senegalese in nationality. This appears to be linked to a sense of national pride and connection with local communities, such as when Georges, as noted above, expressed his desire to serve his country. For non-Senegalese staff, the motivation for becoming involved in an NGO in Senegal did not often feature a specific interest in helping Senegal. In fact, a number of non-Senegalese NGO volunteers noted that coming to Senegal had not been an expressed interest for them before they arrived here. For example, when asked about her aspirations for Senegal's future, Regan, a young American volunteer with an INGO, said, "I don't give a crap about Senegal." She said she had come to Senegal because she had previously visited East Africa, and she had wanted to see another part of Africa and learn French. Also, her INGO had decided to send her to Senegal because she was needed here (INT55). Indeed, other non-Senegalese volunteers also stated that they came to work with NGOs in Senegal not out of an interest in the country itself, but due to a desire to visit Africa, to learn French, and in some cases, because their NGO posted them there. An older Canadian woman named Veronique pointed out that she had not chosen to volunteer in Senegal, and had in fact applied for a post with the INGO in a different West African country. However, after her interview, the INGO manager called and said that they would like her to go to Senegal because they have a bigger contract here and they need her financial expertise. They said that she has a

lot of experience and they needed a person that can travel autonomously (INT22). Thus, not all motivations for NGO work in Senegal involved an interest in the country, and many described reasons outside of a desire to help the population for their interest in this work.

### *Motivations involving Personal Interests*

The most significant theme in the motivations for deciding to work, volunteer or paid, with an NGO in Senegal involves an aspect of personal interest or benefit. A large majority of participants described personal reasons for working with an NGO that are unrelated to a desire to assist others, either within or outside of Senegal. This included a range of individual concerns. For example, Lamine is a young Senegalese man who has been volunteering with a Senegalese health association for four years. The appreciation and recognition he receives for his volunteer work is very important to him. He said, “I am valued at my organization...I meet kids on the street, and many recognize me. This is important to me. I have many friends and many people adore me just because of this health association. It is very important for me that many know me for the work I do here” (INT69).

For a few non-Senegalese study participants, their interest in pursuing their current NGO work was due to a desire to travel. For example, when asked why he decided to volunteer with an INGO in Senegal, Alex, a young Canadian volunteer, said, “In my case, [it is] because I wanted to travel, and I had already worked in a similar post in Canada; when I worked with [an NGO in Canada], it was a similar structure, so it was

a perfect fit for me in terms of work here. This was a similar job – everything was very similar. So I knew I could help them here... And I wouldn't mind at some point working for the UN, and I needed some field experience in developing countries. And they usually require three years, at least. So, all this together, it made sense for me to come here.”

Thus, he decided to come to Senegal to volunteer, both for travel and career reasons (INT4).

Indeed, for many participants, the personal reasons they mentioned for working or volunteering with an NGO involved work aspirations, such as seeking income, work opportunities, or the chance to use their skills and expertise in their jobs. As Townsend and Townsend (2004: 275) note, while there are a range of complex motivations for the work of NGO staff, there are a large number of people, both from the North and South, who consider their work in this domain as simply a career. For example, some participants noted that their motivation for working with their NGOs involved an interest in having a job and generating an income. Alphonse, a middle-aged Senegalese man working as the coordinator of a local environmental NGO, said that he started this work because despite his training, the state was not recruiting, and this was a problem. So he decided to work for an NGO (INT87). This was similar to the situation described by Malick, a Senegalese man in his twenties, who has been working for the last year as an assistant program coordinator for an INGO. In terms of his motivations for becoming involved in this work, he said, “I prefer working with NGOs, which is my personal motivation. First, I find that with remuneration, salary, etc, it is better than with [government] administration. Also, with my personal conviction and my vision of

development, I find that these are the organizations closest to the population and do the most concrete things for the population” (INT36).

In a similar way, almost a third of participants described engaging in NGO work in order to utilize their past experiences and education in a work context. For example, Andre, an older Senegalese man, received post-secondary training in agronomy at a technical school, and worked for several years as a technician for an international organization. He then completed a masters degree in sociology and began working with a development INGO. This was followed by several years of work for another NGO in the field of agricultural production, and then a foray into freelance consulting. He was then hired by an American INGO, which focuses on issues of agriculture, and after twenty years of service, he is now the director of their local office. In his view, by working for this NGO, he is able to use his background in agronomy to help with the development of Senegal (INT23).

Certainly, a number of individuals in this study, both Senegalese and non-Senegalese, pointed out that by working with an NGO, it allowed them to gain professional work or volunteer experience and training. This includes volunteers such as Alex, noted above, and Danica, a young German volunteer with a local NGO. She has a bachelor degree in international development, but has been unable to find work with a humanitarian organization, her preferred area of work. She tried writing emails to try to find a job in development and humanitarianism. This did not work well, because she had studies in development, but not much experience. She decided to find a volunteer job and go abroad. Her need for more work experience in this area is primarily why she wanted to

come to Senegal to volunteer with a local organization (INT60). As well, Yacine, a Senegalese woman in her early twenties, is working as a secretary for a local association as part of a training practicum, and she engages in this work because she wants professional training, in addition to needing the small salary for her children and mother, and wanting to help with a humanitarian association (INT31).

As is evident with the above cases, study participants often cited a variety of motivations for becoming engaged in NGO work, which typically involved a combination of reasons, such as a desire to help others generally, to assist in the development of Senegal, and/or to satisfy personal interests. This is evident in the response of a Senegalese woman in her forties, who noted that she sought work as a program manager for a British INGO because this work meant less moving around than her previous job in consulting. As well, she wanted to use her knowledge and university schooling in natural resource management and apply it towards changing things, to work against poverty and to help others (INT51). Thus, the motivations for deciding to work with NGOs are varied and numerous, and tended to entail reasons that were altruistic along with others involving a desire for personal gain.

## **Perspectives and Definitions of Hope**

*Understanding Hope: Visions of a Better Future*

How can we understand and approach the concept of hope? It is an important aspect of the human experience, and Zournazi (2002:123) notes that people generally have a need to look forward to something, and a sense that there is some sort of meaning in life. Hope can be understood in a variety of ways, and it can be active or passive, critical or patient, collective or private (Webb 2007:80). As Webb (2007:80) notes, everyone hopes, but we experience this mental feeling in a variety of modes. In this study, participants were asked to discuss their NGO motivations, hopes and aspirations for the future. Given the nebulous nature of the concept of hope, which is notoriously difficult to pin down (Webb 2007:80), it was important to base this in an understanding of how they approach this notion.

For participants in this study, hope can be envisioned in many different ways. Some Senegalese participants felt that hope was best understood as a dream for the future. As noted by a young Senegalese woman, hope is to dream to have something, and it will either happen or not happen (INT31). For others, including a few women from different backgrounds, hope can be considered a form of wishing. For instance, when asked to define the concept of hope, Julie, a Canadian volunteer with a Canadian INGO, said that “Hope is for people to live better; wishing they will live better and wishing to get better conditions to live” (INT19).

While the NGO staff participating in this study provided a range of views concerning the concept of hope, the most common perspective involved the notion that hope entails the idea of a better future. More than a third of study participants, from a variety of backgrounds and NGOs, shared this view, which very generally involved the

expression of hope as connected to something better. For Alex, a Canadian volunteer, hope means, "...to have a better world; to better the world; to improve the world...To improve the world in some positive way. To help others" (INT4). For Alphonse, a Senegalese coordinator of a local NGO, hope means the next day being better in all areas of life (INT87). While this was the most popular approach to understanding hope, this notion of "better" is not very specific, and this issue was raised by Jeff, a young American man working for a local NGO. He noted that the definition of hope would be different for everyone. In his view, this is because, "Even when we say we hope for something better, I mean, what's better? For me, the concept of hope is that I'm going to get or do something that I want to do soon. I hope to be on a plane on December 9, and I hope to be working for this local NGO in a different way. I guess that's the best I can do. It's a difficult one. Hope. I think it's meaningless... Because it's like normal, it's like reality, or – it's just a general concept that doesn't have any sort of...it's not like table [knocks on table], that's different. It's an abstraction" (INT66). Given that hope is a rather abstract concept, it can be a slippery notion to pin down. However, its ambiguity also allows people to imbue it with ideas that are meaningful to them, which can provide insight into how people understand and approach their current context.

*Hope as an Emotion, Capacity and Affect*

Hope can be defined in a variety of ways, and the participants in this study took a number of approaches to understanding this concept. Given the academic literature on hope, which, as noted in Chapter Two, tends to describe this concept as a human emotion, capacity or affect, it is interesting to consider how responses from participants correspond to these categories.

#### Hope as an Emotion

Only a few participants described hope as a human emotion. Almost all of those who shared this view were Senegalese, and most were men. This perspective was shared only by a small number of individuals, such as Jean, a young Senegalese man volunteering with a local association. Asked to define hope, he said, “I just live, I just feel it. It is a vision of the future. An ideal vision of the future one can project...Hope is a fuel, a booster. There is hope inside. Hope is a feeling. With my association, there is a job to do and there is a feeling of hope to unite everyone in the country” (INT71). Another Senegalese man who works for an INGO said that hope is a sentiment that tomorrow, something will be better (INT36). This corresponds with Bloch’s (1986:75) view of hope as a human emotion of longing, an expectant emotion that counters fear and anxiety.

#### Hope as a Capacity

Given the significance of the notion of capacity in NGO work, which is further described in Chapter Five, one would expect that this term would be popular in describing the concept of hope. However, only four participants used the term capacity to refer to

hope. This includes Michel, an older Senegalese man working as the director of a local NGO that is a member of an international network. In his view, hope is the capacity of an individual or group to have a vision for the future, and plan a path to arrive there. He envisions a future of quality, and he knows there is a path to arrive there (INT88). This perspective resonates with that of Appadurai (2004), who views hope as a human capacity to navigate towards achieving certain goals in a particular context. He notes that agents engaged in development can strengthen this capacity to aspire amongst the poor by helping them find resources to challenge the conditions of their poverty (Appadurai 2004:59). While Appadurai (2004) shows that this perspective involving hope as capacity can be employed in approaches to development, this view was not commonly shared by the individuals in my study.

#### Hope as an Affect: A Sense of Future Possibility

Out of these three approaches to hope, the perspective that most connected with the views of participants involved the idea that hope is an affect, associated with a sense of possibility about the future. Indeed, Anderson (2006a:744) describes hopefulness as a positive change in affect involving a renewed feeling of possibility. Nine participants from different backgrounds described hope as involving a sense of possibility, while a number of others alluded to this perspective. In expressing this view, Bill, an American director of an American-founded local NGO, stated that:

I think hope is believing things can be better and believing that we can help to make them better. I think Obama is the epitome of a person who has instilled hope in an entire country despite the blackest of economic times, despite two wars, despite everything that's going on in terms of terrorism. He managed to bring

people around to the idea of ‘yes, we can.’ That, for me, is what hope is about. It’s that things may be bad, but we can make them better; there are things that can be done to make them better. And that it’s within our power to make them better. We’re not necessarily victims of circumstance, or powers bigger than we are. No matter how small we are, we can do things to influence what is happening to us and what is happening around us. That’s what hope means to me. (INT45)

In a similar way, several other individuals suggested that hope was tied to the notion that change is possible in the future. According to one Canadian woman, who works for a Canadian INGO, hope is the belief that tomorrow, or later, something will be better – that things can change (INT13). Certainly, the notion of possibility was considered an important aspect of hope. It was even pointed out by a few people that something could not be called hope if it is impossible. Giselle, a French woman volunteering with a local European-funded association, said that “For me, hope is something that is not inaccessible that can be realized that will improve things, but not necessarily material...It is not the thing that you dream for. Hope is something that I really wish, but that is possible to realize... It is not something impossible. For me, hope is something that makes me live. It is all the little things that are possible” (INT52). Pettit (2004:153) shares this view, stating that “To hope that something comes about, or to put one’s hope in someone’s achieving something, or to be hopeful that such and such has or has not happened – or anything of the kind – a first prerequisite is that one does not believe for certain that the hope is forlorn... I must not rule out the hoped-for possibility; I must believe that it could be realized.”

It is interesting to note, however, that some participants pointed out that even while hopes and aspirations are possible, there is no certainty that they will come about. According to a young American volunteer, hope is believing the possibility of something

happening. It is related to the future, and involves allowing oneself to be positive about an outcome that is unsure (INT55). Tania, a Dutch woman working as a coordinator for an INGO, viewed hope as a wishful feeling that might not happen (INT39). As well, Lamine, a young Senegalese volunteer with a local association, stated that the uncertainty of hope makes him fearful of this concept. While he noted that he is not pessimistic, he is afraid for his people and the children he might have some day because of uncertainty about the future. For him, hope signifies fear (INT69). Similarly, Pettit (2004:153) points out that while hope requires a belief in the possibility of an outcome, it also requires that this outcome not be considered an absolute certainty. Hope can be considered a mental act of creating a sense of anticipation and expectation about the future, even if the desired event is highly uncertain to occur (Drahos 2004:21-22).

Despite the uncertainty involved in achieving one's aspirations, numerous participants noted that people should work towards achieving their goals and not wait idly for them to happen. For instance, Adama, a Senegalese man who works as a coordinator for a NGO network, noted that hope allows us to dream about a different tomorrow or future. However, he said that hope is not enough; you need to work to realize these hopes (INT15). For another Senegalese man, Luc, who is the director of the local office of an INGO, hope is a positive vision one has of the future. Things must be in set in place in order for one to think that the future will allow for a better life. One should not have hope if you do not put things in place; this is too naive. For example, he did a Masters of Arts in economics and he will do an MBA, because this will improve his work in his current management position. It is naïve to do nothing and have hope. It is like winning the

lottery. One should do something to put things in place for one's hopes to happen (INT68). Perhaps the act of hoping should be considered as the impetus to pursuing desired outcomes. Drahos (2004:22, 23) notes that when an individual places himself or herself in a state of hope, this starts a process that brings into realization the desired situation, and this process of hope leads to a cycle involving expectation, planning and action. As noted by Courville and Piper (2004:44), while pushing for social change requires hope, this is not sufficient, since hope must also be harnessed through concrete action.

### **Hope and NGO Development Work**

Aspiration for future progress is a central component of the project of development. A number of participants specifically discussed hope in terms of their work with NGOs and development. Henry is a Canadian man in his fifties who has worked with a number of NGOs, and began working with his current Canadian INGO over twenty years ago. He is now a director for this organization, which works in a variety of areas with the aim of fighting poverty and exclusion. He noted that, "When you are alone, sometimes it is a bit discouraging. But sometimes when you are discussing with people, or communities, or organizations, and you see where they are, even a small improvement that they can get, they will be so happy with that...I think that's hope." He then added, "I think that to work in a context like mine, one sees that human beings everywhere are equal... Everyone wants to improve their condition" (INT3).

In this study, it was often noted that hope was necessary for one to continue engaging in development work, and even to continue living. Jacques is an older French

man who works as the coordinator of an environmental INGO. For him, the concept of hope involves having an egalitarian society, where all can eat and live equally with others without conflict. He said that all of his life, he has had utopian hope. This is what allows him to live. If you do not hope for a better day for the world, life becomes more difficult. He pointed out that hope is important for his work. First, one must hope for a better world, and hope that what you do each day will provide movement towards a better world. If not, he said he will close the office, and to this, he laughed. Jacques commented that one must hope – hope that what you do allows for another generation to follow (INT74). Similarly, Adama, a middle-aged Senegalese man and a coordinator for an NGO network that focuses on assisting youth, said that hope allows us to continue to live. It gives us courage to continue working and to fight even if the situation is catastrophic (INT15). Indeed, Anderson (2006a:744) points out that being hopeful is characterized by striving to live and experiment, and it allows individuals to go on.

Hope was also discussed more specifically in terms of the communities with whom the NGOs work. Jean-Marc is a French man who has lived in Senegal for the last five years and he works as the local director of an INGO focusing on programs for children. He described trying to foster hope in communities through NGO work. He said that hope is very important for his work, noting that “You can work effectively only with people that have hope for a better future. You cannot work with communities – and we choose not to work with communities – where there is absolutely no hope...Even in our systems we talk about the emergence of hope in our work as a sign...All of our development philosophy is centred around a concept we call transformational

development, TD, where we have TDIs, transformation development indicators. And one of these indicators is the emergence of hope.” In his view, “A place that is not so hopeful is a place where all the young people decide to leave. Only old people stay in the village. All the young people have fled. In some places in Senegal, that has happened. All the young people have fled – to the city, to Europe, to die in the sea.... Also, a community, when you interview people where you see that people don’t think that tomorrow can be better.” In contrast, he said that the emergence of hope could be seen with young people returning to communities to earn a living, and communities sending their kids to school. Sending your kids to school indicates you have hope, because school is a financial sacrifice, and it involves hope that your children will go further than you have. Another sign is that people go to vote. He said, “If you vote, it’s because you believe that something can be transformed, that your government can get better. It’s a very strong indicator of hope. And in Senegal, if you look at the last elections, you see that people have voted” (INT65). Given the often bureaucratic nature of NGOs and the importance of aspiring for improvement in their approaches and activities, it is interesting to note how hope has been institutionalized into such a framework.

In a similar way, Nancy, a young American woman working with a Christian development INGO, pointed out that hope is the confidence whether in yourself, your community or country that you can attain a certain level of happiness and contentment, whether physical, financial or spiritual. For her INGO, there are six things that contribute to the development of a person, community and country. They are social assets, physical, financial, natural, spiritual, and political aspects – political in terms of having a say in

what happens. These combine together to influence one's environment. With a strong structure and system, it reinforces the ability that people can access these assets (INT58). It is evident that notions about hope and aspiration have a significant role to play in the improvement approaches of NGO staff, and it emerges as an important part of their ability to continue working in this field, as well as a vital aspect they seek to locate and encourage in the communities in which they work.

### **Aspirations for the Future: Different Levels of Hoping**

In terms of the object of one's hopes, it was noted that hope could be understood as existing at different levels or scales. For example, Djiby, a Senegalese man working as a program manager for an INGO, pointed out that there are different levels of hope. There is hope at the level of the individual, where each person hopes to have a job one likes, start a family and find one's place in society. Then there is hope at the collective level; this hope involves a re-founding of society (INT40). In addition, an African woman in her thirties who is currently working at a program director at an INGO said that hope exists at different levels. There is hope at the personal level, which one can define as having a better life. Each person defines what it is that they seek to have better, such as having a better job. At the personal level, it is always in terms of better. There also hope for the nation, at the level of the country. This involves hoping that there is always peace in the country, that things will change, and that leaders will do the work they should do. One always hopes at different levels that things will change for the better (INT63). A similar perspective is also evident in the work of McGeer (2004), who considers how people

direct their hopes. She notes that people hope for individual or private hopes, as well as engaging in collective hope, which involves hope shared by others for the community of which they are a part (McGeer 2004:125-126). As McGeer (2004:126) states, “While it builds on individual or private hopes, shared hopes become collective when individuals see themselves as hoping and so acting in concert for ends that they communally endorse.” In this following section, I examine the personal hopes of NGO workers, in addition to exploring their collective hopes for what can be accomplished through their NGO work, both for the wider Senegalese community and the organizations themselves. Further consideration of the collective hopes NGO practitioners expressed for the country of Senegal will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

### *Personal Hopes*

Personal hopes are directed towards specific goals at the individual level. It was pointed out by a number of participants that hopes are different for each person, and based on individual values and preferences. As noted by a young American volunteer with a local NGO, it is like seeing the glass half full or half empty. You hope something will or will not happen. She said that it depends on where you are before and where you hope to be. Thus, one hopes for something and then depending on your personal situation, you can evaluate how possible these hopes are to achieve (INT54). Veronique, an older Canadian woman volunteering with an INGO, stated that hope is the criteria that permits one to think of a future better than the present. These hopes are based on one’s values,

and her hopes are based on her values, while others have different values. Values allow for hope, and there are personal and community values (INT22).

The most common personal aspiration for NGO staff involved being able to work well and achieve success in their NGO work efforts. This was cited by more than half of participants, both Senegalese and non-Senegalese staff from both international and local NGOs. This includes Idrissa, an older Senegalese man with a doctorate in development economics from a university in France. He worked with the Senegalese government for over thirty years, along with a number of different development NGOs. He is currently working as an expert consultant at a local NGO. When discussing his personal hopes for the future, he said, “I hope, and I believe in myself and in god – I am Muslim – and in people too...I believe in people. It is why one should help the poorest. The faith of believing in people gives me an altruistic attitude; an attitude that makes me want to approach people and help and assist them.” Also, he noted that his religious beliefs as a Muslim shaped his personal hopes. As he noted, “I am a member of the Mouride brotherhood...for me, the culture of this brotherhood is a culture of work. The religion says one should have a culture of work. It is in work, that one is rewarded and can have interior satisfaction. Work well done, that is what I try to do. It gives me satisfaction. It is moral satisfaction, and maybe then financial satisfaction will follow, and so on. That is why I hope” (INT81).

Similarly, numerous participants discussed their personal hopes involving having a stable job and progressing in their careers. Having previously worked for other NGOs and as a university professor, a Senegalese research manager of a local health NGO said

his personal hopes for his future involved having a promotion and the opportunity to manage a big project for his organization (INT90). Aminata, a young Senegalese woman, has volunteered with a local health association for the last four years, and while she enjoys her work, which involves promoting reproductive health amongst young people, she said that she can no longer continue to be a volunteer, since she wants to support her family, and have something for her future. She hopes that she will be paid for her work with the NGO (INT75).

Personal aspirations involving one's family were mentioned by almost half of the participants in this study. This included hoping for a better future for one's family, getting married and having children, and, as was noted by Aminata above, being able to help and financially support family members. Indeed, Nancy, a young American program manager for an INGO, said that because she had recently had a baby, her aspirations for the future had changed. Six months ago, she would have said that she hoped to continue working at her INGO and had the ability to manage more programming. Now, she hoped to do that and at the same time, meet the needs of her family. Before, she would still be working at the office at 6:00pm in the evening. Now she is home at this time to be with her family. She hopes to be able to find a work/life balance. (INT58).

A small number of participants, most of whom were non-Senegalese, also shared their personal aspirations involving travel and achieving happiness. Hope for good health in the future was also mentioned by NGO staff, as well as a desire to further one's education. This includes several Senegalese men and women aspiring to complete graduate degrees at the Masters and PhD levels, as well as a young Senegalese man and

an American woman who both expressed a desire to complete a law degree, he in human rights and she in food policy. As well, a few Senegalese NGO practitioners noted their aspirations for further training in their fields, and Jules, a Senegalese man who is completing a Masters in management, described his hope to study overseas, perhaps in Canada, Belgium, France or the U.S. He hoped he could study outside of Senegal and then return to Senegal with this knowledge and work here (INT76). The aspiration for greater education can be understood given the role of NGO staff, who must maintain their expert status through advanced education and training, as discussed in Chapter Five. While hope is a universal quality, how it is experienced and expressed varies differently depending on the context (Webb 2007:67). For NGO staff, many of their personal hopes revolved around working well, having career and educational success, and being able to provide for their families. In the context of working for NGOs in Senegal, hopes for job security and success can be related to working in an environment that is experiencing increasing instability with the financial crisis, an issue noted in Chapter Four. This financial crisis has been viewed as having the potential to create a more difficult economic situation for the Senegalese population, as well as being a threat to the operations of NGOs and creating uncertainty about the continued employment of NGO practitioners.

*Hopes for NGO Work*

### Helping the Population

At the organizational level, in discussions involving the aspirations of staff for their NGO work, there were two general themes expressed. This included hopes for the target population of the NGO, and hopes for the future of the organization itself. The former typically involved statements about hoping to assist particular groups of people for whom their NGO organizes activities and interventions. For example, a young Canadian volunteer sent by a Canadian INGO to volunteer with a local association of producers said that he hoped that through his NGO work, local cultivators could produce vegetables that are competitive with European imports (INT4). As well, the Senegalese coordinator of a local NGO focusing on women's issues said that she hopes her organization will work with the dynamic of social transformation, and offer a space of dialogue and cooperation for women. She hopes they can develop a strategy involving lots of actors, not just NGOs, but religious leaders, traditional leaders, etc., to discuss and work on issues affecting women. She said she hoped they could change the image that men are of higher status than women in Senegal (INT7).

Hopes for what their NGOs can accomplish in Senegal were sometimes discussed in very specific ways, such as when Jules, a young Senegalese president of a student association, said he hopes to accomplish their mission of increasing the number of university students from his ethnic group from forty to one hundred at the local university. He hopes to involve these students in the decisions of Senegal by having them attain top government and business positions in the country (INT76). However, participants often described future aspirations for the work of NGOs in very general

terms, such as when a young Senegalese program manager stated that he hoped his NGO would change the lives of youth in difficult situations and develop the community (INT12). Certainly, for a number of participants, their aspirations were described very generally as achieving the mission of their NGOs. This includes comments about hoping to “remain on target” (INT39), “further the mission” (INT55), “obtain objectives” (INT73), and “accomplish the program of development” (INT79). Indeed, when asked what she hoped to achieve with her NGO, the Senegalese coordinator of a local NGO commented that she hoped her NGO would realize all that they wanted to achieve and all of the missions that the NGO has established (INT7). While these responses may be due to the rather vague goals typically espoused by NGOs, they are also likely influenced by the technical language encouraged in this environment and a desire to complete the interview in what they perceive as a speedy, yet professional manner.

#### Strengthening and Sustaining NGOs

The second theme for the hopes of NGO practitioners with regard to their NGO work involves aspirations for the future of the NGOs with which they work. For example, a number of volunteers and employees of Senegalese NGOs and associations, most of whom are Senegalese themselves, stated that they hoped their organizations would be able to access more funding in order to be sustainable and help their target populations. A few other Senegalese participants noted their hopes that their NGOs could grow and expand into other regions and countries. In a similar way, some individuals, including those involved with INGOs and local NGOs, noted their aspirations for their organizations to collaborate with other NGOs and organizations. This was the case for the

Senegalese coordinator of a local NGO network, who said, “My hope for the organization is to be able to overcome the challenges, to develop the network, to keep our partners – because it is a challenge to keep partners...to work in synergy with other civil society organizations” (INT16). For some, the future strength of their organizations was based on the ability to be more self-sufficient and less dependent on others for support. Indeed, several other participants involved with Senegalese NGOs, including Ibrahim, a Senegalese man who works as an INGO program supervisor, expressed their interest in having stronger, more independent organizations in the future (INT14).

Interestingly, a woman sent by an INGO to train a local Senegalese NGO commented on her hopes for the eventual end of her work and her organization, an American NGO focusing on women’s issues such as domestic violence. In terms of what she aspires for her NGO to accomplish, she hopes they will fight and meet their goals, working on their mission so that eventually their services will no longer be needed. Her aspiration was, “To work so that we do not have work” (INT24). None of the other participants expressed such an aspiration, although, in a somewhat different approach, Janice, an American director of a local NGO, noted that she hoped that her organization would be handed over for a local governmental organization to operate, stating that “It is a handover they should see, and I am encouraged by the creation of a long-term management structure” (INT53). Few others shared such views about the termination of their NGO or the transfer of its activities to a government agency, and in fact, a number of non-Senegalese participants had expressed their hopes for the long-term continuation of local NGOs. This includes a small group of non-Senegalese participants working or

volunteering for Senegalese NGOs, who described a desire for their organizations and their efforts to continue and be sustainable. Jeff, a young American man working for a Senegalese NGO said he hopes for it to be a self-sustaining organization. This is what he really hopes (INT66). In the same way, Patricia, a Canadian volunteer sent by an American INGO to assist a local NGO partner, discussed her hopes for her NGO work. She said, “I hope that I am helpful to them in a way that is sustainable in the future, so that when I leave, whatever I put into place will be carried on by the people that are working there. There’s a very smart group of people that are there. To me, it’s all about sustainable development – about being able to put things in place and train and you can then walk away and it can continue” (INT43). Similarly, an American woman working as a program assistant at an American-founded local NGO said that she was concerned about the longevity of this NGO since its founder recently retired. This had left a lot of holes and it was a huge change. She hopes that the organization is able to carry on into the future. She noted that longevity is a big issue for NGOs if the founder retires and is no longer there (INT44). Thus, a number of non-Senegalese volunteers and employees shared their hopes that their efforts will continue to be felt after they leave these local NGOs and that these organizations will thrive in the future. Concerns about the sustainability of local organizations and their projects in a context of financial uncertainty are further discussed in Chapter Four.

Having explored the aspirations of NGO staff at a personal level and at the level of their organizations, including a discussion of what they hope to achieve for Senegalese

communities through their work, Chapter Seven will further consider their collective hopes for the country of Senegal in a context of growing interconnection.

### **Encounters with Hope in NGO Work**

Many NGO practitioners find that the mental feeling of hope is significant in their efforts to achieve future improvement for local populations. However, given the complex and challenging nature of their work, along with the criticisms and critiques they face for engaging with social change in a manner that seems not to counter a hegemonic and destructive economic system, other strong mental feelings, such as frustration and despair, shape their NGO experiences. In a context of neoliberal globalization, millennial capitalism appears to fuse utility and futility, modern and postmodern, hope and hopelessness, such that the world presents itself as full of contradiction, simultaneously full of possibility and impossibility (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:24). In trying to live together in this era of postmodernism, DeChaine (2005:3) notes that “Palpable in their affective admixture of idealism, fear, hope, anger, and uncertainty, the protagonists of the story are humanitarian social actors, engaged in a vivid social drama.” In this section, I suggest that NGO practitioners are indeed engaged in an environment of uncertain hope that creates a complex fusion of human experiences and responses.

#### *Hopeful NGO Experiences*

The work of NGO staff is imbued with hope that such efforts will contribute to a better future for the people they aim to assist. Participants in this study often discussed the

sense of hopefulness they felt in engaging in work in this field. Typically, this was associated with an acknowledgement that their NGO activities had accomplished some of their aims, suggesting the likelihood for success in the future. As the director of an INGO that focuses on a variety of issues, including women's rights, Sandra felt proud of her organization's accomplishments. She noted that she sees changes happening through their work, as do many of the INGO executive members. They see actions occurring that have resulted in an improvement of people's lives. They see people becoming empowered, and they feel a sense of satisfaction at having the ability to make a difference in people's lives. In one community where they have programs, four women are running for parliament, and community members are committed to promoting human rights and health in the community. To Sandra, this can be considered hope, and it is her personal aspiration that her INGO, "...be remembered as the first NGO to really bring human rights education to Africa. And we're doing that on a very large scale right now, and I think it's going to make an incredible difference. And it think it's not going to bring even hope, it's going to bring beyond hope... It's beyond hope. It's actually bringing change, positive change, through very positive and forward-looking action" (INT33). Similarly, Luc, the Senegalese director of the local office of a human rights INGO, discussed the importance of hope to his work. He noted that his job is very demanding, often with a lot of frustration. Only hope allows him to keep going. NGOs do not pay very much. He hopes for change for the betterment of the population. In recent years, his INGO lobbied for the Senegalese government to pass important human rights legislation. Through their work, the president has implemented these changes, and it has been passed into law by

the Senegalese government. He said even if he quits his job, he would know he brought something to Senegal. In his view, you start certain projects and have hope that gives you the strength to pursue and continue this work (INT68). Thus, through the accomplishment of some short-term aims, NGO work was described by some as contributing to a sense of hopefulness about the ability of NGOs to contribute positively to the improvement of local populations now and in the future.

#### *Disappointment and Despair in NGO Work*

While hopefulness is an integral aspect of NGO work, other, more distressing, mental feelings are also associated with this work environment. The sense of helplessness and despair described by Celeste at the beginning of this chapter was also described by a number of other NGO practitioners in this study. This often involved a sense of disappointment or frustration about the ability to change the current situation and have a positive impact on the future through their work. In particular, this tended to be noted by non-Senegalese volunteers. At the end of her month-long volunteer placement with a Canadian INGO, Veronique, a middle-aged Canadian woman, found herself feeling more uncertain about the ability of NGOs to make an impact in Senegal. While she did not know very much about the country and the mission of the NGO before she arrived, during her time in Senegal she has seen that there are many needs. She is not sure that continuing to have more projects with NGOs like hers is the solution because changes are not being made this way. She said that she does not have the sense that the situation will change. For her, it seems that the government does not want the country to grow, and you can feel

that this government wants the country to stay in the same situation (INT22). In another case, a young French volunteer with a local association supporting youth in rural communities shared his frustration at the failure of one of their projects. His organization had invested in helping a community grow crops as a source of income, but a variety of environmental factors had decimated their harvest. Describing his disappointment, he said, “So you believe in something, and get nothing.” They had hope and it did not work out, and now a project that was supposed to provide opportunities for young people has resulted in disappointment (INT84). For an older Senegalese man volunteering with a local NGO that focuses on conflict resolution, one of the main disappointments he has faced in his work occurred when a partner who had agreed to fund one of their programs informed them that they were no longer able to provide this funding. In this way, the donor created hope for him and his organization, and then cancelled this funding at the last minute so that his NGO could not realize their program. He said this has truly been the biggest disappointment they have faced at his NGO (INT86). Certainly, hope can be considered to embody risk, given that hope is uncertain, and it can fade and be disappointed (Anderson 2004:751). As well, hope is something that can be lost, either partially or completely (McGeer 2004:109). Certainly, Courville and Piper (2004:57) point out that if hope is relied on for too long and changes are not achieved at some point, there is the potential for hope to collapse into despair. In order to maintain hope, we require a somewhat responsive social world, which involves a world of others who support our hopes (McGeer 2004: 109). This does not necessarily involve satisfying our hopes, but involves a world that in some way acknowledges and supports the value and

meaning we give to our efforts (McGeer 2004: 109). For NGO staff, perhaps this can be found within their organizations and the community of NGOs who collaborate and support each other's efforts in their pursuit of improvement for local populations.

### *Hope Needed to Overcome Disappointment*

Hope for future improvement can be a daunting task considering the challenges one can face in achieving objectives to create positive change. This may be the most significant role for hope, given the energy it can provide to continue trying to succeed despite the obstacles we face. As McGeer (2004:109) states, "Hope is deeply constitutive of our way of inhabiting the world, orienting us toward a future of self-expanding possibilities despite the existence of limitations and constraints." For NGO staff, a more commonly shared perspective on experiencing disappointment in NGO work involves the importance of maintaining hopefulness in order to be able to work despite the challenges, frustrations and set-backs. This was expressed by participants from a variety of backgrounds, who were engaged in a range of activities for both INGOs and local NGOs. In one case, Tina, a young American volunteer with a local NGO pointed out that hope is important for her NGO work, since if one is not optimistic, it is more difficult to achieve things. She commented, "And yeah, you have to be realistic. You can't dream huge and not be disappointed, because it's difficult to work in any developing sphere. But, you know, of course, I think that it's very important. [My NGO] wouldn't have been created without somebody having hope that that there's a possibility. You know, it's like 5% of scholars say Africa's is a damned continent, and 95% say, 'no, we can probably do

something.’ And that’s the hope that these NGOs stem from, most of them” (INT35). As well, Ibou, a Senegalese program manager for a local health NGO, noted that in his sensitive work in the area of HIV/AIDS, there is a need for hope to continue working in this area. Each day he sees human drama and without this vision of hope, it is difficult to continue to work effectively in the response to HIV/AIDS. Everyday, he sees problems, with people dying of AIDS and families suffering from the impact of AIDS, and there is a need to help the population. In his view, without hope, you cannot help in a positive way (INT46). Similarly, Heather, an American volunteer with a health INGO, said that in her work, there is so much to discourage you. She said it is like Sisyphus. It is two steps forwards, and two back. You have to believe if you touch one person, it makes a difference, and you never know whom you will influence (INT59). Taking a more political stance, a young American volunteer working with a microcredit NGO found hope important for her work since she noted that there are a lot of factors working against it, including the current lack of balance of power and wealth in the world, and incredibly strong forces keeping things the way they are (INT55). Finally, Mamadou, a financial administrator at the local office of an INGO involved in economic development, pointed out the importance of hope for his work due to the long-term nature of development. As he stated:

First, you cannot eradicate/eliminate poverty in one day. You need hope to work a long time to help a community to take charge. Without hope you cannot do this. Because each year, there is a little budget that you put in a given zone, and you hope after a few years they can take charge and you can help other zones. While you work in a zone, there is another NGO working in another zone. And you will have results. Hope is really a necessity...it does not happen in a day; you wait and wait and you need hope. If you say it will never work, and it is not possible, it

means you do not have hope, and you cannot work in development. You need time – lots of time. (INT50)

As previously noted, most NGO work involves focusing on gradual, progressive change, with limited budgets for improvement projects occurring over discrete time periods that are intended to contribute to larger social change over the long-term. In this approach of trying to implement small steps towards building a better future, it can be a frustrating process when one cannot decidedly see the impact of this protracted work in achieving such distant, long-term goals. Hope is needed by NGO practitioners to sustain these efforts towards achieving their longstanding aims in this development process.

Certainly, Courville and Piper (2004:44) note that while social change requires for hope to be used in harnessing concrete action, this action cannot be sustained without hope. Even while certain struggles can seem hopeless at times in light of the larger political and economic context, people continue to take action, and this can inspire hope for others even in the most dismal situations (Courville and Piper 2004:44). In Zournazi's (2002:15) perspective, even in moments of despair, hope is that which can sustain life. Indeed, aspiration may allow us to move through challenging times to a period when the context allows us to realize our hopes. Expectation and anticipation about the future, which forms the basis of hope, can carry individuals through difficult and unknown periods to the time of their hoped-for results (Drahos 2004:22). As stated by McGeer (2004:104), "For, no matter what the circumstance, hoping is a matter, not only of recognizing but also of actively engaging with our own current limitations in affecting the future we want to inhabit. It is, in other words, a way of actively confronting, exploring,

and sometimes patiently biding our limitations as agents, rather than crumpling in the face of their reality.”

## **Conclusion**

For many NGO practitioners, working for NGOs entails encounters with complex experiences and mental emotions as they aim to improve the situation of communities through the project of development while facing tremendous challenges to their work. Emerging after WWII, this vision of modernization and development involves gradual improvements over a long period of time while working within an unequal and constrictive economic system. In tracing the growing roles of NGOs in Africa, it is noted that these organizations were viewed as a solution to top-down development and a form of empowerment for poor populations. However, the development discourse tends to emphasize technical expertise, neutrality and progress, rather than employing a language of justice and emancipation. As well, within this context of development, levels of inequality have grown worldwide, raising the question of the effectiveness of the development apparatus as supported by NGOs and other such organizations. In this setting, NGO work is infused with hope and disappointment, frustration and possibility. Despite the criticisms of ineffectiveness and the challenges they face in developing and implementing their projects, NGO practitioners continue to hope that their efforts will produce positive change for the future of the populations with whom they work. People become involved with NGOs for a variety of reasons, including the belief that change and better futures are possible, and NGO work is a way to direct that hope. However, many

also have personal reasons for engaging in NGO work, including a desire paid income, prestige and work experience. In many ways, NGO practitioners view their NGO work as a way to contribute positively to local communities while also making a living.

While hope can be understood and approached in a variety of ways, for NGO staff, the view that seemed to resonate most closely with theirs is that of hope as an affect, involving a sense of possibility about the future. This included a sense that change is possible in the future, and while not certain, we must work towards our hopes for positive change. While experiencing frustration and disappointment in their work at times, many noted that this sense of hope that their efforts will be beneficial for the future inspires them to continue their work.

In this chapter, I also discussed the personal hopes of participants, along with their aspirations for helping local populations and sustaining the work of their NGOs. By considering the hopes of NGO practitioners, one can see how this future-oriented mental emotion involving visions of progress shapes their engagement with development work. Indeed, despite the obstacles and limitations encountered in this work, NGO practitioners continue to express their hopes for positive change through NGOs as they work within political and economic systems while employing their technical and managerial strategies for improvement.

## Chapter Seven - NGOs, the State, and Aspirations for Senegal

*“There are NGOs that really fight to change things, but they are not numerous. They implement little projects, which are often too focused on just the activities. They want to have an activity – ok, say an awareness campaign. So, the NGO will call a minister and have a nice talk. People will come and have coffee, a meal, and after, it is finished. Everyone leaves; there is no continuation of the effort and nothing changes. An NGO will say that they did a campaign, but what did it change in the life of kids, of people? Nothing... It is difficult.”* – Fatima, program manager for a children’s rights INGO

### **An Advocacy Event**

*It’s a warm, dusty day in May as I climb out of the beat up yellow taxi with the coordinator of WNGO, the organization I have been volunteering with for several months. Earlier that day, she had invited me to this cultural centre for an event advocating for greater reproductive health education for young people. As we walk into the building, I notice that there is a large banner announcing in blue and red paint that an event on reproductive awareness is to take place here at 3:30pm. We are about five minutes early, and at the entrance of the centre, two Senegalese women hand us information sheets and have us sign in on a registration form. Once inside, I see we have been directed to a large auditorium filled with Senegalese adolescents and women in boubous sitting on plastic chairs. Some of the children are wearing uniforms, while others are wearing white t-shirts that say “Reproductive Health for Youth.” The children are from local schools, and some of the women are their teachers, while others are members of various women’s NGOs supporting the event. At the front of the room, a PowerPoint is set up, along with another event banner listing the organizations involved in this advocacy event that is part of a larger project to promote awareness of youth reproductive health issues. This includes the three main organizations involved: a local women’s NGO, SeneFem, its INGO partner, ReproINGO, and the organization providing their project funding, WestDonor. There is also a table with four chairs at the front, along with signs in green marker on yellow paper indicating the names and titles of a moderator, representatives from WestDonor and SeneFem, and that of a government minister. I see the secretary from WNGO already sitting and I sit down in the chair next to her. We chat a little, and she tells me that the minister of education had agreed to come to the event. However, by 4:25pm, the minister is still not here, and the room has been filling up with more Senegalese children and women. Because it has become so crowded inside the auditorium, large sliding doors on one side of the room have been opened and now there are women sitting outside the room on concrete benches in a garden area. A few minutes later, the secretary tells me that the minister has arrived, and a Senegalese man in a suit enters the room and goes to sit in one of the chairs at the table at the front of the room, while three others join him.*

*A Senegalese woman then acts as moderator and welcomes people to the event, and thanks the minister for being able to join us. While she talks about the problems with reproductive health in the country, yellow head wraps with the name of the event are handed out to the audience and the panel. Following this, the president of SeneFem, a middle-aged Senegalese woman, and the director of WestDonor, a older American man, also provide speeches and discuss some of the problems youth in Senegal face with respect to forced marriage, AIDS, maternal mortality and FGM. The president of SeneFem points out that the minister needs to make a political decision to help kids become healthy adults by providing access to health information, while the director of WestDonor notes that his organization continues to support the government in protection of youth and is there to reinforce the capacity of the ministry.*

*Finally, the minister of education stands up to speak. He thanks WestDonor and says it is a pleasure for him to participate in this event. He comments about the importance of access to health and education, and the challenge the government of Senegal faces to engage with better actions and the need for informed and engaged teachers. He then lists some of the activities the government is currently working on in this regard, such as reproductive health education provided in secondary schools and information centres. It is difficult to hear him over the noisy chatting of the crowded room. The minister then congratulates all of the participants and everyone applauds. He says that health is fundamental, and SeneFem wants to reinforce the capacity of teachers and have more information provided to students. More clapping follows this.*

*Just after this applause, a theatrical group of Senegalese teenagers wearing black and white run into the room and start yelling in Wolof and French. The children seem excited by this and the room gets very noisy. They perform a question and response routine involving the need for youth to have better reproductive health at schools, more information, and greater communication, mobilization, and awareness training. They group says that there are problems with bad information on reproductive health and decisions the state has made about education, to which there is much applause. They say that education transforms society and reproductive health information is not accessible in schools. During this, the SeneFem president does not look very amused, and by the end of this theatrical presentation, the panel, including the minister of education, the WestDonor director, and the SeneFem president, exits the room. The moderator then says that the program is not over and there is a lull as a video is being set up on a laptop to be projected on a screen at the front. While waiting for the video, I turn to the WNGO secretary beside me to chat. I ask her if this advocacy event will have an affect on the minister who was here, and she says, "I think so." Eventually, a film involving interviews with youth about the need for reproductive health information is shown, but the room is so noisy that I can barely make out the sound of the film. Several more speakers follow this, but after two and a half hours it is evident that the children can no longer sit still, and during one of the speeches by an older Senegalese man, a teacher begins to lead her students out of the auditorium and the rest of us follow suit. It's now after 6:00pm, and I am grateful to be able to stretch my legs and have the chance to reflect on the strange, yet somewhat mundane, events that had just taken place.*

## **Introduction**

Senegal has often embraced its international image as a country of diplomacy and a model of democracy in West Africa. However, NGO staff are concerned that this is hiding a difficult local reality that includes economic hardship and political corruption. In light of these challenges, they hold many aspirations for the future of the country, and see those hopes as possible to achieve based on Senegal's strong cultural values and human resources, as well as the efforts of NGOs and civil society, rather than the state. Still, these organizations are quite engaged with the state and often collaborate with government ministries, although tensions between them do exist. Many of these NGOs engage in political activities involving advocacy for the protection of human rights and the promotion of democracy, activities that are shaped by the agendas of the foreign aid agencies that provide their funding. In this way, NGOs can be considered political in their efforts to achieve their hopes of improvement through short-term projects and a political agenda that involves not challenging the political and economic system, but trying to improve it and work within it to create positive change.

## **Senegal's Place in the World**

### *An Image of Democracy and Diplomacy*

In the West, Senegal has generally been viewed as a stable and democratic country, with good diplomatic relations and active participation in international negotiations and meetings. As noted by the U.S. Department of State (2011), "Senegal is one of the few African states that has never experienced a coup d'état... The Government

of Senegal is known and respected for its able diplomats and has often supported the U.S. in the United Nations, including the troop contributions for peacekeeping activities.” In terms of how study participants viewed Senegal and its place in the world, it was often noted that Senegal was well viewed by the international community and had good relations with other countries. Indeed, a number of participants pointed out that Senegal has cordial relationships with countries in the West, as well as in Africa, Asia and the Arabic world. Several individuals described Senegal as having an influential role in international decisions, with a few Senegalese participants noting that there are Senegalese intellectuals working in important posts at international institutions throughout the world, including in the United Nations (UN). For example, Luc, a Senegalese INGO worker, said that generally, he thinks there is a good image of Senegal in the exterior. Senegal is a poor country, but it is very influential because of its human resources. In his view, Senegal is listened to at the international level, including in the UN and the African Union. The country is very respected and it is always considered in evaluations of the position of Africa. He pointed out that there are Senegalese in important posts throughout the world, and many UN organizations for West Africa are in Dakar, showing that it is an important capital (INT68). This perspective is also shared by the U.S. Department of State (2011), which describes Senegal as having a high profile in many international organizations, including membership in the UN Security Council from 1988-89 and its 1997 election to the UN Commission on Human Rights. Indeed, Gellar (1995:105) points out that Senegal has had a remarkably high reputation and has been considered an important African actor in the international arena.

Numerous participants in this study described Senegal as respected and recognized on the world stage for its relative economic and political stability. According to Lamine, a Senegalese volunteer at a local association, Senegal may be a small country, but it is significant because of the people living here. He noted that the Senegalese are appreciated in the world, and the country is well known for being democratic, which is rare in Africa (INT69). Similarly, Ibou, a Senegalese man working at a local health NGO, stated that “Politically, often Senegal has a good reputation due to its political stability and calm in the country; there are not a lot of crises. Senegal occupies a place of choice for many developed countries, and donors think that investing here can somewhat guarantee that their program will succeed. The economy is stable and it is politically stable here. This influences the multinationals and investors to come to put funds here in the Senegalese economy and construct enterprises to produce products. This marks the important place of Senegal at the world level” (INT46). Indeed, countries such as Canada have decided to provide development aid to Senegal due to the perception of its stability. In 2009 the Canadian government announced that 80 percent of its bilateral resources would be directed towards twenty countries, including Senegal (CIDA 2009). These countries were selected based on, “their real needs, their capacity to benefit from aid, and their alignment with Canadian foreign policy priorities” (CIDA 2009). While CIDA (2011) considers Senegal one of the poorest countries in the world, it also states that Senegal, “...is a hub of economic and political stability in the West African region.” In this way, CIDA views Senegal as both in need of aid and stable enough to use this aid effectively.

Senegal's place on the world stage was often discussed in terms of its role and relative stability in West Africa and Africa generally. Several non-Senegalese NGO staff members also pointed out that Senegal could be considered a progressive country in comparison to the rest of the West African region. According to Jeanne, a Canadian INGO volunteer who has traveled extensively in the region, "Senegal is the country with the hope most bright in West Africa for democracy and development" (INT6). The positive image of Senegal's relative stability allowed one U.S. volunteer to convince her parents to let her visit Senegal. According to this young woman, who volunteers with a microcredit organization, her parents did not want her to go to Africa, which they saw as a place of AIDS, war, violence, crime, and pestilence. Then her Dad did research on Senegal, and said, "It seems not half bad for Africa". While she is sure there is a great deal of government corruption, on the surface and in comparison to others, she thinks Senegal is a decent model. It is democratic, it has a free press, as well as peaceful elections, investment, and economic growth. In her view, it is a good model for African development (INT56). Indeed, Senegal was often described as a model or example to other countries in Africa and the West African region due to its democratic values, its relative lack of violence and wars, its ratification of international conventions, and its religious tolerance. As stated by Bill, an American NGO worker, "They are a relative democracy, in a place where dictatorships and ruthless regimes are fairly well-known. So they are a good example and a good partner politically for the West" (INT45).

The image Senegal presents to the outside world as a democratic and stable model for the region has attracted many international organizations operating in the area to

locate in Dakar. This was noted by a number of non-Senegalese participants, who commented on the large number of foreign embassies and businesses located here, in addition to the many INGOs that locate their headquarters in the capital. Kamara (2010:9) notes that 100 of the 184 foreign NGOs registered in Senegal have a headquarters agreement with the state. Still, while Senegal was considered to be a leading light in West Africa and in the larger continent, a number of participants pointed out that it is still a poor country with little influence on the world stage. As stated by one American woman working as an INGO program manager, in the world, Senegal has a minor role. In Africa and West Africa, it is a powerhouse (INT58). For Moustafa, a Senegalese man working at an INGO, Senegal does not have a big role in the international community. It is a small, underdeveloped country, and it is not very important in the world and does not have a strong influence. However, in the subregion, Senegal is an influential country. It plays an important diplomatic role at the African level, but at the world level, it is too small to play a large role (INT38).

### *Economic Weakness*

Interestingly, some participants, most of whom are Senegalese, described Senegal as having little influence in international decisions, which was often based on their view of Senegal as an underdeveloped country with poverty affecting much of the population. As a result, the country was not considered to have the same bargaining power as that of rich Western countries. Faye, the Senegalese director of a local NGO network, commented that Senegal is not aggressive enough in its international relations

because it has the same problems facing other African countries in terms of poverty and weak negotiation capacity. The state cannot say no in its international negotiations, or it will upset other states and receive less funding. However, it also has to try to meet the needs of the people, and this is a difficult balance (INT20). This sense of Senegal's relative economic weakness compared to rich countries in the West was reflected in participants' frustrated comments about the imposition of the World Bank and IMF's conditions, as well as the difficulties Senegal faces in competing in the world marketplace. For instance, a Senegalese woman with experience working in a community association noted that the IMF and World Bank provides funds for Senegal, but imposes certain conditions, directing these funds in a manner that may not prioritize concerns of the population. This is sort of an obstacle to Senegal's liberty, and, "it is seen as a constraint to the people rather than aid to the population." (INT17). Ferguson and Gupta (2002: 992) point out that today, international agencies such as the World Bank and IMF, along with First World governments, often impose policies on African states, which have been made possible by the squeeze of the debt crisis and the general fiscal weakness of African states, and these impositions and conditions have raised concerns about the erosion of the sovereignty of these states. These policies have greatly impacted the economies of impoverished countries, and Manji and O'Coill (2002:578) state that "Today, most commentators agree that the neo-liberal reforms the IMF and the World Bank imposed under adjustment programmes in the 1980s actually caused much of the growth in poverty and inequality we have seen in Africa and Latin America over the past two decades." They point out that constraints imposed by the exterior on such areas as

education, health, and social programs, in addition to the liberalization of price controls and dismantling of state enterprises, have contributed to growing internal disparities (Manji and O’Coill 2002:578). According to Gellar (1995:72), in 1980, Senegal became one of the first countries in Africa to accept a structural adjustment program, involving the implementation of economic liberalization policies in exchange for loans and debt rescheduling. It has had numerous engagements with the IMF and World Bank since then, including its second Poverty Reduction Strategy covering the period from 2006-2010 (World Bank 2011). However, there have been many concerns raised about the impact of these programs, and Gellar (1995:78) notes that “Senegalese critics have attacked Senegal’s structural adjustment program for its high social costs and failure to achieve economic recovery”. This includes concerns about structural policies and external pressures to liberalize trade and cut spending for government programs, such as subsidies for producers. For example, in the early 2000s, pressure from the EU and IMF to liberalize the groundnut sector led the Senegalese state to cut its prices for producers and then dissolve a publicly-owned subsidiary that had played a significant role in collecting and transporting groundnuts from farmers to processing plants (Harsch 2003:14).

In my study, the issue of subsidies and its impact on trade was often raised in the discussion of Senegal’s place in the world, since it was generally felt that its weak economic position means that it has little influence on trade rules that negatively affect the ability of the country to compete internationally. This issue was most commonly raised by Senegalese participants, who noted that Senegal’s unsubsidized producers were unable to compete against heavily subsidized producers in Europe and the U.S. Ousmane,

a young Senegalese man working for an agriculture INGO, shared similar concerns about these international institutions, particularly in terms of their impact on trade issues in Senegal. He pointed out that in the past, the EU and U.S. have subsidized cotton producers when the world price of cotton was low, but the Senegalese state was unable to do so for its cotton producers (INT10). According to Mutume (2003:18), the decline in cotton prices by 54% since the mid-1990s is connected to the increase in U.S. government subsidies to cotton farmers, while EU agricultural subsidies are considered to have been an important factor in the decline of the world price of sugar. In this context, developing countries have charged that such subsidies are fostering unfair trade and flooding world markets with cheap agricultural goods, eroding commodity prices to levels at which competitors in developing countries struggle to survive (Mutume 2003:18). This imbalanced trade situation is a significant issue for Senegalese farmers, as noted by Issatou, an older Senegalese woman who volunteers at a local association that helps women producers with their own small businesses. She had many concerns about Senegal's farmers, noting that European farmers have access to subsidies that are not available to Senegalese producers because the Senegalese government says they do not have the means. In her opinion, this is bad management by the government, who should subsidize the producers and do more to support them. As well, she said that local farmers have difficulty competing because in a poor country like Senegal, they are unable to produce large quantities of high quality products, which makes it a challenge to sell their products in the European market (INT30). Certainly, as noted by Phillips (2002:49), at the

level of international trade, Senegalese agricultural products continue to face considerable barriers to entering foreign markets.

### *Internal and External Senegal*

The Senegalese government was often criticized for not being more proactive in supporting farmers, as well as for a wide range of other issues. Concerns about the economy and political mismanagement led some participants, both Senegalese and non-Senegalese, to comment that the positive image Senegal projects in the international community was a false one.<sup>26</sup> The country may be considered to have a history of democracy and tolerance, with Senegalese representatives in important international organizations and a president who makes frequent diplomatic visits to other countries; however, for some participants, this image of a progressive West African country does not reflect the local struggles experienced by many in Senegal.<sup>27</sup> For example, Djiby, a Senegalese man working as a program manager for an education INGO, said that in his view:

There are two Senegals: the external version of Senegal, and the local version of Senegal...Senegal from a diplomatic point of view plays an important role in Africa. It influences the policies of the region, as well as in the African Union... At the level of the world, there are many intellectuals in posts of responsibility with international organizations. This is the external Senegal. In terms of the Senegal of here, it is a true ordeal – a catastrophe. It is very badly managed. It is

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<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that Senegal's positive image externally may be starting to shift; Mbow (2008:157) points out that enthusiasm for Senegal generated by Wade's 2000 victory has been receding first for Senegalese intellectuals, and now also for foreign analysts.

<sup>27</sup> According to a study by Aid Transparence, an INGO based in Dakar, Wade is one of the most well-travelled political leaders, with an average of 37 trips per year to such countries as France, the U.S., Switzerland and Saudi Arabia (Cham 2010).

insupportable. At the same time, with the economy, there is inflation and everything is expensive. Also, with social planning, there is tension all over. In the political context, there is a significant reduction in democracy. (INT40)

Ford (2003:43) points out that while President Wade has been eager to play an important role on the international stage and has engaged in initiating several plans for African development, including his involvement in developing NEPAD, many Senegalese which he would focus more on addressing Senegal's problems.

Indeed, others in my study shared the perspective that Senegal's reputation in the international community does not reflect the real situation in Senegal. Chantal is a middle-aged Canadian woman working for an educational NGO. In describing how Senegal is viewed internationally, she stated that:

It is well viewed due to its stability and due to Wade who carries out a lot of things, politically and publically. But I think that [the international community] has a false vision of things...because, stability, yes, but how is this stability maintained? The political opposition is pushed aside. It is stable, but because it is a little dictatorial. This word is too strong, but you see people who disagree with the system put in prison. I think it gives a certain image but it is not true. People live difficult lives here. Life is difficult here; there is no work... everything is expensive. (INT13)

Chantal noted that in the villages, teachers are often on strike and there are no health posts or electricity. She also stated that farmers receive no aid to help cultivate better, and commented, "If agriculture is not good because rain is not good, what can be done to help? Nothing at all" (INT13). These problematic internal issues were of great concern to most participants who are frustrated with the state's inability to meet the needs of the population, a problem they see their own NGOs as striving to address.

## **Critiques of the Political Context**

### *Concerns about Corruption, Reduction in Democracy and Instability*

Economic concerns, such as those noted above, were the most common issues raised by NGO staff with respect to problems facing the country. The second most frequent issue discussed involved political concerns, which were noted by more than half of the participants in this study. This namely entailed criticisms of the Senegalese state for its problems with mismanagement and corruption. While some pointed out that Senegal is relatively stable in comparison with other countries in Africa, many considered it to have internal political issues that hinder its progress and weaken the democratic principles on which the country prides itself.

Many participants in this study expressed their frustration with the current political regime, which they saw as undermining the development of the country. They described numerous problems with the current political context in Senegal, including corruption, dictatorial tendencies, and a general deterioration of democracy, leading to concerns about a political disconnect between the government and those it governs, along with the potential for political instability. Government corruption and mismanagement was one of the issues of concern most commonly raised when interviewees were asked to describe the current situation in Senegal. Government ministers were often described as dipping into public funds and living lavish lifestyles while the Senegalese population is living in poverty. Babacar, the Senegalese president of a local association, commented that corruption has taken hold of Senegal. In his view, political leaders have taken the Senegalese people hostage, and a minority in the country has all of the resources. He said

that there is a crisis in management (INT32). In a similar way, Giselle, a French volunteer for a European-funded local association, shared her concerns about the political situation in Senegal, stating that “I find at the same time that the Senegalese government spends a lot of money – for their big cars, planes...Whereas, there are things to do in the country. This is what the Senegalese say.” In her view, “One should have a government that senses that Senegal has resources and develops them for us...And the government does none of this...In fact, [the president] wastes a lot of money, he lives like the French President, etc. Here, you cannot do this. It is obvious. For me, it is obvious” (INT52). This perspective is also shared by Mbow (2008:164), who finds that the current rulers of Senegal generally favor corruption and cooptation, which is widespread throughout the country.

Others described worries about authoritarian tendencies in the way that the opposition is managed in the country, as well as concerns that the president is engaging in nepotism and may try to impose his son, Karim Wade, on the population as his successor. One Senegalese association volunteer noted that Wade is old and has a son that he wants to be the next president. However, this son is not in Senegal, but in France, and he does not know Senegal or the local language, Wolof. This son wants to return and lead, and the president will try to get his son into this position (INT11). The Senegalese may have cause for concern in this area, given that Karim Wade, who has already been appointed Minister of State and Minister of International Cooperation, Territorial Management, Aerial Transport and Infrastructure, was also recently named Minister of Energy in October 2010, leading to further accusations that President Wade is positioning his son to succeed him (Associated Press 2010). There have also been concerns about repression of

political opposition in Senegal. According to Khady, a Senegalese woman working for a human rights NGO:

Democracy doesn't work. With the constitution, citizens have the right to organize marches, but when they try, [they are prevented from doing so]. There are lots of spontaneous marches that do a lot, but they send the police. It is more and more difficult for human rights here. People can't express themselves. There are some newspapers where writing something negative can result in police being brought in, and when they say something, there is a criminal investigation. It is difficult for people to express themselves here. (INT34)

In Mbow's (2008:163) critical account, she notes that under the Wade regime, there have been many examples of judicial and police actions against opposition leaders, journalists and civil society figures, including a general ban on marches by the opposition in January 2007, and the censorship of political works criticizing the government. Concerns about growing authoritarianism have led some participants to state that there has been a weakening of democracy in the country. Ibou is a Senegalese man who works for a local health NGO. He noted that there is currently a sense of moving backwards with respect to democracy, and if democracy goes backwards, it is because there are important political stakes leading political actors to forget all the principles of a good democracy. In his view, there is a crisis in Senegalese society, as well as poverty in the communities, and if we are not careful, this can make Senegal fragile (INT46).

In addition, participants often expressed the view that the state is disconnected from the people it is supposed to serve, and is not responsive to the needs of the population. According to Henry, the director of an INGO,

Senegal is at a bad point. There are more and more difficulties here, and the president does not know the internal problems of Senegal... Senegal has a big problem of governance. There is a lot of investment in Dakar, but it is not redistributed to the rest of the country; it is very concentrated. People living in the

countryside do not have enough food. Even if there is a good rainy season, there is also a problem with cereals. However, the government does not recognize these problems... Just a year or two ago, Senegal was recognized by the World Bank and donors as a country that responded well to economic and social indicators. Now, however, this year, there are many international organizations that are asking questions. There are lots from the World Bank and representatives of multilateral organizations, etc., that are sounding the alarm. They think that things are getting much worse... There is a government problem and the government does not recognize the country's problems. (INT3)

Diop (2006:126) notes that, for several decades now, those leading Senegal have had little interest in developing the productive forces of the country, but are concerned instead with perfecting techniques to grow rich and conserve power. This focus on personal enrichment over addressing the issues facing the country has led some to worry that Senegal is becoming increasingly politically unstable. As Marie, a young French woman volunteering for a local women's NGO, stated:

Many people say that soon Senegal – which has never had a coup d'état and is known as a model of democracy – people today are afraid that soon there will be a political crisis. Not quite a coup, but people here are tired of seeing [government] deputies with nice cars, lots of money, etc. With the floods that happen, the many sick people here, and the destroyed houses, the government takes a long time to intervene, while all of these deputies are in nice 4x4 vehicles. People are angry. Little by little, more and more angry. I have talked with many, [who say] that maybe, one day, something bad might happen. They can be very angry. It could be grave. (INT21)

### *Disappointed Political Hopes*

These frustrations associated with the Wade regime are perhaps felt more poignantly due to the hopefulness surrounding the election of this new leader. It was often noted that despite the great hopes held for the democratic regime change in 2000, many in the country are disappointed with the unfulfilled promises and lack of results. As one young Senegalese program manager for an INGO noted, the Socialist Party had been in

power for a long time, and people wanted change, so they elected a new political party, the Senegalese Democratic Party, led by President Wade. In his opinion, the president has done more bad than good. People have had many hopes that he will help with employment and development, but there have been numerous financial scandals, including misappropriation, corruption, and general political instability (INT10). Similarly, Pape, an older Senegalese man who volunteers with a local women's association, noted that after twenty years of economic difficulties and structural adjustment programs, President Wade's party was elected because the population wanted change, and they felt that electing Wade's party would bring about this profound change. As he stated, "But after 8 years of Wade in power, they ask questions since they do not see this change. They ask why they do not see lots of changes, and the change has not come. It is a matter involving sentiments of regret and doubt. The government promises a great deal, but it has not become concrete." He pointed out that in 2000, Wade asked the young people, "Who wants jobs?" and they all raised their hands. They thought he would give them jobs, but this has not happened. With a sad smile, Pape noted that the young people still have their hands raised (INT11). Indeed, participants described a sense of disillusionment and disappointment amongst the population for a government that promised to provide jobs and decrease poverty, but which has instead seemed to do little to remedy the problems facing the country. Bill is an older American man working for a health NGO, and he noted that the current context in Senegal is a bit precarious because the government that raised hopes has disappointed many people (INT45). Elaborating on this issue, Erica, the American director of an INGO, described the situation in the

following way: “In 2001, with Wade in power, people were still very positive. In 2003, people were getting concerned. In 2007, they shouldn’t have re-elected him. Here we are now, saying to ourselves we are governed by highly incapable people in a country with highly capable people.” In her view, this compromises Senegal’s place in the world, making it more slippery. She pointed out that the country had credibility due to its very capable people, but that this credibility is being weakened by having many leaders that are unfit to lead. In this way people are becoming less confident and excited about Senegal’s future (INT61). In Gellar’s (2005:89) view, “Despite the high hopes raised by Wade’s victory, Senegal’s political parties and political class continued to practice politics as usual once Wade and his coalition took power. Those in power continued to sing their own praises, favor their friends and clients, and work to use the system to make sure that they would stay in power.” Thus, the Wade regime is perceived as not delivering on its promises for change, leading many to place their hopes for Senegal’s future elsewhere.

## **NGO Staff and Aspirations for Senegal**

### *Hopes for Senegal’s Future*

Given their concerns about the current economic and political problems facing the country, many participants shared their hopes of a better future for Senegal. This future is considered possible due to a number of positive aspects that includes the work of NGOs and civil society. When describing their hopes for Senegal’s future, the most common aspiration discussed involved that of an improved political situation, which was

mentioned by more than half of participants. Those sharing this aspiration came from a variety of backgrounds, although this group did involve a large number of Senegalese men, which includes Idrissa, the Senegalese director of a health NGO. In terms of his hopes for Senegal, he said, “The politicians of the best quality are needed to develop Senegal. Politicians that are more conscious of the population’s suffering and aware that they must help them in developing the country...Politicians are needed to develop the country so that everyone benefits” (INT81). These sentiments were also expressed by Nancy, an American woman working for an INGO. She said that in terms of power and government, Senegal is close to an intersection or juncture. She hopes that the next transfer of power will go smoothly, and that they can rebuild the hope that the Senegalese have in their country and leadership. She hopes the government will make the most of what Senegal has to offer (INT58).

A second aspiration cited almost as frequently as hopes for political improvements was that of greater economic development, including job creation and a reduction in poverty. This was often discussed by Senegalese participants, but also noted by some participants from non-Senegalese backgrounds. Jules, a young Senegalese man who volunteers with a local students’ association, emphasized this aspiration. He commented that while the country has many opportunities for training in different fields, there is no work, and this is dangerous and frustrating. In his opinion, Senegal should develop its resources and improve its touristic zones, which would bring in money for the country. His hope is that more jobs will be created in the future (INT76).

NGO staff also described their aspirations for the Senegalese population to have access to quality education and healthcare, along with hopes that cultural values will be upheld in the future. In addition, hopes were expressed for improved rights for youth, women and children, and the protection of human rights generally in Senegal, along with aspirations for a healthy environment, stability and peace. These aspirations were often connected to the focus areas of their NGOs. As well, participants typically expressed having a combination of these hopes for Senegal's future. For example, Bill, the director of a health NGO, stated the following when asked about his hopes for Senegal:

I hope that Senegal gets a more development-minded and socially-minded government with a greater sense of equality and caring for the weakest and poorest; that there is a government that applies social and economic policies to improve health and education, that allows these incredible young people who are sitting around on the streets drinking tea, looking down a black tunnel of nothing, to find ways to contribute to human society around the world without having to go to Harlem to sell t-shirts or get on boats to Spain. I'd like them to rediscover their core values and realize how rich and how relevant some of the things that Senegal is built on, continue to be. That people stop seeing themselves, as, you know, dépassé. [To] stop saying that Senegalese values are not relevant to modern times. Seeing what there is – what the strength is of these Senegalese values that can be built on.” (INT45)

### *The (im)Possibility of Hope*

Still, it should be noted that not all participants described feeling optimistic about their hopes for Senegal's future. Bovens (1999:673) notes that hope involves a degree of belief that a state of the world will come about without being completely confident that it will or will not occur. As he states, “To believe that some states of the world may or may not come about is to assign a subjective probability (or range of subjective probabilities) to these states of the world.” For Bovens (1999:678), the strength of these subjective

probabilities should be shaped by available evidence. Some study participants, who come from a variety of backgrounds and work for a diverse range of organizations, feel quite unsure whether their aspirations for Senegal are possible. In some of these cases, participants were hesitant to suggest that their hopes for the future were likely to happen due to the current context, such as when Michel, a Senegalese man working for a local NGO, noted that he has a lot of hope, but there are social tensions here due to the financial crisis, and if a political crisis also occurs, there will be a clash. In his view, some hopes are achieved and some are not, but there is always a little bit of advancement (INT88). Others who are quite unsure about their aspirations coming about said they did not want to forecast the future. For example, Jeff, a young American program officer for a local NGO, was asked if his hopes for Senegal involving a non-oppressive government were possible for the future. To this, he said, “Yes, they are likely. It is a dangerous thing to say, like predicting the weather. It is difficult to say yes or no. Absolutely definite things aren’t what anyone should deal with. Nothing is black and white” (INT66). A very small number, three participants from different backgrounds, expressed their view that their hopes for Senegal were not possible. This includes Chantal, a Canadian woman who had lived in Senegal for the last four years while working as an assistant coordinator for an education INGO. She hoped that people in Senegal would find a way to live off the land so that there is more employment. However, she said that she did not think her hopes for the future were probable, because she is a bit of a pessimist. But that is why she feels she needs to go back to Canada, since her vision is getting blurry here (INT13). Alphonse, a Senegalese coordinator of an environment NGO, noted that he does not have hope for

the future of Senegal. He pointed out that there are problems throughout the country, including power cuts, flooding, and children begging on the streets. Life is very expensive here. He said he could not hope for anything because it is very difficult in Senegal, and it is difficult to hope. What he sees today does not allow him to hope for the future (INT87).

*Aspirations Based on Current Strengths: Cultural Values, Human Resources, and Civil Society*

While some NGO staff feel doubtful about their hopes for Senegal's future given the economic and political difficulties they see affecting the country, most feel that their hopes for a better future are possible, due to certain encouraging aspects of the country. This includes Senegalese cultural values of dialogue and tolerance, an innovative base of intellectuals and human resources, and most notably, the efforts of their own NGOs and civil society. These aspects were viewed as providing the basis for believing that hope for desired improvements in Senegal were possible.

In this study, both Senegalese and non-Senegalese participants commented on the strong cultural values found in Senegal, which includes an emphasis on sharing and openness, dialogue and exchange, as well as religious tolerance. For some NGO staff, a group that mostly involves Senegalese men, but also several Senegalese and non-Senegalese women, these cultural aspects allowed them to feel that their hopes for the country's future were possible. For Abdoulaye, who volunteers as the executive director of a local NGO, the situation in Senegal is difficult but he is not afraid for his country. He noted that, "Each time there is a problem, people talk and find a solution. There is a

capacity of people to talk. This is why I have hope” (INT86). Sharing similar views, the Senegalese coordinator of an education NGO stated that, “I know that Senegalese culture is very strong; we speak and share a lot. I imagine that even if it is difficult and hard, people can always succeed at communicating so that things happen peacefully” (INT27). Gellar (2005:162) points out that there are historical roots to these cultural values, stating that “Senghor’s emphasis on dialogue as the main instrument for preventing and resolving conflicts, his philosophy concerning the complementarity of human civilizations, and the convergence of different civilizations toward a universal civilization contributed to preserve and strengthen Senegalese traditions of ethnic tolerance.”

Senegal’s religious tolerance between its majority Muslim population and minority Christian population was also cited by participants as an example of the country’s peaceful relations and acceptance of diversity. According to a young Senegalese volunteer, Jules, who noted that he is Catholic, Senegal is a secular country where Muslims and Christians live together without problems. It has stability. In this way, it is an example for other countries. (INT76). Some Senegalese participants described the religious context in Senegal as giving them hope for a peaceful future without conflict. This was the case for Diarra, a young Senegalese Muslim woman volunteering with a local association. She noted that in Senegal, there are no civil wars, and stating that:

People all live together despite differences in the Senegalese community, despite being Muslim, Christian, animist, etc. You’ll find them in the same community, the Senegalese community... This is good here. It is rare in other countries. This is on the positive side... People here are pacifists; they do not want war. Not because of, but thanks to the brotherhoods. Because this is an education Senegal has had a long time...always, one should have faith towards god and others. This is why there is no war, and why Senegal can support a lot of things. (INT72)

For these reasons, Diarra said that she does not see any war or violence in the country's future (INT72). In this way, several participants considered religious tolerance and the efforts of religious brotherhoods as having a positive influence on the future stability of the country.

For a large number of participants from different backgrounds, aspirations for Senegal's future were considered entirely possible due to the country's rich human resources and the efforts of its intellectuals. For Ibou, a Senegalese program manager for a health NGO, "Hope says that everything is still possible. We have known a difficult period now. With the regime change, things have not worked out in the way we wished. If I see the number of people in Senegal training and in universities, and it is quality training, it makes me think that a day will come when Senegal will change and continue to work towards development. This is my hope for the country" (INT46). Similarly, Nancy, an American woman working for an INGO, said she is more optimistic than pessimistic about the possibility of her hopes for Senegal being realized. She said that there is a slight chance that things could get bad, around twenty percent. However, she is impressed with the intelligentsia class – the people she works with. A large portion of people knows what's going on and are working to change it. They have shown that the voice of civil society is strong in the country (INT58).

Indeed, many participants considered the work of NGOs and civil society as making their aspirations for Senegal possible. A Senegalese NGO worker stated that he seeks to transform society through his work with his NGO, and that his hopes for a future

with better governance would be realized because, “We will fight for it” (INT40). As noted by Faye, the executive director of a local NGO network:

Senegal is a country with the most associations in all areas. There are associations in the neighborhoods, locally, associations for women and youth, etc., where people organize themselves... Even if it is only the street, in a neighborhood, people come together for this neighborhood. The people in this associative culture, it is a culture of citizens too. They need to be given resources and capacity to do something. This gives hope – knowing that people want to do this. It’s not each person for themselves, looking for money, and then it’s over. They have a vision of developing their society. (INT20)

In this way, Faye sees hope in a context of society development through working together for the same vision (INT20).

Arame is the Senegalese coordinator of a women’s NGO, and she has several hopes for the future of Senegal, including having a stable country without war, illness or disease, and an end to violence against women. She believes that these hopes will happen, pointing out that there are many NGOs here that try to help. She said that is why hope is here – because they want to change the situation for the future (INT16). It is interesting to note that in these discussions, participants did not express the notion that their hopes for the future might be realized through actions of the state. Rather, they viewed NGOs and civil society as the basis for believing their aspirations would be achieved. This is largely due to growing criticism about mismanagement of the state, and the view that NGOs, unlike the government, are actively engaged in seeking improvements for Senegal’s population. This issue will be further discussed in the following section.

### **Aspirations for Senegal: Hoping through NGOs Rather than the State**

Growing frustration and disillusionment with President Wade and the current government has reaffirmed participants' views that NGOs are vitally important to the progress of the country, given that it cannot depend on its political representatives alone to protect the interests of the population. Indeed, numerous NGO staff in this study described placing their hopes for Senegal not in the hands of the state, but in the hands of civil society, including the variety of NGOs active in the country. In discussing their hopes for their NGO work in Senegal, they shared their perspective that civil society is able to offer a number of services and operate much more efficiently and fairly than the state in its efforts for the local population. One of its perceived vital tasks involves operating as a considerable counter-power to the state and keeping the government in check for the population. As noted by the Senegalese president of a local NGO, the state does not act alone, and if the population does not agree with the state, the state has to listen. In her view, religious groups and civil society are there to give their opinion, and they act as counter-powers to the state (INT81). Idrissa, the Senegalese director of the same organization, noted that politically, there are civil society groups such as NGOs that share their views, and the government cannot do whatever it wants. In fact, there have been several unpopular decisions made by President Wade that he overturned due to pressure from civil society. In this way, the president cannot do whatever he wants – he is not a dictator. This is comforting (INT81). It was noted that civil society is taking more responsibility and playing an important role in monitoring the state (INT40). According to the director of one NGO network, NGOs work on citizen control of public actions.

They monitor the services delivered by the administration to make sure they are well delivered, at minimum cost, and that everything is transparent (INT85).

In addition to monitoring the activities of the state, civil society was considered to have a significant role to play in working with impoverished communities. Given the apparent corruption of the state, some NGO practitioners described the work of NGOs as less corrupt and more effective than that of the state. For Janice, an American woman working for a local NGO, it is necessary for NGOs to provide services to the population rather than having a corrupt government sucking up the funds (INT53). According to one Senegalese NGO director, when he sees what small NGOs are able to accomplish, it does not seem that the state, which receives and misuses millions of dollars, is much more effective in its work (INT49). NGOs were viewed as providing important services to local communities that the state was unable or unwilling to provide. As noted by Arame, a Senegalese woman working as the coordinator of a women's NGO, "It is the state that should assure the social protection of all the citizens. It is the state that should assure the health of the population. It is the state that should assure the rights to education. But today, the state cannot do this. But we are here to complete government actions." (INT16). Similarly, Lamine, a volunteer administrator of a community health association, pointed out that previously, his community did not have a health association that provided youth with reproductive information. He said that this is something the state should do but it cannot because it does not have the means. He noted that he wanted to invest in the population here, for his brother and parents, and did not want to wait for the government to do this for them. Instead, he said that they try to do it – to help the population,

especially youth, who are often the most vulnerable (INT69). In addition, a program consultant for a local health NGO commented that NGOs really play a role in Senegal. There are many NGOs here working in different areas, and civil society is strong in the country. In many areas, civil society is the government (INT41).

Those working with NGOs also emphasized the significance of working more closely with local communities, which allowed them to be more aware of the needs of local people, and to be able to respond accordingly to assist with projects of improvement. Certainly, it was often noted by NGO practitioners that, unlike the state, their NGOs were able to interact and engage more directly with the grassroots population. As stated by a young Senegalese man working for an INGO, he prefers working for NGOs rather than for the government, because, “I find that these are the organizations closest to the population and do the most concrete things for the population” (INT36). For Michel, a Senegalese director for a local NGO that is a member of an international network, there is a concern that there is no transparency with funds given to the state, and that the state will not direct these funds to the population. Some believe that funds given to NGOs will go closer to the population. In his view, NGOs are closer to the population, and they work at the grassroots community level. They are in a niche and satisfy a need. Michel commented that the state works on macro issues like schools and roads, which NGOs cannot do. NGOs are supplementary and they go where the state cannot (INT88). Similarly, Renate, a German woman who works for a German INGO, stated, “I see that many small NGOs make very good work and so even if the state doesn’t know exactly what they are doing, but they are at the bases, and they are doing very good work and the

state can't be everywhere. And the state – there is a lot of money which would go into organization structures and I don't know what, but it won't come to the bases" (INT82). On this issue, Ebrahim (2003:1) points out that the growth in funding and attention to NGOs is in part inspired by the belief that NGOs provide services more efficiently than public agencies, and are more democratic and effective in reaching the poor, although there is a lack of empirical evidence to support this.

For NGO staff, however, NGOs were generally viewed as having greater involvement with local communities than the state, which they considered to contribute to their success in changing the perceptions and awareness of these local groups. Certainly, it is interesting to note the emphasis of some NGO staff on changing the mentality or outlook of certain sections of the population as part of their NGO hopes for the future. Yacine, a young Senegalese secretary of a local women's association, hopes that through her work with the organization, people will be helped to develop themselves to have a better life. She commented that the next generation must discover more than the habit of living day to day. It must improve. There are many people who do not go to school, especially women. The mentality of her grandparents' generation is that the place of women in society should be in the home. She said that this mentality needs to change. (INT31). In a similar way, a German woman working for an education INGO noted that she hopes her organization's programs will touch both the grassroots and those at the highest levels, promoting intercultural understanding and helping to develop better perspectives in the country. (INT37). Thus, for NGO practitioners, their organizations provide monitoring of the state and necessary services to impoverished communities,

interacting closely with local populations to create positive change. In this light, NGOs are considered to have a significant and hopeful role in Senegal's future. Malick is a young Senegalese man who works as a program coordinator for an INGO. He commented that:

In the context of the financial crisis, NGOs are still the only actors of development that can really return hope to a population that has lost hope.... It is they that come to a village where there are villagers that for a long time have not seen rain or a well, and NGOs come and drill a well. They give hope to those people there. It is important. These NGOs push hope.... NGOs give hope to the marginalized population; it is they who are interested in the talibé, students you see in the street, as well as women that are victims of rape, human rights, and putting in wells. NGOs are interested in lots of things where the state has lost control of the context. It is they who come with their meager means to fund things, maybe at the local level. (INT36)

In response to this statement, I asked Malick if he thought NGOs were a mechanism of hope, and he laughed, stating, "Yes, it's a thought" (INT36).

These views, which involve placing one's hopes in NGOs rather than the state, were most strongly articulated by Michel, a Senegalese man who directs a local NGO. He noted that the state has its mission and role, such that "The state works on macro issues like infrastructure with building routes, hospitals, schools, agriculture, policies of agriculture, social policies, education policies. At the household scale, with communities and the grassroots population, the state can no longer intervene at the base. Solidarity – creating solidarity is not a function of the state. My NGO can help with solidarity; constructing solidarity with communities." He then commented, "Hope, how can we give hope? We can share a vision. In doing our social analysis, we transform social mentality; this is not the role of the state to do this.... With social transformation, it starts with mentality, the heart, etc. The state cannot do this" (INT88). In this perspective, hope for

Senegal's future is not found in a corrupt, disconnected and unresponsive state, but found rather in the civil society organizations that defend the population's interests through monitoring the state, and engage with local communities to provide services and share their visions of improvement. Building hope for the population can be considered part of the aim of these NGOs. This is even expressly stated by CONGAD (2008), the council of development NGOs in Senegal, when it claims to promote social, economic, cultural and political dialogue, engaging civil society organizations and other actors in mobilizing to leave the crisis and restore hope. It states that this citizen mobilization is needed to restore hope in Senegal, given that government action has been reduced to vain electoral promises (CONGAD 2008).

These views appears to resonate with the findings of Courville and Piper's (2004:40) study, which discusses how, "...people have lost hope in the state and official political processes as a leading vehicle for social change; instead, they organize and network through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and social movements that largely operate outside state-based structures." In Senegal, many NGOs, networks, associations and other civil society organizations have arisen out of the desire to improve local conditions by supplying needed services and engaging with the local population, activities that the state is not considered to adequately provide. However, many of these organizations do not work outside of state-based structures, but work with the Senegalese state and within Senegal's political system to accomplish their goals, which in some cases involve efforts to strengthen these same structures. The complex relationship between NGOs and the state will be further addressed in the following section.

## **Relations between NGOs and the Senegalese State**

### *Collaborating and Partnering with the State*

While NGO practitioners in this study were often quite critical of the political situation in Senegal and the (in)actions of the state, many also described working with the state in different capacities. This includes providing workshops for government officials, participating in state commissions on different issues, collaborating on projects, providing research and presentations on policy issues, as well as carrying out contracts funded by the state. For example, a young Senegalese program coordinator for an INGO stated that the EU and the Senegalese government fund one of the programs he works on. This program focuses on encouraging discourse between civil society organizations and the state in several fields, including education, health and transportation. Part of this work involves having consultations where representatives of civil society meet with representatives of the state to give the state recommendations (INT36). In another instance, a young Senegalese volunteer with a local association pointed out that they collaborate on programs with the state, including one that involves making basic services accessible to those experiencing health problems (INT18).

In a number of cases, participants described the Senegalese state as a significant partner for their organization. According to the French director of an INGO, the government of Senegal is a big partner of his organization, and they work with a number of different ministries, including the departments of health, demography and education (INT65). Similarly, a Senegalese director of a health NGO noted that his organization works a great deal with the state, and they receive both materials and financing for

contracts from the ministry of health. He said the policy of the state is no longer about trying to do the work themselves, but engaging in partnerships. Now the minister has a policy of contracting out the work, of forming partnerships (INT81). A middle-aged Senegalese man working for a local NGO also described one of their programs as receiving funds from the World Bank via the state, which hired his NGO to be the program operator and implement the local development planning (INT79). It is interesting to note that while most participants who mentioned partnering with the state worked for INGOs, several individuals who described the state as a partner of their organization were involved with local NGOs or associations.

When asked about the relationship between the Senegalese state and NGOs in the country, a representative from CONGAD noted that there are several areas of interaction. First, she noted that, “The state has the responsibility to implement policies, to formulate them in a participative way and give account to the population. In this view, it is the state that puts in place the regulatory framework regarding the interventions of NGOs.”<sup>28</sup> Second, NGOs in Senegal promote citizen participation in the formulation and implementation of public policies. This includes holding public debates between political candidates for upcoming elections. Third, there is the matter of NGOs carrying out state contracts. She stated that “In certain cases, the Senegalese government can decide that a certain number of programs will be implemented, notably in such sectors as health, water, etc., by the official state service, but also by the operators of civil society, which can be

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<sup>28</sup> The Directorate of Community Development of the Ministry of the Family provides oversight of NGOs in Senegal, and foreign and national associations wishing to establish themselves as NGOs must submit a request for approval by the Ministry (Kamara 2010:9,15).

NGOs or CBOs (community based organizations).” She also commented that civil society has had an increasingly important influence on the country, and there is a tradition of political openness here that allows for a dynamic of dialogue between civil society and political actors in power or in the opposition.

Certainly, NGO staff described numerous cases of working together with the Senegalese state. A few participants even described the importance of working closely with the government. Ibrahim, the national secretary of local NGO that is a member of an international network, said that the state calls on NGOs to help, and here, NGOs are the long arm of the state – they get to do the work (INT14). A European woman working for an INGO stated that “[My organization] is close to the Senegalese government, the ministers, national assembly, the senate, etc... We are close; we work hand in hand and we want to support the Senegalese state. One shouldn’t work beside it” (INT82). The collaborations between NGOs and the state along with NGOs carrying out state contracts for public programs suggest that the line between governmental and non-governmental may be becoming less distinct as these relationships grow.<sup>29</sup>

It should be noted that not all NGO practitioners in this study described NGOs as having a cozy relationship with the state. A few pointed out that due to tensions with NGOs, the state was not keen on working with these organizations. According to the Senegalese director of one INGO, states such as the Senegalese government do not want to collaborate with NGOs (INT23). In a similar way, Abdou, the director of a local

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<sup>29</sup> See previous discussion of Ferguson 2006 and the separation of civil society and the state in Chapter Two.

education NGO, said that the regime in Senegal is not favorable to NGOs. He states that “The president of the republic, in his conception, says that NGOs receive a lot of money, but they eat it up and do nothing. This is the idea in his head. If you have someone with this idea, he will not help these organizations.” As well, he said, “Sometimes, with a small action by the NGO on the ground, one sees more effectiveness than an action by the state that is much larger. But now, if a state was a party to it, it could use these experiences to improve its possibility and effectiveness. But, unfortunately, if one feels a competition – if the state already sees the NGOs as people taking money, it is thus, competition. Now it passes up this synergy between the state and NGOs. There is no synergy. Whereas, normally, it is the opposite” (INT49). While this sense of competition between NGOs and the state has been noted in the past, it has been described as decreasing over time. Gellar (2005:102) points out that with the beginnings of the NGO movement in Senegal in the 1960s, the government at first viewed these development NGOs as a source of political opposition and competition for donor funding. However, he states that “Tensions between the government and the NGO movement declined considerably in the 1990s as the government reduced its tutelage over associational life” (Gellar 2005:102). Still, it seems that underlying tensions still occasionally surface in these relationships. In April 2008, in response to accusations by President Wade that some NGOs had been engaged in embezzlement, CONGAD (2008) released a statement defending the important work of NGOs in the country given the challenging economic and political context. The document points out that NGOs work within the state’s regulatory framework and that CONGAD has worked on formulating a law to increase

effectiveness and transparency in the sector, but despite their efforts, it has never been presented to the National Assembly (CONGAD 2008). Thus, tensions do exist between NGOs and the state, but as noted above, many seem to find ways to collaborate with the state in their projects for the population, recognizing the benefits of such partnerships.

*NGOs in Senegal: Working within the Political System*

Given the frequent negative assessments of the Senegalese government by NGO staff, it may seem contradictory for their NGOs to collaborate with the state. However, there are several significant points to be made in this regard. First, the aim of many of these NGOs is to assist the population through services and capacity building, and working with the state not only gives NGOs potential access to further funding but may also allow for smoother operational experiences in the country, which would be viewed as helping them to achieve their aims. For instance, Tania, a Dutch funding coordinator for an INGO, mentioned that Senegal had been very accommodating of her organization, even offering diplomatic status, which provides them with a tax-free situation. She noted that this is important for an organization based on private funding. The Senegalese government also provided land for their office space. In her view, the INGO can only accomplish its goals through the help of its partners, including the government (INT39). Collaborating with the state can often involve funding opportunities for NGOs, and Sarr (2006:110) notes that NGOs are able to directly access public funds through operating as the agents carrying out a state program, particularly in the areas of education, health and micro-finance. She points out that in the first phase of the National Health Development

Program (PNDS), two billion CFA francs (approximately \$4.2 million CAD) out of a 200 billion CFA franc (approximately \$420 million CAD) budget was set aside for NGOs, and approximately twenty agreements were signed between the Ministry of Health and NGOs and local community organizations to carry out this work (Sarr 2006:110).

Therefore, working with the state can be quite a lucrative undertaking for NGOs that are willing to partner with them.

Second, even for NGOs with more political aims, such as human rights NGOs, their focus does not involve ousting a corrupt regime, but entails trying to promote the protection of human rights, encourage citizen participation in politics, and provide input on state actions in order to reinforce the functioning of democracy in the country. As noted by Ousmane, a program manager for an INGO, “The approach of my NGO is that we see people not participating in situations that affect them, and we want a different level of political participation. We want to help them organize and participate in international discussions... We want to be empowering. We try to change the situation in Senegal – the environment and culture. We want all actors at the table to think and decide together and then they can change [the situation]. You cannot impose on people, you need to exchange” (INT10). Similarly, when Renate, a German INGO worker, was asked if she would like to continue to work with NGOs in development, she said, “Yes, because I am convinced it is the only way to promote democracy and participation – working with NGOs and government. We push people to participate in political change – a democratic country.” She commented that for a representative democracy, political participation is important, and people should participate in elections and every democratic event, even

just with parental councils at school. Her INGO really wants people to participate and to be conscious of their role and value, so that they do not let themselves be treated like cattle (INT82). For some participants, NGOs were an instrument of bringing the state and the population together in political dialogue. This was the case for Faye, a Senegalese woman working as the executive director of a local NGO network, SenPol. She said that the goals of her organization are to improve political dialogue and the policies of development. She claimed that the state would call on her organization if an issue were to affect non-state groups, since her NGO is a recognized interlocutor in the area of negotiation and dialogue. SenPol has representatives from different organizations, and to reinforce their legitimacy, they have branches in all regions of Senegal, bringing together local actors. The grassroots population thinks together and develops priorities, and her network brings their views to the national level. In this way, SenPol takes the needs of the population and tries to bring them to the level of the decision-makers (INT20).

### *The Politics and Apolitics of NGOs*

In some cases NGO staff mentioned other methods of bringing their views to the state, such as the advocacy event described at the beginning of this chapter. Similarly, an older Senegalese volunteer for a women's association noted that the goals of her organization are to help women be competent, reinforce capacity, to have the rights of women recognized, and to have laws enforced. To carry out these goals, they are engaged in a lot of lobbying activities (INT30). Certainly, the NGO staff in this study described their organizations as engaging in a variety of political activities, such as studying,

developing and implementing public policy, pursuing lobbying/advocacy work, democracy building, and creating political dialogue between the state and the population. According to Gellar (2005: 87), since the 1980s, an opening up of the political system has contributed to the growth in new forms of civic associations that have political aims not of wresting power, but of strengthening democratic practices and institutions.<sup>30</sup> As he states, “Led by highly educated Senegalese men and women, these groups have generally declared themselves to be politically neutral while lobbying for electoral and legal reforms and women’s rights and intervening to free political prisoners and stop human rights violations in the Casamance” (Gellar 2005:87). Thus, even while declaring themselves politically neutral, many participants described their organizations as engaged in political activities involving the strengthening of democracy and the protection of human rights in the country, suggesting that these entities are political, but perhaps within certain limits. Their organizations are not political in terms of taking political power, but they do seek to hold the current government accountable to certain democratic standards.<sup>31</sup>

While many participants shared their critical views of the state and pointed out the political activities of their NGOs, in some cases, NGO practitioners did explicitly describe having an apolitical stance in their NGO work. This includes Samba, a young

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<sup>30</sup> The civic associations Gellar (2005:87) describes refers to INGOs, local NGOs and associations that promote good governance and the protection of human rights in Senegal.

<sup>31</sup> However, there are some leaders of civic society organizations who have had close ties with political leaders and have used their organizations as vehicles for becoming civil society representatives in government (Gellar 2005:87). In 2001, shortly after being elected, President Wade placed a number of civic and civil society leaders in key ministry positions in the government, although he reduced their number in 2002 (Gellar 2005:88).

Senegalese volunteer of a local association, who noted that he is apolitical and does not like to criticize the authorities of the country. In his view, Africa always can do better (INT83). Similarly, an INGO worker stated that she cannot discuss the political situation in Senegal because her European INGO is a non-political organization, and non-denominational too (INT39). In addition, a British woman commented at one point that she did not want to discuss politics with me because she is the director of an INGO and she cannot be associated with certain political ideas (INT33). Despite the few participants that emphasized their apolitical stance, as noted previously, many participants were vocal about their criticisms of the political context in Senegal and some described a variety of political activities engaged in by their organizations to push the government to address areas of their concern.

### *The Political Constraints of NGOs*

Given the sometimes tense relationships NGOs experience with the state, along with the political activities of these NGOs as described by participants, it is reasonable to infer that the apolitical label applied to NGOs requires further inquiry.<sup>32 33</sup> Perhaps it would be more useful to consider NGOs as entities that operate within certain political limits given their objectives of gradual improvement and organizational longevity in a

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<sup>32</sup> See discussion in Chapter Two on the work of Ferguson (1994) regarding the efforts of development organizations to characterize their work as apolitical, and the work of Li (2007) involving how improvement experts render issues technical and nonpolitical.

<sup>33</sup> Foley and Edwards (1996:47) suggest the need to consider the political aspects of civil society organizations.

competitive context that financially rewards those who follow the dictates of Western political and financial institutions, organizations that support the Senegalese government. As noted by USAID (2010), “Working in partnership with the Senegalese Government to achieve its vision of becoming a modern, prosperous, democratic state with a majority Muslim population is an important U.S. foreign policy priority.” Thus, donors such as USAID emphasize working with the Senegalese state. Such an approach has significant effects on the efforts of NGOs in Senegal, given that NGO officials design their funding proposals by determining the issues of greatest importance to Western funding elites (Petras 1999:433). Gellar (2005:102) points out that NGOs in Senegal, which are registered as nonprofit private apolitical associations, have a heavy dependence on external financing. Certainly, many participants in my study noted that their NGOs received funding from the development agencies of Western countries, including Canada, Germany, and the U.S. In her 2004 survey of 135 NGOs in Senegal, Sarr (2006:109, 111) found that the most influential donors to NGOs included the World Bank, several UN agencies, USAID, CIDA, French cooperation and the European Union. These donors provide funds to the NGOs for economic and political development, which includes promoting practices and structures of democracy, not political upheaval. For example, according to USAID (2010), in Senegal, “The United States is expanding its efforts to promote government-wide transparency and accountability. Governance issues are also systematically integrated in each sector program.” Indeed, foreign donors have supported the promotion of good governance activities through NGOs for many years. Sarr (2006:108-109) notes that in French President Mitterand’s speech at the 16th Franco-

African Summit in June 1990, he stated that henceforth, French aid to African countries would be connected to conditions of democracy, and that he supported new civil organizations that were mobilizing to reinforce democracy, fundamental rights and collective and individual freedoms. In this way, NGOs began to engage in more political work in these areas, and they started to receive substantial technical and financial support from the government and external donors for their activities (Sarr 2006:109). Thus the agendas of foreign funding agencies can greatly impact the work of NGOs, both international and local, which depend on these funds in order to operate.<sup>34</sup>

Through their NGOs, NGO practitioners engage in political activities that are considered to support the aims of democracy and stability, while pursuing more radical political agendas that could directly threaten the operations of the current political system, locally or internationally, is unlikely to receive the support of foreign aid agencies that provide the bulk of the funding for INGOs and their local NGO and association partners. Wallace et al. (2006:27) note that while many NGOs have misgivings about globalization and the spread of World Bank and IMF paradigms around the world, they seem to have found few alternative models from which to draw. While there are a few that openly struggle with the larger issues raised by the broader economic context and the position of NGOs in it, many NGOs see their role as working with the social and economic model of development, while attempting to limit some of its excesses by focusing on economic growth with a human component (Wallace et al. 2006:27). According to Wallace et al. (2006:28), “Others do not question the larger paradigm, but rather focus on projects that

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<sup>34</sup> Issues involving access and control of funding in the work of NGOs are further explored in Chapter Four.

they can see might benefit poor people in the countries where they work, such as providing service delivery for poor people who are being overlooked.” Indeed, Petras (1999:432) has described NGOs as addressing poverty by engaging in preventative action and survival strategies, not organizing mass demonstrations to challenge neo-liberal regimes. For some NGO critics, the less radical political efforts of NGOs suggest that these organizations are engaged in creating a political world where a facade of social action and solidarity hides a “conservative conformity” with the national and international structure of power (Petras 1999:435). Despite the aspirations of NGO staff for an improved economic and political future in Senegal, it seems there are constraints to the political actions their organizations can take to address larger systemic issues that contribute to the challenges the Senegalese people now face.

## **Conclusion**

In exploring the views of NGO practitioners on the place of Senegal in the world, it becomes apparent that despite the country’s external image as a beacon of democracy in a political unstable region, underneath the surface lies a great deal of frustration and concern with the current economic and political context. Political leaders are viewed as disconnected from the population they have been elected to represent, which leads to concerns about a reduction in democracy and possible instability in the country. Given their discontent with the current situation, NGO staff described their aspirations for better future for Senegal, a future they considered possible not due to the state, but as a result of efforts by NGOs and civil society. Still, despite their critiques, NGO practitioners often

described their NGOs as engaging with the state, although underlying tensions do sometimes emerge between them. Given these tensions and the efforts by NGOs to promote human rights and reinforce democracy, perhaps we can consider these organizations as political entities that operate within the constraints they face from international donors, which limit them from pursuing more radical agendas. In this way, they work within national and international political structures to try to attain their aspirations for Senegal.

## **Chapter Eight - Conclusion**

In this dissertation, I have sought to provide a more in-depth understanding of the experiences of local and international NGO practitioners working towards their aspirations of improvement for Senegal. Through an engagement with relevant literature and ethnographic data collected from fieldwork research with the voluntary and paid staff of NGOs in Senegal, I have presented an exploration of the NGO context in Senegal with a consideration of the personal perspectives of those working with these organizations. This has involved examining the international connections and partnerships between NGOs, the approaches and techniques utilized by these organizations, the hopes of NGO practitioners for what can be achieved through their efforts, and their political engagement with the state. The findings of this research connect with several wider theoretical themes, including issues of civil society and governmentality, globalization and global connection, social hope and improvement. In addition, this research points to a number of potential future areas of research, which will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

This study has explored a number of issues concerning the perspectives and efforts of NGO practitioners in Senegal. Throughout the previous chapters, I provided a discussion of the political and economic context in Senegal, as well as explored the main themes and scholarly works that form the theoretical basis of this research. This included a discussion of the concept of hope, looking at different conceptual approaches to hope, how it is shaped by one's context, and the role it can play in social research. In addition, I

described the ethnographic methods and analytical techniques employed in this research, while considering the advantages and challenges to studying the NGO context in Senegal with anthropological research methods.

Following this, I engaged with issues of globalization by examining the interconnection of local and international NGOs involved in partnerships. I discussed how these partnerships tend to form and function, and the experiences of staff participating in these relationships. I also noted the perceived benefits and challenges of these partnerships and concerns about financial dependence and problematic power dynamics involving the chain of organizations seeking funds from larger international institutions. I then considered issues of governance by these civil society organizations, exploring the critical discourses of NGO staff regarding their work in contrast to the criticisms of NGO work found in some scholarly literature. I considered how, in this context, NGOs focus on using their expertise to train communities how to better manage the impact of larger structural forces, rather than more directly engaging with these structures.

In addition, this study explored the issue of social hope among NGO practitioners, first by discussing the motivations of NGO staff engaged in this work and then examining how they approach and experience the concept of hope. With a focus on implementing programs targeted at certain groups over a short period of time, the hope of NGO staff involves a desire for long-term improvement despite the challenges faced. Finally, I aimed to draw upon the three main theoretical themes of NGOs and governmentality, global connection, and social hope by considering the aspirations of NGO staff with respect to their political engagement with the state and their perception of Senegal's place

in the world. This involved discussing how NGO practitioners perceive the current economic and political context in Senegal, and their belief that civil society and NGOs are the basis for hope in Senegal rather than the state. I found that NGOs seek improvement by working within the political and economic system, constrained and limited by the dictates of their external donors.

### **Connections and Contradictions: Concluding Observations and Remarks**

Throughout this work, I have attempted to connect the local experiences of NGO workers with larger issues of civil society, globalization, and social hope. In exploring these topics with participants, I found that a number of connections and contradictions emerged, and these issues point to interesting tensions that exist in the framework of NGO agendas and efforts, tensions that highlight some of problematic aspects of this pursuit of social change and improvement. I turn now to discuss some of these issues of note. For instance, Senegal was described as a stable, peaceful, and democratic country that is respected in the international community. Yet, the same participants would also point out the many economic difficulties facing the country and share their concerns about a corrupt and unresponsive government. How can we understand these seemingly incongruent views? I would suggest that the view of Senegal as politically and economically stable is due to its position relative to its West African neighbors, such as Guinea-Bissau and Mauritania, who have experienced a great deal of instability through civil wars and coup d'états, making Senegal with its democratically-elected leaders appear politically secure by comparison. However, further examination shows that much

of the population is impoverished, while the Wade government faces accusations of mismanagement and nepotism. In some ways, Senegal can be viewed as a prime environment for development NGOs – considered relatively safe and stable, but with many opportunities for improvement projects, including initiatives promoting human rights, democracy, microcredit, access to better education and health care, and sustainable farming practices. With pressure from international financial institutions to cut spending to public programs, there are increasingly spaces for NGOs to provide services and assistance to the Senegalese population. In this context, local NGOs have flourished and partnered with INGOs flocking to the country.

Connections between civil society groups are growing, and diverse groups from different areas of the world are linking together in their efforts to address shared issues and concerns. This includes the partnerships formed between INGOs and local NGOs who seek to engage in these relationships that can at times entail underlying frictions concerning mismanagement, bureaucracy, and control over projects and funding. While local NGOs have sought out technical and financial assistance from INGOs, by engaging in these international networks of NGOs and funding institutions, they have opened themselves up to both the potential benefits of receiving this assistance, and the risks of depending on this network of support when financial volatility, such as that with the recent financial crisis, makes this support increasingly unreliable. While there are many perceived benefits to growing interconnection between civil society groups, it is important to consider the power dynamics and positioning of these disparate groups, and

the potential for instability to spread through these connections, particularly those based on funding.

The issue of funding also raises important questions about NGO accountability. What are the obligations of NGO staff to the populations with whom they work when their funding is largely provided by external organizations with no direct ties to the community? By working with local associations, NGOs and INGOs attempt to better understand local needs and may try to collaborate with program participants. Still, when the project funding is finished and the priorities of international donors change, NGOs may have little impetus to continue working with a community. Local communities do not have a clear process for ensuring that they have input into the programs of NGOs. For organizations that strongly promote democracy and equality, it is disconcerting how hierarchical and undemocratic NGOs can be, both within their own organizations and with the other organizations and communities with whom they interact.

In Chapter Two, I discussed different theories and approaches to social hope. It was noted that one's context fosters and supports particular hopes. How do people hope in a context of neoliberal globalization and what is the object of this hope? In Senegal, I find that some people hope through their work with NGOs. This entails aspiring for a democratic, peaceful world where human rights are respected and people live without poverty, and hoping to achieve this state of the world by engaging in NGO work. This work involves connecting with other NGOs at the local and international levels, trying to lessen the negative impact of structural poverty and inequality by providing services and promoting community management techniques, and engaging in short-term improvement

projects that aim for long-term change while working within the wider political and economic system. Their hope for a better future is enacted in their NGO work, which aims not to contest or change global economic systems and structures of power, but to advocate for them to be less destructive and more conscious of human needs, in addition to trying to find ways for local communities to tap into the benefits of the market. The dream of development, born post-WWII out a liberal desire for modernization and equality, is now being applied by development agents such as NGOs in a context of growing neoliberalism, employed not to counteract processes of inequality promoted by this system, but to help communities to deal with the challenges it poses and become better able to compete in the global marketplace. One wonders if such projects of progress and improvement that continue to shape the approaches of NGO practitioners and their organizations are adequate to meet the challenges in this context of growing neoliberal agendas and actually help to decrease the poverty and inequality against which they claim to fight.

Hope entails dissatisfaction with the present and a desire for a better future. For NGO practitioners, the current economic and political situation in Senegal is problematic, and they hope their efforts at improvement through development techniques will create positive change. In their view, the efforts of NGOs are much more effective and responsive to the needs of the population than those of the corrupt and bureaucratic state. They feel their hopes for an improved Senegal are likely to be achieved through the work of NGOs, which contrasts with their poor view of the state. Given this assessment, it seems contradictory that NGOs are in fact frequent collaborators with the state, engaged

in partnerships and carrying out state contracts. This suggests that despite their criticisms, NGOs have been able to benefit from working with the state. Although they have non-governmental status, given their governmental ties, they may at times not be all that distinguishable from the state.

In addition, while NGOs have been accused of taking on state functions, it is evident that their ability to become responsible for such services is limited. NGOs are engaged in governance activities through trying to manage communities by applying their expertise in various fields. However, with an approach of providing short-term projects for a limited number of communities, it is clear that NGOs are likely to experience difficulty trying to effectively replace the services of the state. As well, there are many challenges to designing a cohesive plan to address the economic and political issues facing Senegal with a multitude of NGOs and their varied aims and approaches. While the state may play a reduced role in the services it provides for the population, it continues to play an important role in the current context, collaborating with and regulating NGOs in the country.

It should be noted, however, that tensions do exist between NGOs and the Senegalese state, and some NGOs have engaged in advocacy work to encourage the government to respect human rights and engage in democratic practices, as well as providing workshops and policy discussions on a range of issues. The political agendas of NGOs tend to involve encouraging state reform and engaging in awareness campaigns to inform the local population about better management practices. These may be admirable

goals, but they lack an emphasis on addressing larger systems of power including that of neoliberal globalization, which shapes the situations of poverty they seek to manage.

Through this research, I have found that NGO practitioners in Senegal aspire to use their organizations to build a better future for Senegal through building the capacity of local communities to become more informed and use better practices to succeed in a challenging economic and political context. They partner with INGOs that provide technical assistance and funding, since INGOs also seek to work with local NGOs in order to have more direct connections with local groups. In seeking funding drawn from external sources, since the local population is unable to provide these funds, they are able to implement their projects and maintain the functioning of their organizations. However, their focus on technical training and their dependence on external funding limits their ability to tackle larger structural issues, such as the conditionalities and trade imbalances imposed by Western financial institutions. Indeed, the forms of political engagement NGOs are able to participate in seem constrained given that their funding tends to flow from external institutions that support the current regime and promote a neoliberal agenda of trade liberalization and privatization that contribute to the poverty and structural inequalities experienced by the Senegalese population.

### **Future Directions for Research**

The findings of this study point to a number of possible research efforts in the future. My study largely focused on the discourses of NGO practitioners regarding their work and my experiences in their office environments. It would be beneficial to also

engage in fieldwork that entailed observing and participating in NGO programs that included greater interaction with local recipients of these programs in Senegal. I think it would be intriguing to be able to bring ethnographic methods to study both the NGOs in Senegal and the recipient populations involved in a program with an emphasis on understanding the power dynamics shaping these relationships. Given the growing concern that NGOs have with protecting their image, it may be very difficult to gain consent to study their interaction with local populations without agreeing to considerable limitations in the scope of study.

In addition, further ethnographic research into other NGO contexts, such as those of Western countries like Canada, could also be revealing in terms of the issues of interest to these organizations, the challenges they face in this environment, and how this differs from NGOs in other contexts. Works such as those by Crewe and Harrison (1998), Wallace et al. (2006), and Ferguson (1994), have traced the impact of aid agencies and their policies on NGOs and/or local groups. More in-depth anthropological studies of these aid institutions could be helpful in understanding the complex power dynamics that exist in their relationships with NGOs, recipient governments and populations. As well, it would be beneficial to further explore how the Western public perceives NGOs and the aid institutions that their governments support. How do they understand the positioning of their countries in the world, and what role, if any, do they believe they and their governments should take in building a more equitable global environment?

Greater exploration into the concept of social hope and how it is shaped in different contexts is another intriguing avenue of study. One's context helps form our

understanding of the world, our place in it, and what we hope for it to be. How do different groups of people in different places hope in a context of neoliberal globalization? How do these global processes contribute to uniformity and variation in the aspirations of people in diverse settings and positions?

While many NGOs focus on working within political and economic systems using a model of development, Wallace et al. (2006:27) point out that a few do in fact overtly grapple with issues involving the larger economic paradigm. Further study of how some NGOs may be re-envisioning their role in development processes and pursuing more radical political aims that contest global inequalities and power structures would be helpful in revealing alternative approaches to aspiring for change. It would allow greater understanding of the potential and possibility for NGOs to adapt and reevaluate their approach to confronting conditions of poverty, perhaps engaging in a re-imagined politics of improvement and hope.

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## Appendix 1- Consent Form

### Aspirations for Senegal: Explorations of the International Connections of NGOs

**Principal Investigator:** Kathryn Mossman  
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(905) 525-9140 ext. 24424

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Hamilton, Ontario, Canada  
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**Research Sponsor:** SSHRC Graduate Scholarship, H.L. Hooker Senior Fellowship

#### **Purpose of the Study**

In this study, I will be exploring the connections formed between international and Senegalese NGOs in their attempt to work with local communities in Senegal to improve areas of education, human rights, health, and the economy. I will also ask what kind of hopes Senegalese and non-Senegalese NGO workers have about the future of Senegal, and its place in Africa and the world.

#### **Procedures involved in the Research**

In this research, I will volunteer and conduct participant observation, which involves trying to immerse yourself in the experiences of those you study, with an NGO located in Dakar, Senegal that focuses on the areas of health, education, economic development, and human rights and democracy. I will conduct 85-100 in-depth interviews with the volunteers and members of this NGO and other NGOs operating in Senegal.

In this study, you will be asked to participate in one in-depth interview. In this interview, I will ask why you decided to work with this NGO, and what goals you hope to accomplish by getting involved with this NGO. I will ask you to share your experiences of working with international and/or Senegalese NGOs on projects in Senegal, and to describe the partnerships and connections your organization has fostered with other NGOs. I will also ask what hopes you have for yourself and the future of Senegal, and what you think of Senegal's future outlook in terms of politics, economy, health, and religion. I will ask how you define hope and what importance this term has for you, and what you think of Senegal's political and economic role in the global community. This interview will take place at a time and location that you find both comfortable and convenient, and will be approximately one-hour in length, depending on your schedule. If any follow-up information is needed from you after the interview, with your approval, I will contact you personally.

#### **Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts:**

Participation in this study will present no risk beyond what people face in day-to-day living. Some of the questions may raise issues that you feel strongly about. Also you may worry about how

others would react to what you say. You do not need to answer questions you would prefer to skip. All attempts will be made to respect your privacy, and the confidentiality of all personal information will be maintained. With your full permission and consent, this interview will be recorded and transcribed.

If you consent, please initial the following statement:  
\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to have my interview recorded by a voice recorder.

**Potential Benefits**

A report can be made available to you at the end of the study. I hope that this report will help give a greater understanding of how different organizations work together to achieve their goals and suggest other possible areas of cooperation. You may benefit by having the opportunity to discuss your experiences and share your views on the future of Senegal and how you hope your organization can work towards positive change.

**Payment or Reimbursement:**

Participants will not be paid for participating in this study, but you will be reimbursed for transportation costs that are directly related to participating in an interview.

**Confidentiality:**

I will take a number of steps to protect your identity. While the NGOs I am studying may be mentioned by name, I will not be using the names of any individuals in my study. I will refer to individuals only by their pseudonyms. Nor will I be using personal information that could be used to identify you. I will be the only person with access to the identities of participants and the information gathered from the interviews. I will keep all materials related to my study in a secure place.

**Participation:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Those who object to my note-taking or collecting data about their activities within the organization should inform me, and I will respect their wishes. Those who decide to participate in an interview can decide to stop at any time, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study. There are no consequences for those who decide to stop participating. In cases of withdrawal any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. It is possible not to answer some of the questions, and still be in the study.

**Information About the Study Results and Participating as a Study Subject:**

I expect to complete my study at the beginning of 2010. If you are interested in obtaining a summary of the results, please let me know. If you have questions or require more information about the study itself, please contact: Kathryn Mossman, PhD Candidate in the Department of Anthropology, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Telephone: (221) 77-508-8033. Email: [mossmake@mcmaster.ca](mailto:mossmake@mcmaster.ca).

This study has been reviewed and approved by the McMaster Research Ethics Board. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, you may contact the McMaster Research Ethics Board Secretariat by telephone at 00 (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142 or by e-mail at [ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca](mailto:ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca)

**CONSENT**

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Kathryn Mossman of McMaster University. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study, and to receive any additional details I wanted to know about the study. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time, if I choose to do so, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

---

Signature of Participant

In my opinion, the person who has signed above is agreeing to participate in this study voluntarily, and understands the nature of the study and the consequences of participation in it.

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Signature of Researcher

## **Espoirs pour le Sénégal: Une Étude Ethnographique Explorant les Connections Internationales Entre des ONGs**

**Investigatrice principale** Kathryn Mossman  
Département d'Anthropologie  
Université McMaster  
Hamilton (Ontario) Canada  
(905) 525-9140 extension 24424

**Superviseur d'Universitaire:** Dr. Petra Rethmann  
Département d'Anthropologie  
Université McMaster  
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada  
(905) 525-9140 ext. 23905

**Commanditaire de recherche**  
SSHRC Bourse d'études graduées; H.L Hooker Senior Fellowship

### **But de l'étude**

Dans le cadre de cette étude, je vais explorer les connections formées par des ONGs internationales et Sénégalaises qui travaillent avec des communautés locales Sénégalaises, ces ONGs ayant pour le but d'effectuer des améliorations dans les domaines de l'éducation, des droits de la personne, de la santé, et de l'économie. J'examinerai aussi les espoirs qu'ont les travailleurs d'ONGs, Sénégalais et non Sénégalais, quant au futur du Sénégal et à la place que peut occuper ce pays en Afrique et à l'échelle mondiale.

### **Méthodes de recherche**

Pour cette recherche, j'effectuerai de l'observation participante en habitant à Dakar, au Sénégal, et en me portant bénévole avec une ONG située au Sénégal, qui travaille dans les domaines de la santé, de l'éducation, du développement économique, des droits de la personne ou de la démocratie. J'effectuerai aussi 85-100 entrevues approfondies de une heure, avec des bénévoles ou membres de cette ONG et des autres ONGs situées au Sénégal. Je demanderai chaque participant de participer dans une entrevue approfondie. Ces entrevues porteront les expériences de travailler avec des ONGs internationales et/ou Sénégalaises, et les expériences avec les partenariats des ONGs. Ces entrevues porteront sur la décision qu'ils ont faite de venir travailler pour l'ONG en question, sur les buts – tant personnels qu'organisationnels – qu'ils espèrent atteindre via leur travail avec l'ONG, et sur les espoirs qu'ils entretiennent, pour eux-mêmes et pour leur pays. Je demanderai aux participants de partager leurs expériences de vie, et leur avis sur le futur du Sénégal, en termes de politique, d'économie, de santé et de religion. Je leur demanderai aussi comment ils perçoivent le rôle du Sénégal dans la communauté internationale, en termes politiques et économiques. Finalement, je leur demanderai comment ils définissent l'idée d'espoir, et le rôle que l'espoir a pour eux. Cette entrevue aura lieu à un endroit et à un moment qui vous conviennent, et durera environ une heure. Si des questions supplémentaires s'avéraient nécessaires suite à l'entrevue, je vous contacterai personnellement, moyennant votre permission.

### **Dangers, inconforts, et risques potentiels :**

La participation à cette étude ne présentera pas de risque au delà de ceux déjà impliqués dans les activités quotidiennes des participants. C'est possible que vous trouverez certaines questions difficiles. Vous n'avez pas besoin de répondre à certaines questions si vous êtes mal à l'aise. Tous les efforts possibles seront pris afin de respecter votre vie privée et de protéger la confidentialité de

vosre information personnelle. Avec votre permission, cette entrevue sera enregistrée et transcrite.

Prière d'initialer l'énoncé suivant, si vous consentez à participer :

\_\_\_\_\_ J'accepte que ma participation à l'entrevue soit enregistrée sur un dictaphone.

**Avantages potentiels**

Les avantages potentiels que cette étude offre aux participants incluent l'occasion de discuter de votre expérience, ainsi que de partager vos idées sur le futur du Sénégal et vos espoirs quand au rôle que peut jouer votre organisme dans ces changements. De plus, si vous êtes intéressés, une copie du rapport présentant les résultats de recherche vous sera offerte, dès que celui-ci sera terminé. Ce rapport pourra vous offrir une meilleure compréhension de comment différents organismes travaillent ensemble pour atteindre leurs buts, et présentera des aires potentielles de collaboration future.

**Paiement ou remboursement :**

Aucune compensation financière ne sera offerte aux participants, quoi que les dépenses personnelles encourues dans le cadre d'entrevues – par exemple les frais de transport - pourront être remboursées.

**Confidentialité:**

J'emploierai un certain nombre de mesures pour protéger votre identité. Des pseudonymes seront utilisés à la place de noms réels, pour masquer l'information personnelle révélée par les participants. Tout énoncé bibliographique évitera de révéler de l'identité personnelle des personnes impliquées. Conséquemment, moi seule, Kathryn Mossman, aurai accès à votre identité et à l'information personnelle que vous me révélez en entrevue. Je vais garder tous des matériels de recherche dans un endroit sûr.

**Participation:**

Votre participation à cette étude est volontaire. Si vous avez un problème avec mes efforts de rassembles les données dans l'organisation, je vais respecter vos souhaits. Si vous choisissez de participer dans une entrevue, vous pouvez à tout moment décider de mettre fin à votre participation, même si vous avez déjà signé le formulaire de consentement, et même si votre participation à l'étude est déjà entamée. Si vous choisissez de mettre fin à votre participation, vous ne subirez aucunes conséquences. Si vous ne voulez pas répondre à certaines questions, vous pouvez refuser de le faire et continuer à participer au reste de l'étude quand même. Veuillez noter qu'il vous sera possible de retirer toute information personne que vous ayez divulguée, ou de stipuler des conditions quant à mon utilisation de celle-ci.

**Information au sujet des résultats de l'étude et sur la participation en tant que sujet d'étude:**

Vous pouvez obtenir de l'information concernant les résultats de cette étude en demandant un rapport détaillé des résultats. Ceux-ci vous seront transmis suite à la fin de la recherche, durant le début de 2010. Si vous avez des questions, ou souhaitez plus d'information sur l'étude elle même, prière de rejoindre Kathryn Mossman, candidate au doctorat, département d'Anthropologie, Université McMaster, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Téléphone: (221) 77-508-8033. Courriel: [mossmake@mcmaster.ca](mailto:mossmake@mcmaster.ca).

Cette étude a été revue et approuvée par le Comité d'Ethique de Recherche de l'Université McMaster. Si vous avez des questions ou des inquiétudes quant à vos droits en tant que participant, ou à la façon dont l'étude est effectuée, prière de communiquer avec le McMaster Research Ethics Board Secretariat par telephone: 00 (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142, où par courriel: [ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca](mailto:ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca)

**CONSENTEMENT**

J'ai lu l'information présentée dans la lettre d'information au sujet de l'étude effectuée par Kathryn Mossman de l'Université McMaster. J'ai eu l'occasion de lui poser mes questions par rapport à mon implication dans cette étude, et de recevoir des explications sur les détails supplémentaires que je voulais connaître. Je comprends que je peux, à tout moment, me retirer de cette étude si je le souhaite. Je consens à participer à cette étude. Une copie écrite de ce formulaire m'a été remise.

---

Signature du participant/de la participante

À mon avis, la personne qui a signé si haut consent à participer à cette étude de son plein gré, et en pleine connaissance des conséquences que pourrait avoir sa participation.

---

Signature de la chercheure

## Appendix 2- Informational Letter for Organizations

### Aspirations for Senegal: Explorations of the International Connections of NGOs

**Principal Investigator:** Kathryn Mossman  
Department of Anthropology  
McMaster University  
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**Supervisor:** Dr. Petra Rethmann  
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Hamilton, Ontario, Canada  
(905) 525-9140 ext. 23905

**Research Sponsor:** Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Canada, Graduate Scholarship; H.L. Hooker Senior Fellowship

#### **Purpose of the Study**

In this study, I will be exploring the connections formed between international and Senegalese NGOs in their attempt to work with local communities in Senegal to improve areas of education, human rights, health, and the economy. I will also ask what kind of hopes Senegalese and non-Senegalese NGO workers have about the future of Senegal, and its place in Africa and the world.

#### **Procedures involved in the Research**

In this research, I will conduct participant observation by volunteering with an NGO located in Dakar, Senegal that focuses on the areas of health, education, economic development, and human rights and democracy. I will also conduct 85-100 in-depth interviews with the volunteers and members other NGOs operating in Senegal. Participant observation is an anthropological research method that involves trying to experience the lives of those you study as much as possible. In this study, participant observation will involve volunteering and observing the everyday activities of an NGO located in Senegal. Notes may be taken of these everyday encounters and experiences that I participate in or observe taking place. These notes will use pseudonyms and change identifying personal details of any individuals mentioned in order to maintain confidentiality and protect their privacy.

#### **Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts:**

Participation in this study will present no risk beyond what people face in day-to-day living. All attempts will be made to respect your privacy, and the confidentiality of all personal information will be maintained.

#### **Potential Benefits**

A report can be made available to you at the end of the study. I hope that this report will help give a greater understanding of how different organizations try to achieve their goals. You may benefit by having the opportunity to discuss your experiences and share your views on the future of Senegal and how you hope your organization can work towards positive change.

**Payment or Reimbursement:**

Participants will not be paid for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

I will take a number of steps to protect your identity. I will not use the name of your NGO or the names of any individuals in my study. I will refer to individuals only by their pseudonyms. Nor will I be using personal information that could be used to identify you. I will be the only person with access to the identities of those in this study. I will keep all materials related to my study in a secure place.

**Participation:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Those who object to my note-taking or collecting data about their activities within the organization should inform me, and I will respect their wishes.

**Information about the Study Results and Participating as a Study Subject:**

I expect to complete my study at the beginning of 2010. If you are interested in obtaining a summary of the results, please let me know.

If you have questions or require more information about the study itself, please contact: Kathryn Mossman, PhD Candidate in the Department of Anthropology, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Telephone: (221) 77-508-8033. Email: [mossmake@mcmaster.ca](mailto:mossmake@mcmaster.ca).

This study has been reviewed and approved by the McMaster Research Ethics Board. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, you may contact the McMaster Research Ethics Board Secretariat by telephone at 00 (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142 or by e-mail at [ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca](mailto:ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca)

## **Espoirs pour le Sénégal: Une Étude Ethnographique Explorant les Connections Internationales Entre des ONGs**

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**Commanditaire de recherche:** Conseil de Recherches en Sciences Humaines du Canada  
Bourse d'Etudes Graduées; H.L Hooker Senior Fellowship

### **But de l'étude**

Dans le cadre de cette étude, je vais explorer les connections formées par des ONGs internationales et Sénégalaises qui travaillent avec des communautés locales Sénégalaises, ces ONGs ayant pour le but d'effectuer des améliorations dans les domaines de l'éducation, des droits de la personne, de la santé, et de l'économie. J'examinerai aussi les espoirs qu'ont les travailleurs d'ONGs, Sénégalais et non Sénégalais, quant au futur du Sénégal et à la place que peut occuper ce pays en Afrique et à l'échelle mondiale.

### **Méthodes de recherche**

Pour cette recherche, j'effectuerai de l'observation participante en habitant à Dakar, au Sénégal, et en me portant bénévole avec une ONG située au Sénégal, qui travaille dans les domaines de la santé, de l'éducation, du développement économique, des droits de la personne ou de la démocratie. J'effectuerai aussi 85-100 entrevues approfondies de une heure, avec des bénévoles ou membres des ONGs situées au Sénégal. L'observation participante est un mode de recherche en anthropologie où on essaye de connaître les expériences des sujets autant que possible. Pour cette recherche, je me porterai bénévole et je vais observer les activités quotidiennes d'une ONG située au Sénégal pour l'observation participante. Parfois, quand j'observe ou participe à quelque chose intéressant, je vais écrire les notes de ces expériences et rencontres quotidiennes. Pour ces notes, je vais utiliser les pseudonymes et changer les détails personnels pour protéger les identités personnelles des personnes impliquées et aussi pour protéger l'identité de l'ONG.

### **Dangers, inconforts, et risques potentiels :**

La participation à cette étude ne présentera pas de risque au delà de ceux déjà impliqués dans les activités quotidiennes des participants. Tous les efforts possibles seront pris afin de respecter votre vie privée et de protéger la confidentialité de votre information personnelle.

### **Avantages potentiels**

Les avantages potentiels que cette étude offre aux participants incluent l'occasion de discuter de votre expérience, ainsi que de partager vos idées sur le futur du Sénégal et vos espoirs quand au rôle que peut jouer votre organisme dans ces changements. De plus, si vous êtes intéressés, une copie du rapport présentant les résultats de recherche vous sera offerte, dès que celui-ci sera terminé. Ce rapport pourra vous offrir une meilleure compréhension de comment différents organismes essayer d'atteindre leurs buts.

**Paiement ou remboursement :**

Aucune compensation financière ne sera offerte aux participants.

**Confidentialité:**

J'emploierai un certain nombre de mesures pour protéger votre identité. Dans cette étude, je ne utiliserai pas la nom de votre NGO. Des pseudonymes seront utilisés à la place de noms réels, pour masquer l'information personnelle révélée par les participants. Tout énoncé bibliographique évitera de révéler de l'identité personnelle des personnes impliquées. Conséquemment, moi seule, Kathryn Mossman, aurai accès à votre identité et à l'information personnelle. Je vais garder tous des matériels de recherche dans un endroit sûr.

**Participation:**

Votre participation à cette étude est volontaire. Si vous avez un problème avec mes efforts de rassembles les données dans l'organisation, je vais respecter vos souhaits.

**Information au sujet des résultats de l'étude et sur la participation en tant que sujet d'étude:**

Vous pouvez obtenir de l'information concernant les résultats de cette étude en demandant un rapport détaillé des résultats. Ceux-ci vous seront transmis suite à la fin de la recherche, durant le début de 2010.

Si vous avez des questions, ou souhaitez plus d'information sur l'étude elle même, prière de rejoindre Kathryn Mossman, candidate au doctorat, département d'Anthropologie, Université McMaster, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Téléphone: (221) 77-508-8033. Courriel: [mossmake@mcmaster.ca](mailto:mossmake@mcmaster.ca).

Cette étude a été revue et approuvée par le Comité d'Ethique de Recherche de l'Université McMaster. Si vous avez des questions ou des inquiétudes quant à vos droits en tant que participant, ou à la façon dont l'étude est effectuée, prière de communiquer avec le McMaster Research Ethics Board Secretariat par telephone: 00 (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142, où par courriel: [ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca](mailto:ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca)