**“The One That Cuts the Path Doesn’t Know it is Crooked”: Ghanaian NGO Workers’
Perspectives of Development in the Multi Donor Budget Support Era**

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A thesis in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to examine Ghanaian NGO workers' perspectives on development in Ghana. In 2003 the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Multi Donor Budget Support program were implemented to create a national strategy for political, economic, and social welfare development, and to harmonize donor funding. Through participant observation and semi-structured interviews with eight Ghanaian NGO workers, I investigated their individual reactions to the changing development landscape in Ghana, and how this affected the practice of development in the non-governmental sector. This context of change and NGO workers' views are employed to critique early anthropology of development studies, which emphasised the hegemonic power of the Global North, and James Ferguson's concept of transnational topography of power. The changes to the practice of development have altered NGO workers' identities, and what emerges is a view that the changes are counter to the socialist historical legacy of development in Ghana.

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List of Abbreviations

ADRW: Accra Declaration on the Rights of Water
CHRAJ: Commission on Human Rights and Justice
CIDA: Canadian International Development Agency
CPP: Convention People's Party
CSO: Civil Society Organization
DFID: Department for International Development
ERP: Economic Recovery Program
GDP: Gross Domestic Product
GNCAPW: Ghana National Coalition against the Privatization of Water
GPRS: Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
HIPC: Heavily Indebted Poor Country
IDA: International Donor Agency
IFI: International Financial Institution
IMF: International Monetary Fund
INGO: International Non Governmental Organization
ISI: Import Substitution Industrialization
MDBS: Multi Donor Budget Support
NDC: National Democratic Congress
NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
NHIS: National Health Insurance Scheme
NLC: National Liberation Council
NPP: New Patriotic Party
NRP: National Reform Party
PNDC: People's National Defence Council
PRS: Poverty Reduction Strategy
SAP: Structural Adjustment Program
UGCC: United Gold Coast Convention
WB: World Bank

Chapter 1: Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate Ghanaian non-governmental organization (NGO) workers' perspectives on development. The reason that this undertaking is important is because anthropological studies of development rarely focus on or include the point of view of the people who actually practice development, live their lives in developing countries, and, consequently, have to live with the outcomes of development processes. Instead, over the last fifteen to twenty years, anthropologists who study development have focussed on issues ranging from the unequal power relations between the "developed world" and the "less-" or "under-developed world" (Ferguson 1990; Escobar 1995), the policies, programs, and projects encompassed in development (Crewe and Harrison 2002), and the recipients and supposed beneficiaries of development (Moore 2000). While these investigations have served to broaden the knowledge base of social scientists that focus on the theoretical, historical, or practical dimensions of development, rarely have the views of development practitioners from developing countries been included in these discussions.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to place the focal point on the people who both implement development, and who have to live with its consequences: Ghanaian NGO workers. What emerges is a multiplicity of individual practitioner-based perspectives on the development landscape. Their perspectives incorporate topics about the power dynamics between the Global North and the Global South, as well as the policies, programs, and projects that aim to transform the lives of development recipients. Importantly, however, they also identify and elaborate on separate topics that are of priority to both their own livelihoods and the future of development in

Ghana. Therefore, the objective of this study is to pose and explore the answers to two basic questions: Who are Ghanaian NGO workers?; and, What are their perspectives on development? What follows is a study that privileges the narratives of Ghanaian NGO workers who speak for themselves, about themselves, and about the processes that affect the development of their country.

Context of Development in Ghana

Beginning the research for this study in late 2006 was a fortuitous time to investigate NGO workers' perspectives on development, because the development landscape in Ghana was undergoing broad structural changes that directly affected NGO workers' livelihoods. While the rise of NGOs, in the late 1980s through the 1990s, heralded what Eboe Hutchful terms the "NGO-ization" (2002: 184) of development in Ghana, this trend recently began to decline, as the confluence of democratization, economic stabilization, and the institutionalization of the national Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) influenced donor agencies and international financial institutions (IFIs) to coordinate their development assistance to Ghana under the new Multi Donor Budget System (MDBS) (Woll 2008). MDBS means that the funding for Ghana's national development strategy would be "harmonized" (DFID 2003) amongst all donors and lenders, and that the government would start taking over many of the services that NGOs had hitherto performed or provided. In the wake of the implementation of MDBS funding to NGOs, their ability to conduct service provision has declined. Furthermore, a new strategy by international donors to convert NGOs into civil society organizations (CSOs) is emerging, whereby they are expected to perform a public policy advocate mandate while also acting as a watchdog to government spending (DFID 2003: 16).

Ghanaian NGO workers' responses to these changes are mixed. Many of the participants interviewed for this study view the changes to the development landscape with discontent and scepticism. In part, this is due to their new roles as civil society advocates, fashioned for them by donor agencies, whereas their relative autonomy as service providers will cease to exist once they are repositioned to be both supporters of government policies and watchdogs of its expenditure. A second theme running through NGO workers' narratives is that the current John Kufuor government doesn't place the social welfare of the people atop its priorities like previous governments did, hence, the perceived handing over of the responsibilities for the social dimensions of Ghana's development to the state was an unpopular move. Since the inception of the SAP era and the neoliberal policy framework that arose, Ghanaians who claim to retain the beliefs of the socialist era perceive the goals of recent governments to be incompatible with their own, and, generally speaking, NGO workers place themselves at the forefront of this group. Lastly, because the civil service was reduced in the 1980s and the government's retrenchment has yet to be fully reversed, many NGO workers expressed doubt that the government will be able to adequately replace NGOs and, thus, they view the state as ill-equipped to tackle Ghana's national development needs.

Hence, the ongoing changes to Ghana's development landscape have produced strong and varied reactions to which NGO workers have responded in at least one of two ways. Firstly, many NGO workers have changed their jobs, either voluntarily or involuntarily, within the non-governmental development community. This turn of events is either caused by a lack of funding for the NGO that employed them, which forced its closure, or because their NGO has altered its mandate and, hence, NGO workers have had to change their roles and responsibilities. Secondly, these changes to their positions have caused them to re-evaluate their perspectives on both the

present and the future development trajectory in Ghana in the wake of the changes brought about by MDDBS. Consequently, each NGO worker interviewed for this study is going through a process of trying to understand what shape the development landscape will take, and what part they can and will play in the new development era. Thus, what emerges within NGO workers' narratives is a multiplicity of perspectives about the processes that are placing Ghana's development landscape in flux.

Scope

Placing the focal lens on Ghanaian NGO workers and engaging them in discussions about what they think and feel about how development is practiced represents a departure from the historical lineage of the anthropology of development. As R.D. Grillo notes, historically there has been a lack of voices within the anthropology of development from academics who are citizens of developing countries. Grillo notes, "Although often apparently speaking for, or at any rate claiming to speak for, 'local' people, the citizens of developing countries, or at least those to which development policies and practices have been applied, developing country anthropologists and other social scientists are noticeably absent" (1997: 4). To this one could add an absence of developing country practitioners. Instead, Grillo claims, the anthropology of development has privileged the views and voices of academics that focus on questions regarding the asymmetry in power relations between the Global North and the Global South (Ferguson 1990; Escobar 1995), or those that focus on development 'on the ground' (Crewe and Harrison 2002; Hilhorst, 2003).

The former are represented by the early works of Arturo Escobar (1995) and James Ferguson (1990), who have "a tendency ... to see development as a monolithic enterprise, heavily controlled from the top, convinced of the superiority of its own wisdom and impervious to local

knowledge ... [resulting in] a single gaze or voice that is all-powerful and beyond influence” (Grillo 1997: 20). The outcome of this focus on a supposed development hegemony has been the creation of a neat dichotomy between “developers and [the] victims of development”, which Grillo terms the “myth of development”, because its creation is born within a “poor [and] partial history” that reveals the ethnocentrism of predominantly North American scholars (1997: 20-21). The second group, whose focus has been primarily concerned with development at the local level and is represented mainly by European scholars, has instead focussed on the “interfaces” and institutions of development, primarily in developing countries. Ethnographers, such as Emma Crewe, Elizabeth Harrison, and Dorothea Hilhorst, explore the interstices between development policies, programs, and projects, while revealing the “real world of NGOs” (Hilhorst 2003). While these investigations employ an actor-oriented perspective, and incorporate both NGO workers’ and citizens’ perspectives in their narratives, primarily the actors at the centre of these analyses are non-developing country anthropologists. Hence, although these analyses represent a departure from earlier preoccupations with global power dynamics, the people that constitute the interactions and institutions remain secondary to their studies, resulting in the presentation of analyses that remain couched within narratives that ‘speak for’ or ‘about’ the people living in developing countries, but not the views of people who live in developing countries and who are primarily *doing* development.

While it is easy to critique the above anthropological works for excluding the views of developing country practitioners, it must be acknowledged that presenting Ghanaian NGO workers’ perspectives on development does not imply that anthropological questions and debates such as “what is development?” (Ferguson 1990: XII) and “whose development?” (Crewe and Harrison 2002), will be put to rest here, because the changes to how development in Ghana is

configured and implemented serve to create more questions than answers for NGO workers. Hence, while the aim of this study was originally to engage NGO workers about the above lines of inquiry, what transpired during my interviews with them was a diversion to new topics of discussion that were of more immediate concern to Ghanaian development workers, resulting in the change in topic of the thesis. Consequently, what emerges in this study are NGO workers' perspectives that are primarily focussed on the changes taking place to the development landscape resulting from the introduction and implementation of the MDBS program, and what this means for those in the non-governmental development sector. While these conversations frequently touched on issues surrounding the power dynamics between the Global North and the Global South, and development policies, programs, and projects, their responses to questions I posed were generally framed within their individual opinions about the changing relations between the non-governmental and governmental spheres, and how the positions that NGOs, and hence NGO workers, held within Ghana's development landscape were altering. Hence, the scope of this study is limited to what the participants voiced during our interviews, and what emerges, then, are the perspectives of NGO workers regarding their changing place within development in Ghana, and how they saw this process unfolding during the time in which I conducted research for this study.

Theoretical Perspectives

In order to present Ghanaian NGO workers' perspectives, this study applies the same actor-oriented methodology as ethnographers Emma Crewe, Elizabeth Harrison, and Dorothea Hilhorst. However, the focus here is less on my firsthand account of development in Ghana, and instead primarily rests on the narratives of the eight Ghanaian NGO workers who participated in

interviews for this study. According to Hilhorst, “[an actor orientation] starts with the premise that social actors have agency ... [and that] they reflect upon their experiences and what happens around them, and use their knowledge and capabilities to interpret and respond to development” (2003: 5). Hence, this study focuses on how NGO workers described the events and occasions in which they have employed their agency while acting on their interpretations and responses to the changing development landscape, and presents their reflections on their experiences of doing so.

Since the emphasis here is placed on NGO workers’ narratives rather than my own observations, their actor-oriented perspectives will be delineated via discourse analysis, primarily focussing on four Ghanaian NGO workers’ narratives, which will be used as exemplars for the eight in total that were interviewed. While much overlap exists between how they each think and feel about development in Ghana due to their commonality as non-governmental development workers, their views on the various subjects and lines of inquiry were generally communicated in untidy assemblages of incomplete and contradictory narratives. The process of untangling these narratives will begin by attempting to answer the first question of this study: who are NGO workers and what are their identities within Ghana’s development community? Exploring Ghanaian NGO workers’ identities will help shed light on how elements of an actor-oriented methodology can be incorporated into discourse analysis, because identity studies, according to Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte Jr., and Cain (1998), similarly focuses on individuals’ use of agency, which take into consideration their “day-to-day and on-the-ground relations of power ... [in their] lived worlds” (1998: 127). Hence, identities provide “a modicum of self-direction” (1998: 4), based on how they “reflect upon their experiences ... and use their knowledge and capabilities to interpret and respond to development” (Hilhorst 2003: 5) through the employment of their agency. Consequently, what emerges is insight into how these NGO

workers employ their agency to position themselves within the changing development landscape, and how this process is based on navigating the “day-to-day and on-the-ground relations of power” that shape it.

Answering the second question, what are Ghanaian NGO workers’ perspectives on development, then, stems from the first question. NGO workers’ narratives were dominated by the immediate changes to the development landscape, and, hence, their perspectives were centred on their “reflections upon their experiences” and the knowledge acquired while “interpret[ing] and respond[ing] to development” (2003: 5). What emerges are their individual identity perspectives, perspectives that are based on how they had altered their positions, or were in the process of changing or adapting to a new position, within the development landscape. Hence, the views brought forth here relate to an actor-oriented perspective about changes to the ways in which development is organized and practiced in the MDBS era. Secondly, NGO workers are preoccupied with how institutions such as NGOs are transforming as a result of the new pre-eminence of the government within Ghana’s development landscape. The slow shift within the non-governmental sector from service providers to advocates and watchdogs is extremely unpopular amongst the majority of my participants, though importantly not all, because it required relinquishing the positions that they had come to occupy within Ghana’s development landscape. Also, this shift means adapting to, or at the very least be willing to participate in, a new form of development that is at odds with their own development ethos.

Consequently, through the employment of an actor-oriented theoretical methodology, the analysis of NGO workers’ narratives and their practitioner-based knowledge provides insight to the primary questions of this study: who are NGO workers, and what are their perspectives about the development landscape in Ghana? Though this study is limited in its capacity to produce a

broad range of NGO workers' views, due to the constraints of scope and number of participants, what emerges is a comprehensive look into how a small number of Ghanaian NGO workers perceive the shifting development landscape, how their identities change in response to these shifts, and how they view their individual and collective positions within the development landscape in Ghana. Consequently, this study serves to broaden the knowledge base of anthropological studies concerned with how development is interpreted by those who live and work in developing countries and, hence, have to live with the outcomes of their own development efforts. What emerges is a unique and particular insight into how these NGO workers view Ghana's development path, and how their own lives have come to shape, and be shaped by, this historical process.

Research Methods

I conducted research for this study primarily in Accra, the capital city of Ghana, from September, 2006 to April, 2007, and during a second sojourn in Ghana from January, 2008, to May, 2008. I chose Accra as the primary site for my field work because of the significant number of NGOs that are based in the capital, which allowed me the greatest exposure to different types of programs and projects, and consequently to potential participants. During my previous studies in Ghana in 2001-2002, I was introduced to a number of organizations that are currently involved in a myriad of development projects and I drew on this previous network of institutions to apply to individuals and organizations for permission to conduct my current studies with people from and within these NGOs. I was able to conduct participant observation in one such institution as a Research Fellow, in order to gain a perspective on the daily work life

of NGOs and NGO workers, and understand how the practice of development leads Ghanaian NGO workers to form an actor-oriented perspective.

Consequently, my participation as a Research Fellow gave me the exposure to critically examine a variety of NGO practices, because I attended conferences, stakeholder meetings, and training sessions, as well as going into the field to assist in data collection and conducting community meetings with villagers. Participating in these events enabled me to gain a unique insight into how NGO workers prepared for, and carried out a multitude of activities involving other NGO workers and the beneficiaries of their work, along with getting their interpretations of events prior to, during, and after these junctures. I kept detailed notes of the activities that I was directly or indirectly involved with, and catalogued the information in a journal that I kept in a secure place when unattended. Also, the notes that I made were coded so that if they were ever lost or discovered the names of participants were not distinguishable.

Due to the historical perspective within which my research is oriented, I conducted in-depth interviews with eight Ghanaian development workers to understand how the on-going process of development has informed their opinions and perspectives on historical development in Ghana. These interviews were conducted on a person-to-person basis over the duration of my research in the field and I recorded and transcribed these conversations.

I selected my participants based on the criteria that they have worked in development since the time of the reintroduction of democracy and multi-party elections in 1992. I also aimed to interview a cross-section of upper-level and lower-level employees, such as managers and administrators, and program officers. I intended to have a gender balance, so that I could gain multiple interpretations of the changes in development from both sexes. While this initiative

ultimately failed, I was able to enrol three women as interviewees, with ten-plus years of development experience, and gained a fair gender balance.

I employed the snowball and word of mouth strategies to enrol participants for this study. My position as a Research Fellow for a Ghanaian NGO allowed me to engage with many NGO workers, and consequently selecting NGO workers to petition to be interviewed for this study was not difficult. A number of my participants were able to put me into contact with NGO workers that they felt matched my criteria. Furthermore, I was contacted by several individuals who were interested in providing their perspectives on development in Ghana. Lastly, I was able to draw from a pool of NGO workers that I had befriended in my previous studies in Ghana in 2001-2002.

I employed semi-structured in-depth interviews to allow conversations to evolve along topical lines introduced by myself. I raised topics and posed questions to Ghanaian development workers that led to lengthy discussions centred on their perspectives on development, which they have gained through growing up in a developing country and working in the NGO sector, over an extended period. Therefore, I assembled numerous question sets covering a significant number of topics centred on certain aspects of a participant's life history and their experiences in the development field, including: their economic and educational backgrounds; how and why they entered the development field; the nature of relations that NGOs they have worked for held with local, regional, and national NGOs and governmental branches, as well as with international NGOs and donor agencies; the power dynamics between Ghanaian NGOs, the Ghanaian government and international donor agencies regarding who sets mandates for development in Ghana, and changes to how development is coordinated and practiced; gender dimensions in development in Ghana; the role of chieftaincy and traditional institutions with relation to

development in Ghana; and their views on the future of development in Ghana. These lines of inquiry produced varied reactions and narratives and what emerges below is an assemblage of narratives on Ghana's past, present, and future of development.

Chapter Breakdown

The following section provides a breakdown of the various chapters in the thesis. Chapter Two reveals shifts in the literature of the anthropology of development and argues that anthropologists need to expand their toolkit in order to better understand the multiple realities of the development enterprise. The recent rise of the anthropology of development is mapped out in order to understand how the union of post-modernism and Foucault's theoretical approaches helped to create the "myth of development", as deemed by Grillo. An examination of ethnographic works by Hilhorst (2003), Crewe and Harrison (1998), helps us appreciate the "everyday politics" and provides a contextual view of development on the ground. Finally, Ferguson's *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (2006) is examined in order to understand how the changing "topographies of power" (2006: 89) are altering the development landscape in Africa. What emerges from Chapter Two is the idea of a conceptual apparatus that can account for the *process* of development, the dynamics of changing power configurations, and the local and global contexts in which this process is unfolding.

At the crux of the debate surrounding Ghana's development is the state's capacity to control the factors of the social compact. Chapter Three offers a historiography of Ghana's development with the social compact as the entry point for investigating the development process revealing that, while critics of development tend to point to either economic *or* political rationales for the failure to develop, the historical legacy of the social compact in Ghana, which

represents the centre of the overlapping political, economic and social spheres, has been the main linchpin.

Chapter Three concludes that after fifty years of political and economic upheaval and change, the social compact in Ghana has been battered, but not broken. Currently, the social compact in Ghana is a shell of its former self. While democracy, economic stability and the promotion of the private sector are viewed by the participants of my study as imperative for development, they also feel that social welfare programs are relevant to development and demonstrate that the social compact is still paramount in the minds of Ghanaians.

Within the abundance of literature on the anthropology of development there is little ethnographic research that embraces the identity and agency of individuals that work in development. Therefore, the aim of this Chapter Four is to investigate Ghanaian NGO worker's identities as a starting point to framing their perspectives of themselves within the development process, and their conceptions of development.

The focal point of Chapter Four is placed on the current everyday politics of development in Ghana in order to investigate how NGO workers' identities reflect the current changes within the development landscape. What emerges is a continuum of identities based on what the participants of my study say about their own levels of commitment, sacrifice, and ideology, and where they place themselves within the continuum of identities.

In order to understand how Ghanaian NGO workers navigate the changing structures and contexts of the development landscape in Ghana, Hilhorst's actor-orientation (2003) and Ortner's theorizations on agency and intentionality (2006) are employed, and what emerges is disparate set of identities. The everyday politics of development in Ghana is no longer *everyday* – for development is undergoing seismic changes and this flux has forced the opening of NGO

workers' identities, resulting in the search for new orientation points within the changing boundaries of development in Ghana, and thus a greater heterogeneity of positional identities.

Understanding the perspectives of Ghanaian NGO workers is important because their knowledge and experiences have provided them with critical insights into development. The focus of this Chapter Five is on Ghanaian NGO workers' "voices", or, rather, what the "voices" stemming from the multiple positional identities say about development in Ghana and is put forward in three parts.

The first part of Chapter Five presents Ghanaian NGO workers' positions relative to one another along the continuum, as informed by Holland et al.'s conceptualization of positional identities (1998), and how these contribute to their perspectives on development and the second section offers short ethnographic vignettes of each NGO workers' perspectives on the altering development landscape. The third part provides an analysis of how their positional identity perspectives are influenced by both the changing development landscape and each other's positionality, and, finally, concludes that positional identity perspectives of Ghanaian NGO workers are disparate and incomplete, but their collective voices provide a glimpse into broader questions about development in Ghana.

The concluding chapter serves two purposes. Firstly, this chapter serves as an overview of the study, with an outline of the most salient points from the preceding chapters. Secondly, this chapter engages Ghanaian NGO workers' collective perspectives of development in Ghana, so that an understanding of their position with regard to the Multi Donor Budget Support (MDBS) program and the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) can be interposed with historical and anthropological narratives. What emerges from this discussion is an understanding of the proverb, "The one that cuts the path doesn't know if it is crooked", which numerous NGO

workers referenced during both the interview process for this study and during conferences that I attended. The proverb demonstrates how NGO workers feel about their collective position outside the decision-making processes that are shaping Ghana's future path to development, and how the MDBS and GPRS are instrumental in promoting the Ghanaian government's position at the expense of NGO workers. This situation is analyzed by placing NGO workers' collective perspectives at the forefront of both a historical and theoretical discussion, so that the key components of the entire study can be engaged within a broader discussion on the past, present, and future of development in Ghana. Their perspectives present a localized view of how global processes are changing the "path" of development in Ghana, and why NGO workers perceive this course of action as incompatible to their development ethos and, hence, why the "path" is "crooked".

Chapter Two: Literature Review of the Anthropology of Development

Introduction

Charting the literature of the anthropology of development genre reveals shifts and changes much like the development landscape does. Consequently, this literature review begins by mapping the recent rise of the anthropology of development in order to understand how the confluence of post-modernism and Michel Foucault's theoretical approaches (1972) helped to create what Grillo calls the "myth of development" (1997: 20). Secondly, in the wake of such "essentializing" and polemical monographs, an examination of ethnographic works by anthropologists such as Hilhorst (2003) and Crewe and Harrison (1998) is brought forth in order to understand how the "everyday politics" of development affords an increasingly contextual view of development on the ground. Lastly, Ferguson's *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (2006) is examined, in order to understand how the changing "topographies of power" are altering the development landscape in Africa, and how new "categories of analysis [are needed] to gain critical purchase on the emerging ideologies and world views of our era" (2006: 89).

According to R.S. Grillo (1997), the inaugural works by scholars of the anthropology of development were preoccupied with the power relations between the Global North and Global South due to the synergy created with the confluence of post-modernism and the rise in popularity of Michel Foucault's texts, in particular his 1972 publication *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, in British and North American anthropology programs in the late 1980s. As a

consequence, the burgeoning sub-discipline focused primarily on the theoretical underpinnings of modernization-*cum*-development theory, and the unequal power relations between the two worlds. Employing the Foucauldian version of discourse analysis, which “identifies appropriate and legitimate ways of practicing development as well as speaking and thinking about it” (Grillo 1997: 12), Arturo Escobar and James Ferguson devised the heuristic of the development gaze (Escobar 1995: 155) and the dominant problematic/interpretive grid (Ferguson 1990: XII), both tools with which to focus the optic of analysis on the Global Northern-led development “machine”, i.e. the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. As a consequence, by attempting to expose the history of development as a form of domination, or “colonization of reality” (Escobar 1995: 5), these works served to create what Grillo calls the myth of development:

[T]here is a tendency – illustrated [by] ... Escobar and to a lesser degree Ferguson ... to see development as a monolithic enterprise, heavily controlled from the top, convinced of the superiority of its own wisdom ... a single gaze or voice which is all-powerful and beyond influence.... Like most myths, it is based upon poor or partial history, betraying a lack of knowledge of both colonialism and decolonization, and throughout it reflects a surprising ethnocentrism: it is very much the view from North America. (Grillo 1997: 20-21)

Grillo’s polemical stance on what he terms the post-modernists is one of ‘against’ rather than ‘for’ their interpretations of global and historical development. His study provides a succinct account of how many anthropologists in the late 1980s and early 1990s employed Foucauldian analyses. Grillo’s primary objection to these works is not that they focus on the power dynamics between two parties, but, rather, that the focus is far too simplistic, equating *the* ‘developers’ with total power over the ‘developees’. The point of this study, much like Grillo’s, is to investigate and reveal how power processes among international development agencies,

governments, and local non-governmental development organizations are predominantly controlled by the former rather than the latter, but never in totality. Hence, Grillo's analysis, in its polemical form, is employed here for its concise critique of the dominant voices in the early anthropology of development, while recognizing that Grillo's views do not necessarily represent the majority of anthropologists, but instead have helped shaped a plurality of voices on development.

Ferguson's *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (2006), represents a new trend in contemporary socio-cultural anthropology; a distancing of the discipline from its development-oriented and discourse-analyzing orientation that was standard in the 1990s, to a spatially-oriented, trope-analyzing, post-millennial/global analytic. Ferguson trades in the "dominant problematic" of development, the core of his *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (1990), for "Africa", the heterogeneous 'place' that becomes homogenized in Global Northern imaginations (2006: 5). This change represents a shift in anthropological analysis. Gone are the castigations of development as Global Northern hegemony, such as in Escobar's *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (1995), and to a lesser degree Ferguson's 1990 publication, now to be replaced with a lyrical and fluid "imagining" of Africa embedded in the global process and "new world order."

Ferguson's *Global Shadows: African in the Neoliberal World Order* (2006) follows a new mode in the anthropology of development, which seeks to understand the reality of living and working in developing countries. Dorothea Hilhorst's *The Real World of NGOs: Discourses, Diversity and Development* (2003), an ethnography of the "everyday politics" of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Philippines, is a leading example of this trend.

Hilhorst sets out not to prove that development is dominated by a Global Northern hegemonic force or “gaze”, but rather to “testify to a conception of multiple realities of NGOs ... [and] how NGO actors shape and accommodate these realities in their organizational practices and at interfaces with funding agencies” (2003: 25). Consequently, development at the NGO level reveals itself as a nuanced process, complex in its social composition, and whose “reality” is contextual, rather than predefined due to its relations with Global Northern institutions.

Employing similar theoretical tools as Escobar’s and Ferguson’s earlier work, such as Foucault’s discourse analysis, Hilhorst, along with a multitude of other anthropologists (Fairhead and Leach 1997; Moore 2000; Nyamugasira 1998), has contributed important works that “offer a less polarized and ... less essentializing view of development” (Crewe and Harrison 1998: 4).

Anthropology and Development: Reflections on Reflexivity

R.D. Grillo, in *Discourses of Development: Anthropological Perspectives* (1997), discusses how anthropological studies of development and postmodernism make strange partners. However, Grillo notes that their conjoining was more serendipitous than scripted.

The attention paid to development since the early 1980s seems ironic in that during the same period, anthropology in Britain and the United States became increasingly self-absorbed with post-modernism and reflexivity. Several themes come together in post-modernist anthropology in ways in which, on the face of it, make it an unlikely bed-fellow for ‘applied’ work: an assumption that anthropologists ‘construct’ their data, and that what is to be investigated is the process of construction itself; a focus on the ‘how’ of gathering what become ‘data’ (i.e. fieldwork) and the placing of it in the public domain (i.e. ethnography); an emphasis on the anthropologist as ‘author’, on her or his ‘authority’ and on the relationship between anthropologist and ‘subject’. (Grillo 1997: 1-2)

The introduction of reflexivity and power-based analyses in anthropology had perhaps the most profound effect, because it forced anthropologists to turn the lens on themselves and start to ask questions about the discipline that had, heretofore, rarely been raised. A good

example of the effects of reflexivity and power is Hastrup and Elsass's article "Anthropological Advocacy: A Contradiction in Terms?" (1990). The question that Hastrup and Elsass pose, and are at pains to answer, is; can anthropologists advocate on behalf of the people(s) they study? As they note, "[to] be advocates anthropologists have to step outside their profession, because no 'cause' can be legitimated in anthropological terms" (1990: 301). However, as they note following this statement, "even anthropologists have moral responsibilities [to the people that allow anthropologists to study amongst them]." Hence, reflexivity, when contrasted with the power of the anthropologist-as-detached-scientist, creates moral challenges. For Hastrup and Elsass these challenges could not be overcome, in part because the Arhuacos of Columbia, whom they were studying, were internally divided (between the "traditionalists" who did not want assistance and the "modernists" who did) and the authors did not want to advocate on behalf of a faction (which could inflict further internal discord). Secondly, they felt that, as anthropologists, they were interlocutors between Arhuaco society and the world, and, hence, "from the post-modern perspective ... we are forced to consider the practical implications [of anthropological advocacy]", of which being the conduit for development or the "agent for change" (1990: 302) was antithetical, especially to the post-modern anthropological enterprise.

Hastrup and Elsass's article is something of a clarion call within anthropological studies enmeshed in development. It set off debates as to what the responsibilities are of anthropologists who extract information from people(s) in the field, as well as the relative position of the ethnographer within the ethnographic content and vis-a-vis the subject/object of study. Ultimately, Hastrup and Elsass's article serves to bifurcate anthropological studies involving development, because it widened the cleavage between development anthropology and the anthropology of development, defined by Grillo as "[the] contrast between two kinds of

anthropological practice, one engaged directly in application (for example, evaluating a project or offering policy advice), the other primarily concerned with the socio-scientific analysis of development as a cultural, economic and political process” (Grillo 1997: 2). Furthermore, the latter became increasingly self-absorbed with postmodern meta-narratives and anthropological nomenclature.

James Ferguson and Arturo Escobar were the ‘poster boys’ for the latter category in the early-to-mid 1990s, with their seminal works *The Anti-Politics Machine: “Development,” Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (1990) and *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (1995). Both monographs exemplify the above-noted turn-about in anthropology to postmodern studies imbued with historiography, reflexivity and power-based analyses. Crucially, both hinged their monographs on Michel Foucault’s concepts of governmentality and discourse analysis. The consequence of Foucauldian analyses was the rise of fervent critiques of the development enterprise within anthropological texts. For example, monographs such as Crewe and Harrison’s *Whose Development?: An Ethnography of Aid* (1998) and Dorothea Hilhorst’s *The Real World of NGOs: Discourse, Diversity and Development* (2003) began to fit a mould that Ferguson and Escobar had forged, whereby development and the developers are the subject/object under study, rather than the people who at the receiving end of development processes. Secondly, they highlight a growing trend in ethnographic inquiry, which Ferguson notes (2006: 90), that NGOs have become the new locale of study, rather than “an intriguing culture or promising village”.

Ferguson and Escobar’s studies are not allied in form and function. For instance, having done field work in Lesotho from 1982-1983 (Ferguson 1990: VII), Ferguson’s publication is an ethnography of development in practice that employs Foucauldian discourse and power-based

analyses to examine the “dominant problematic of ‘development’”, the “interpretive grid through which the impoverished regions of the world are known to us” (1990: XIII). Accordingly,

Ferguson looks ... closely at some [of the projects under the Thaba-Tseka integrated rural development project for mountain development], especially those concerned with livestock, investigating ‘what happened when the plans produced by the “development” problematic ... encountered the elaborately structured local livestock system (Ferguson 1990: 18)’, or, as it might be put, when ‘rationality’ meets ‘culture’ [What] appeared to be at stake ... was the interaction of two distinct systems of knowledge (and practice) with opposition to the official system taken to mean ignorance of lack of understanding. (Grillo 1997: 18-19)

While Ferguson’s aim was not to show how development is ‘wrong’ or ‘does not work’, the results of the Thaba-Tseka development project, viewed from the “dominant problematic”, certainly demonstrate how the results of such a project are antithetical to its aims of improving the agricultural production and general well-being of the people of the Basothos region.

In Ferguson’s perspective, the consequences of the dominant problematic are two-fold. Firstly, because development is framed within a particular “interpretive grid”, whereby development is defined discursively in rational and technical terms, and outside the concerns or tactics of politics proper, it is thus constituted as anti-political. Nonetheless, secondly, the “instrument-effect” (1990: 256) of anti-political development is the “entrenchment and expansion of institutional state power” (1990: 256), the apparatus to which development projects form a “strategically coherent or intelligible whole” (1990: 256), or rather that which puts the ‘machine’ in “anti-politics machine”. Accordingly, the development apparatus can be employed as a template anywhere that development is constituted through the interpretive grid, and with the collusion of the developers with the local state, who no doubt subscribe to the same rationale. Thus, issues that should be subject to political debate and discussion are relegated to the realm of “technical” decisions made by “developers.”

In contrast, Escobar's study, which is a Foucauldian archaeology of development (1992), is overtly explicit regarding how development *is* wrong and does not work, and he ultimately concludes that it should be "resisted" with calls "for an end to development" (Escobar 1995: vii-viii). Employing the same theoretical tools devised from Foucault as Ferguson, Escobar rebukes the concept of development from a poststructuralist vantage point. Condemning development's

top-down, ethnocentric, and technocratic approach, which treated people and cultures as abstract concepts, statistical figures to be moved up and down in the charts of "progress" ... conceived ... as a system of more or less universally applicable technical interventions intended to deliver some 'badly needed' goods to a 'target' population. It comes as no surprise that development became a force so destructive to Third World cultures, ironically in the name of people's interests. (Escobar 1995: 44)

Escobar perceives development as a similar, though more sinister, apparatus compared to Ferguson's anti-politics machine, when examined through the "interpretive grid" of discourse analysis. Contrary to Ferguson, for whom it suffices to expose the development "machine" ethnographically, Escobar attempts to debase it, deploring the stigmatism that development discourse has allocated to the Global South as either 'less-than' or 'under-developed' in comparison to the "Global North".

Equating development to a hegemonic apparatus that permits the Global North to "successfully [deploy] a regime of government over the Third World ... that ensures certain control over it" (Escobar 1995: 9) allows Escobar to divide the world into simplistic dichotomies: powerful and weak, developers and developpees, rational and irrational, modern and traditional, wrong and right, etc. The consequence of such dichotomizations, according to Grillo, is the creation of the "myth of development", whereby the power of the haves juxtaposed against the have-nots is elevated to mythic proportions (Grillo 1997: 20).

While Escobar's arguments serve to promote polemical fodder for members of the post-development community, or what Grillo calls the *Development Dictionary* (1992) faction (Wolfgang Sachs, Ivan Illich, Gustavo Esteva, Arturo Escobar, et al.) (Grillo 1997:20), his influence within the anthropology of development literature remains limited to the promulgation of Foucault's theoretics, the political stance that his studies take, and the promotion of the local as a site of resistance. Ultimately, his development-as-Global Northern-imperialism argument (Escobar 1995: 167) has fallen on deaf ears. This is due, in large part, to the rise in post-Escobar ethnographic literature that demonstrates the complex nature of local interpretations of development and the multiple discourses that come into play (Pigg 1992; Fairhead and Leach 1995; Moore 2000). As a result, Escobar's theory that the Global Northern hegemonic discourse is *the* discourse of development is highly contested.

Ultimately, Escobar and the *Development Dictionary* post-development faction leave little substance in their wake, having dismantled the structural edifice of development and modernism while attempting to ruin the discursive plot of development just when it was beginning to thicken. However, those that followed Ferguson's trajectory of ethnographically teasing out the local and temporal nuances of development have gained critical purchase in global development processes. The latter include Charles Piot (1999), Donald Moore (2005), and Harri Englund (2006), anthropologists who combine studies of ethnographic enquiry with questions of democratization, economics, rights, and identity. Crucially, these anthropologists are able to apply contrasting and varying theoretical positions in order to focus the ethnographic optic on critical focal points, while maintaining a healthy scepticism of the development axiom.

Anthropology and Development: Through the Ethnographic Lens

The notoriety of the anthropology of development meant that anthropologists were setting their sights on NGOs and development projects as locales of investigation, as well as absorbing the interests of other disciplines (Ferguson 2006: 90). Focusing on the effects of the neoliberal turn in political and economic policies after the introduction of structural adjustment programs (SAPs), and the “NGO-ization” (Hutchful 2002: 184) of the social welfare sector in many countries grappling with the retrenchment of the state, anthropologists such as Emma Crewe and Elizabeth Harrison (1998), and Dorothea Hilhorst (2003), as well as geographer Giles Mohan (2002, 2005), published ethnographic pieces conflating the on-the-ground reality of development work vis-a-vis local (as in national) NGOs, international NGOs, local governments, and international donor agencies (IDAs). What is revealed from these publications is that development is a complex and nuanced process, where “tensions exist between the [Global N]orthern NGO[s] and its [Global Southern] partners” (Mohan 2002: 125), local NGO workers have divergent ideologies concerning the “everyday politics of development” (Hilhorst 2003: 225-226), and that “all actors are constrained by various pressures and limits but create their own space to manoeuvre” (Crewe & Harrison 1998: 186). Excerpts from ethnographic works such as these expose the reality of development in practice; that local NGO workers have conflicting opinions with their Northern counterparts regarding how development programs should be run, that the practice of development produces its own ideologues, and that the chameleon-like personage of NGO workers allows them to straddle divergent domains of development. Consequently, a more rounded picture emerges regarding development dynamics, and the protagonists that are enmeshed in its practices.

Hilhorst's publication is particularly insightful, because her ethnography of development in the Cordillera Region of the Philippines offers a long-term, in-depth analysis of an NGO. Hilhorst's central issue is that NGOs are not "things, but open-ended processes" that constitute multiple realities, and therefore "there is no single answer to the questions of what an NGO *is*, what it *wants* and what it *does*. NGOs are many things at the same time" (Hilhorst 2003: 3-4; emphasis in original). In order to investigate these multiple realities, Hilhorst employs an actor-oriented methodology in combination with discourse analysis to understand the "everyday politics" of NGOs.

In contrast to Escobar's development discourse-as-hegemony, Hilhorst contends that there is a "duality of discourses" that emerges in the day-to-day lives of NGO workers (2003: 82), consisting of dominant discourses (see "Global Northern") and "parallel, residual or emerging alternatives" (2003: 81). Consequently, what materializes in Hilhorst's ethnography is a counterpoint to claims that Global Southern NGOs "converge towards variations of Western-dominated neoliberal ... development agendas" (2003: 225) and, thus, is subservient and depoliticized. In this sense, NGOs would be defined purely within a Global Northern teleological classification with regard to their supposed sole function. In contrast, Hilhorst reveals that Global Southern NGOs are constructed and defined through multiple interfaces and representations; between the Global North and Global South, the political ideologies of NGO workers and their stakeholders, and the expectations of the NGO and its client(s) (2003: 223-224). Ultimately, these representations and identities shift over time and in differing domains, to reveal NGOs as open-ended processes that transform constantly due to their internal configuration and external associations.

Near the end of the millennium, for example, the development landscape began to change. In the late 1980s and early 1990s international donor organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB), began to lean on developing countries to introduce multi-party democracy in order to further economic neoliberal transformations. Consequently, development, and what a development organization is, began to alter. Much like the axiomatic narratives that accounted for the rise of NGOs in the 1980s as the by-product of a Global Northern hegemonic force, the same logic was used to account for the rise in civil society organizations (CSOs) in the 1990s. However, as Rutherford (2004) notes, there is a wide divergence in academia regarding the rise of civil society and how to interpret the claims to the growth of CSOs, as well as the role that civil society was supposed to play in the changing development landscape. Accordingly, the ascension of civil society was viewed in either teleological terms, “that assumes the emergence of civil society, whether it appears autonomously or has to be nurtured as a deliberate project of social reform, [and] will act as a midwife to Global Northern-style democracies, with its specific economic, and social institutions”, or conversely in “suspicious” or “ambivalent” terms, with scholars “critically [interrogating] the promotion of this idea, while also seeking out other forms of sociality, public space, and morality within ‘local realities’” (Rutherford 2004: 127). Not unsurprisingly, most anthropologists fit into the latter category.

John and Jean Comaroff, in their edited book, *Civil Society and the Political Imagination in Africa* (1999), attempted to critically investigate the “Idea” of civil society (“the upperscase being in deference to Hegel”) and how “its versatile appeal [and] its diverse deployments ... yield insight into the forces reconfiguring the geopolitical shape of our world” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 3). Less an investigation into how the rise of CSOs is altering the development

terrain, the chapters in the Comaroffs edited book examine the concept in historical and contemporary terms. Proceeding from the basis that the concept of civil society, in the late 1990s, had neared the status of myth, based on a partial history by academics that “have begun to tell a very similar story about [civil society’s] genesis and [the] genealogy of the concept” (1999: 4), the Comaroffs’ book attempted to reverse the “hardening outlines” of its telos by examining its deployment in Africa. Much like Hilhorst’s idea of NGOs as open-ended processes with multiple realities, the Comaroffs’ claim that civil society is polyvalent, and, hence, open to multiple meanings and definitions. Therefore, they call for an investigation into civil society that reverses the historically-based teleological concept of civil society, and promote the “Idea” as the starting point to interpret civil society’s deployment.

Anthropology and Development: New Interpretations of an Old Paradigm

Perhaps taking his cue from the Comaroffs, James Ferguson incorporates the idea of civil society in opposition to the teleological definition into his grander exploration of ‘Africa’. Ferguson’s *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (2006) seeks to investigate “‘Africa’ as a category through which the ‘world’ is structured – a category that ... is historically and socially constructed (indeed, in some sense arbitrar[ily]) but also a category that is ‘real,’ that is imposed with force, that has a mandatory quality; a category within which, and according to which, people must live” (Ferguson 2006: 5). Consequently, Ferguson employs the category of ‘Africa’ in a similar way to how the Comaroffs and Hilhorst attempt to explore their tropes of analysis; viewed from within its own context and frequently at odds with its supposed universally accepted definition. Accordingly, Ferguson takes aim at preconceived notions of social categories of analysis, such as civil society, in order to scrutinize “the common-sense

mapping of political and social space that the state-civil society opposition takes for granted” (2006: 90).

Conceived differently from NGOs, which were characterized by Ferguson in *The Anti-Politics Machine* (1990) as the lowest rung of the top-down development structure (with Global Northern organizations such as the World Bank (WB)/International Monetary Fund (IMF) as the top), civil society in the teleological narrative is perceived as starting from the bottom and working its way up. However, Ferguson claims that the current axiomatic definition of civil society organizations (CSOs) fixes them within a rigid “vertical topography of power” (2006). To contrast this, Ferguson advocates for a new conception of CSOs, one viewed from the vantage point of ‘Africa’, that places them and the states, which they are supposed to buttress, within a larger “transnational topography of power” (2006: 103). “In this optic, it might make sense to think of new organizations that have sprung up in recent years not as challengers pressing up against the state from below but as horizontal contemporaries of the organs of state – sometimes rivals, sometimes servants, sometimes watchdogs, sometimes parasites, but in every case operating on the same level and in the same global space” (2006: 103). The outcome of this vantage point is the ability to perceive CSOs from a new perspective, one which defies the teleological/Western-philosophical definition.

Harri Englund, in his ethnography *Prisoners of Freedom: Human Rights and the African Poor* (2006), helps to provide insight into Ferguson’s concept of a transnational topography of power. Englund claims that while rhetorically NGOs and CSOs may be positioned “below” the state, the fact that both governments and NGOs/CSOs frequently rely on the same international donors and funding agencies means that the vertical topography of power obscures the true nature of the state-society relationship. Consequently, the two parties have a unique relationship

whereby they not only work in conjunction with one another, but also in competition. The reason for this is that in the transnational governance era, “governance hinges as much on the interventions by [NGOs/CSOs] and their foreign donors as on the manoeuvres of the political class” (Englund 2006: 10), meaning that the role of CSOs in governance issues can be as significant or greater than that of the state in the democratic process, primarily due to the financial and legitimating factors of international donor support.

Englund claims that in Malawi, where he conducted his research, the fusion and division between the NGOs/CSOs and the state has dramatically affected the debate on rights and democracy, because the tension that exists between the government and the NGO/CSO sector has been guided towards and preoccupied with political and civil freedoms at the expense of social and economic rights (2006). As a consequence, Englund’s research has helped to expose the role that international donor agencies, such as the European Union, have played in shaping debates surrounding democracy, governance and rights. Englund’s ethnography has also brought material to the fore that demonstrates how the transnational topography of power reveals the reality of development in Africa; the power dynamics between international donors, African governments, and NGOs/CSOs, belies the supposed hierarchies embedded within historically-based teleological narratives that attempt to apply a Global Northern schema to a complex and temporal process. Ultimately, Englund exposes the constitutive and normative practices of the Global North’s attempts to shape the civil society-African state relations within a vertical hierarchy of power to be illusory. Thus, Englund reveals through his employment of Ferguson’s transnational topography of power how, from the vantage point of the local, teleological narratives of civil society and the state are mere axioms of a specific telos which, once ethnographically demonstrated, are incomplete at best.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as the Comaroffs point out, “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 ... [and hence] the more elusive and ambiguous it has become” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 5). What the participants for this research project conveyed was that it is less important to define *what* an NGO or CSO *is*, than it is to understand what their *purpose* is within a given context. Accordingly, Ghanaian NGO workers predominantly view development as a process, and that the organs of this process (i.e., international donors, the state, and CSOs/NGOs) undergo their own form of development, changing in internal composition, external relations, and theoretical underpinnings. This process of change within the developmental organs is not uniform either. For instance, the wave of democratization in Africa during the late 1980s and early 1990s followed the “NGO-ization” of development and, consequently, NGOs had to adapt from their role as service providers outside the bounds of the state, to operating within an increasingly politicized environment that was being recast as “civil society”. Therefore, the ability of an NGO/CSO to adapt to the changing development landscape within a transnational topography of power reveals that it is more important to be able to adapt to change than it is to define its role within a strict set of parameters. Thus, anthropologists of development need to adapt their toolkit in order to understand better the changing ‘realities’ of development and NGOs/CSOs. Compared to early monographs, such as Escobar’s (1995), and to a lesser degree Ferguson’s (1990), which were rigid in their postmodernist portrayals of the history and structure of development, hence, Grillo’s “myth of development” (Grillo 1997: 20), recent publications have altered the aims of the anthropology of development to better understand the multiple realities of

the development enterprise. Ethnographies, such as Hilhorst's, attempt to demonstrate how the everyday politics of NGOs provide insight in to how development at the level of an NGO is contextual. When combined with analyses such as the Comaroffs' exploration of the Idea of civil society within these contexts, a dramatically different picture begins to emerge of how the processes of development are constantly changing, and how the anthropologists' expanding toolkit can provide insight into this process. Lastly, Ferguson's concept of the transnational topography of power provides the means for focussing the anthropologists' optic on the axis in which international organizations, governments, and NGOs/CSOs converge. How these organs of development are configured within the optic depends on when and where the anthropologist deploys the mode of analysis. Consequently, what emerges is a conceptual apparatus that can account for the *process* of development, the dynamics of changing power configurations, and the local and global contexts in which this process is unfolding. Or, at least, that is the idea.

Chapter Three: Historical Review of Development in Ghana

Introduction

According to Paul Nugent, the history of politics in Ghana is “like a rollercoaster” (1996: 6), due to a recurring process whereby civilian-led governments have been overthrown by military dictators, which then concede power back to the hands of another civilian-led government, only to have the process repeated yet again. Consequently, politics in Ghana has acquired a “cyclical nature” (1996), which has contributed “towards a considerable measure of ideological conformity” (1996: 7), whereby “all of the major political actors subscribed to the basic terms of a social compact, in which private accumulation and state welfarism were welded together in a single ideological matrix” (1996: 8). Eboe Hutchful seconds Nugent’s claim that the post-colonial trajectory was forged in the social compact, and that its origins lay in its colonial past.

[The social compact] incorporated certain understandings about the state and its role in the post-colonial order, of the relations between the state and the marketplace, and between the state and its citizens. This [compact] was itself the result of a certain trajectory of decolonization. The struggle for colonial succession had pit an ‘upstart class’ ... against an older alliance of professional intelligentsia [The] outcome was the victory ... of a populist nationalist stratum ... which looked upon the state and politics, rather than economy and market, as the basis of social status and power, and hence favoured a strong central state with an activist developmental ethos. (Hutchful 2002: 8)

The long term consequence of this “trajectory of decolonization” was economic meltdown. With the state as both entrepreneur and societal custodian from the point of independence, the juggernaut of political upheaval and economic paternalism reached its climax in the early 1980s when internal and external political and economic factors led to the social compact being suspended. Gross domestic product (GDP) plunged 20 percent between 1970 and 1980, and another 20 percent from 1981 to 1983 (Hutchful 2002: 6), signifying that the country

was in a difficult economic situation, and forcing the hand of the state to reverse its role as the preeminent body in Ghanaian economic life. The result of this downward spiral was the inauguration of sweeping economic changes embodied in the economic recovery program (ERP) of 1983 followed by the more stringent structural adjustment program (SAP), both of which were heavily buttressed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), and required unconditional neoliberal reforms (Ayee 2007: 169-170).

While these programs required economic liberalization constituting changes between the state and the marketplace, they also opened the door for the government to “recapture and reconstitute” (Hutchful 2002: 3) its place within the economy by retaining its “pre-eminence and political control of resources” (2002: 2) throughout the process of adjustment. As Hutchful notes, while the state was forced to liberalize the economy this did not mean that it adopted liberalism, implying that the government could reconfigure the paternalistic relationship between itself and the citizenry, embodied in the social compact, through populist manoeuvres, such as promoting export crop production (2002: 4). Manoeuvres such as this benefited rural cocoa-producing communities, and produced improvements to infrastructure, particularly “roads, power, and communications were extended to communities ... that in many cases had not known any since independence” (2002: 168). Liberal reforms certainly proved fruitful in reorganizing macroeconomic conditions, such as the GDP, but the state remained ambiguous towards microeconomic changes, such as aiding small-scale businesses in the private sector. The former brought economic stability, praise from donors, and fiscally strengthened the state’s ability to bankroll further social welfare programs, while the latter could have upset the pre-existing patronage channels. Ultimately, while the social compact was ruptured during the early 1980s financial crisis, the neoliberal policies that were meant to withdraw the state's domineering

presence in the economic sector instead allowed for the state to reinvent the social compact through macroeconomic reform adjustment. As Hutchful notes, Ghana's commitment to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) led reforms was primarily limited to economic stabilization measures and state retrenchment, which were enough to open the floodgates to foreign capital investment and the renewal of loans from the international community. Ultimately, Hutchful explicates, Ghana's commitment to adjustment was "characterized by several striking paradoxes":

[b]etween populist politics and neo-liberal economics, between strong policies and weak institutionalization, strong macroeconomics and weak microeconomics, and ... between economic liberalization and political democracy, which have been driven to some degree by different social and political forces. As long as there was strong [macroeconomic] growth, generating tangible benefits for critical elites, and responsive governance, this patchwork of interests could be sustained. (Hutchful 2002: 3)

The "patchwork of interests" that Hutchful refers to was the large quixotic element of Ghanaian society that, despite the dire economic situation in Ghana during the 1980s, was still heavily influenced by the socialist principles symbolized by the social compact. As long as the state appeared to be providing "tangible benefits" to both its internal allies (the socialist contingent, such as the Nkrumahists who supported Rawlings' coup) and its new external allies (the WB and IMF), it could reconfigure the social compact, despite state entrenchment, through the populist manoeuvres of infrastructure development, rural export-oriented agricultural development, and macroeconomic development and in the process continue marginalizing the private sector. Consequently, the governments of the 1980s and 1990s feared the economic, and hence political, influence of a potential new force within Ghanaian society, a force that could threaten the state's central role within the economic, political, and social spheres of Ghanaian life. Hence, the policy reforms of the 1980s and 1990s became a balancing act of preserving the social compact,

out of appeasement for domestic socialists and the general populace, while placating external neo-conservatives.

At the crux of the debate surrounding development in Ghana is the state's capacity to control the factors surrounding the social compact, because it determines the level of intervention with which the government attempts to manage the political, economic and social spheres. This chapter presents a generalized history of Ghana with the social compact as the entry point for investigating the historical development process, starting with Kwame Nkrumah's period in office and the subsequent "rollercoaster" of Ghanaian politics and economics that was set in motion. What this chapter reveals is that, while critics of development tend to point to either economic *or* political rationales for the failure to develop, the historical legacy of the social compact in Ghana, which represents the centre of the overlapping political, economic and social spheres, has been the main linchpin. Therefore, a historiography of Ghanaian development that encompasses multiple and interconnected spheres of influence is critical in order to understand the historical processes of development in Ghana and why the social compact plays such an important role in the actual outcomes of development interventions.

Development in Ghana: From Nkrumah to Rawlings

Prior to independence in 1957, Kwame Nkrumah established the Convention People's Party (CPP) in reaction to his expulsion from the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) in 1949 (Okyere 2000: 150). Nkrumah and the CPP were able to capture a sentiment that was rife at the time, that the doyens of the UGCC were lax in their calls for independence. Consequently, in the 1951 national elections the CPP won the majority of seats, and Nkrumah became the leader of Government Business; in 1952 Nkrumah became the Gold Coast's first Prime Minister. By

way of a process of differentiation from traditional power figures, Nkrumah promoted himself and his party as the populist response to growing inequalities in the colony. Through the use of funds gleaned from a tax on the international sale of cocoa, of which the Gold Coast was then the world's largest producer, Nkrumah inaugurated the development paradigm that would later be recognizable as Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI). To consolidate these efforts, the CPP began to spend large quantities of money on social welfare programs, particularly in the education sector (Haizel 1991: 67-68). The popularity of these policies and their outcomes ensured Nkrumah of successive victories in the polls, the swift alteration of multiple constitutions with the end result of full independence, and the bifurcation of party politics into one of two camps; the radical/socialists and the traditional/"intelligentsia."¹

After winning independence, on March 6, 1957, Nkrumah set his development plans into full-swing. The paradigm of his African socialism was, in many respects, heavily aligned with modernization theory.

In its most common form, modernization theory posits an original state of backwardness or under-development characterized by ... a low rate of economic growth that is at least potentially amenable to alteration through the normal process of capital ... [I]n the version of modernization theory applied to Africa ... development replaces modernization, the state of backwardness is regarded as preindustrial, the movement to overcome it becomes the process of economic growth to be engineered by neoclassical tools, and the end of social evolution – that is, modernity – means industrialization and high mass consumption. (Ake 2001: 10-11)

¹ The division between Nkrumah's CPP and Dr Busia's UGCC was to leave an indelible mark on Ghana's political landscape as each party forged its place at either end of the political spectrum. Nkrumah's CPP fixed itself as representative of the left-leaning socialist and working class constituent, with geographical support primarily amongst Northern and South-East/West Ghanaians, and the UGCC centrist/right-leaning represented the upper and middle-class professionals and the Akan of central Ghana (Okyere, 2000: 148-153). While both the CPP and UGCC have evolved into different parties, with the CPP making a comeback in the Fourth Republic, the trajectory of the two dominant opposing parties based on class, geography and place within the political spectrum have remained to the present, with the National Democratic Congress (NDC) representative of the left and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) the right.

Positioning Ghana on a fast-track to industrialization within the African Socialism paradigm meant that Nkrumah had to meld together the concepts of capitalism and socialism. His ideal was to be realized by undertaking modernization through industrialization, but the fruits of such labour would be shared amongst all in Ghanaian society. In order to accomplish his goal, industries would be created and operated by the government with the profits funding national expansion in social welfare programs including education, health care, housing, sectors, rather than going to individuals (capitalists) or groups (capitalist class).

There were two necessary components required to put African Socialism into action, both of which had long-term implications for Ghana. Firstly, the form of government needed to create and manage such ambitious programs was highly centralized and paternalistic, which, coincidentally or not, was similar to the colonial-style of governance. Secondly, the mechanism for implementing Nkrumah's seven-year development plan was ISI, which promoted subsidization of manufacturing at the expense of core industries in natural resources (Hutchful 2002: 9-10). These two components, however, resulted in a fiscal downward spiral in which the government had to borrow money from international lenders to bail out under-performing parastatals, while also needing to generate funds to sustain its commitment to social welfare programs. Consequently, the state was accountable for virtually every aspect of Ghanaians' lives, and it was going further into debt as Ghana's export commodities, such as cocoa, began to lose value steadily on the international market due to increased competition and a general downturn in international commodity markets. Ultimately, by the mid-1960s, Nkrumah's African Socialism was bankrupting Ghana (Hutchful 2002: 9-10).

Given the rapid economic downturn, the military ousted President Kwame Nkrumah in a coup in 1966 and formed a governing junta called the National Liberation Council (NLC). The

NLC began by scaling-back many of African Socialism's primary tenets, such as the social welfare programs, under the direction of the IMF which guided the NLC through an economic stabilization program targeting government expenditure and market liberalization. However, as with the Kofi Busia government that followed the NLC in the 1969 election, the Ghanaian intelligentsia was only modestly prepared to reverse Nkrumah's and the CPP's post-colonial trajectory regarding the state's role in social and economic spheres, fearing the people's reaction to a reversal of the ideals of African Socialism. As Hutchful indicates, "These two historical experiences, one in expansionary policies based on public sector investment, and the other in stabilization and 'market' economics, set the essential parameters for the policy debate in Ghana" (Hutchful 2002: 10).

The Busia administration is indicative of the restraints that were placed on successive governments in the post-Nkrumah era; because the social compact between the citizenry and the state was the life-line that all governments depended on to legitimize their power and authority. According to Nugent, the mismanagement of the social compact was also the legitimating factor for the numerous coups, because "each set of coup-makers justified intervention on the grounds that the compact had been irreparably breached by the incumbent regime" (1995: 26).

Ultimately, the significance of the social compact within Ghanaian society meant that only weak attempts at market stabilization were attempted during the politically and economically unstable 1970s, which witnessed six changes of government between August 1969 and December 1981 (Nugent 1996: ix). According to Hutchful, by the time Rawlings seized power in 1981, Ghana was in a severe economic and political crisis, not only monetarily but also with regard to the legitimacy of the state. With each succeeding government changing the policies and direction of institutions, it was inevitable that the system would begin to crack under coup-fatigue, resulting

from the constant cycles of wiping the slate clean and starting all over again with new economic and social strategies (Hutchful 2002: 30).

Development in Ghana: From Rawlings to the Present

Flight Lieutenant Jerry J. Rawlings was able to establish political stability after the coup that brought him to power through the halt to the economic downward spiral that Ghana was engulfed in. A strong proponent of the ideals that were embedded in the social compact, Rawlings came to power at a critical juncture when, despite the wariness for yet another military ruler, Ghanaians were willing to support a leader who would be proactive towards solving Ghana's development ills. According to Ake (2001), the root of the problem was the mode of modernization. In particular, ISI policies are singled-out because they severely damaged the economy, because ISI rested on the state accumulating capital by heavily taxing the export-agricultural industries, which was then invested into capital-intensive industrialization and social welfare programs, neither of which produced the necessary returns to sustain the system. This *modus operandi* meant that farmers were heavily taxed in order to pay for the importation of machinery to manufacture finished goods, however, in the process industrialization this bankrupted the agricultural, industrial, and governmental sectors, because inefficiency, failure to make inroads into foreign markets for finished products, a relatively small domestic market, and massive corruption, meant that ISI was incapable of creating new capital (Ake 2001: 76-77). Consequently, the state, which was at the centre of the development/modernization paradigm, was in a crisis of legitimization, and, according to Ake, the reason for the political crisis in Ghana was that the political functions of development "limited its usefulness as a tool of societal transformation and economic development" (Ake 2001: 17). This means that, as long as the

government was at the epicentre of development that it failed to produce, and political survival meant renewing the social compact, which was bankrupting the country, the succession of developmental failures would continue the proliferation of changes to the government that, in turn, would worsen the economic situation.

Initially, however, Rawlings and his Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) followed the same mould as previous leaders; upholding a commitment to the principles in the social compact, embracing a strong government presence in the workings of the economy, and liberal spending for social programs. However, by 1983 the reality of the national economic situation soon set in; Ghana was bankrupt. Unlike previous governments, which made shallow attempts to steer the economy back into calmer waters, Rawlings had little choice but to propel the country in a neo-liberal direction, which was on its ascendency in international development policy promotion by many of the international donors (Hutchful 2002: 38-39). The first step was to construct and apply the first Economic Recovery Program (ERP). The ERP would eventually fall under the umbrella of a much broader Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), led by the IMF and WB, to bring the economies of the developing world in line with the economic changes taking place in the Global North, after the neo-liberal turn in the 1980s. The aim of the first ERP was to stop the economic freefall of the country. This involved devaluing the cedi (Ghana's currency), gradually eliminating government price controls, restructuring the tax base, propping up the export sector, and rehabilitating the economic and social infrastructure (Hutchful 2002: 56). The successful follow-through of these measures and their corresponding economic returns earned Rawlings and Ghana the label of "star" from international lending institutions (Hutchful 1995). Rawlings' about-turn had mixed results at home, where the devaluation and loss of subsidies were felt by a large vulnerable section of Ghanaian society. Critically, the structural

adjustment components of the ERPs and loss of subsidies affected elements of the social compact that Ghanaians had become accustomed to as their right - such as education, healthcare, public housing, and the state corporations/parastatals that supplied jobs.

ERP I began in 1983 and extended through 1986 (Tsikata 2007: 49). Government revenue nearly tripled, government expenditure declined, Ghana was able to increase the confidence of international lenders by making payments on its loans while building foreign reserves, and in return Ghana was rewarded with more loans for public investment and private investment followed suit (Hutchful 2002: 57-58). According to Nugent, the second ERP was when the SAPs policies started fully. They were “intended to address the structural impediments to economic growth. This [economic restructuring] implied a fundamental shake-up of institutions and practices that had reproduced themselves without much question since independence” (Nugent 1996: 167-168). The ERP II/SAPs had the greatest effect on regular Ghanaians. This is the point when privatization of parastatals began in earnest, reforms to the education system were made in an effort to save money coupled with the introduction of students paying tuition fees, healthcare fees were raised while subsidies for drugs declined, and the wages of public servants were frozen even while the currency was undergoing continued devaluation. The cumulative effect of these adjustments was a deteriorating standard of living for regular Ghanaians, as a consequence of the tenets of the social compact being scaled back.

A critical juncture in Ghana’s development history took place in the mid-1980s once the ERP and SAP processes took hold. The Ghanaian state, acting in accordance with IMF/WB policy prescriptions, began to lose its dominant role within the reproduction of social, economic and political life, resulting in many observers labelling the relationship between the IMF/WB and the Ghanaian state as neo-colonial and neo-patrimonial (Ake 2001: 133). To compound this

perceived deficit in legitimacy, the state had to adapt to the rapid “NGO-ization” of the social welfare sector, which began expanding in direct relation to the state’s contraction as outlined in the IMF/WB’s structural reforms. This dynamic process had two corollary effects. Firstly, NGOs that took on development projects in the social welfare sector were regularly funded by the same institutions that were unconditionally forcing the state to withdraw from the sector, meaning that the state was now being buttressed *and* challenged by the same bilateral organizations. Secondly, while Rawlings and the PNDC were not pleased about the state's mandatory withdrawal and the subsequent rise of NGOs, the NGOs’ visible presence anaesthetized the populace, as programs to improve people’s welfare were springing up across the country, thereby reducing the pressure on the state to provide services that it was incapable of producing. This situation is indicative of what Chaplowe and Engo-Tjega, quoting Alan Fowler (1994), refer to when they speak of NGOs as “‘ladles’ in the ‘global soup kitchen’”, because NGOs are “serving” the citizenry without being able to determine “the menu” (Chaplowe and Engo-Tjega 2007: 265). During this period NGOs began to symbolically represent development in Ghana in the wake of state retraction, making the transition from state-led development to NGO-led development ostensibly seamless, even though NGOs were acting on the mandate of the international donors with little to no input from the Ghanaian government.

The interlude between ERP II and ERP III saw the 1992 transformation of the Ghanaian government from autocratic to democratic, with Ghana’s first elections being held since 1979. Under pressure from both internal and external sources, Rawlings and the PNDC wagered that calling a quick election would significantly improve the PNDC’s chances of being elected in the new, now fourth, republic. By most accounts, Rawlings’ new National Democratic Congress (NDC) would have won the election without employing questionable tactics such as stalling

opposition parties from ‘legally’ campaigning (Nugent 1996: 218), based on their record of economic gains, infrastructure improvements, and the cult of iconography regarding Rawlings himself. Also, the main opposition parties, including the New Patriotic Party (NPP), which carried on the legacy of the Busia/intelligentsia tradition, and the many parties and figures, who attempted to revive the Convention People’s Party (CPP) heritage from the Nkrumah era, were out of form entering the political ring against the seasoned (P)NDC cadre. Ultimately, in both the elections of 1992 and 1996, Rawlings and the NDC won a clear majority in both the presidential and parliamentary elections due to the inability of opposition parties to politicize the ERPs and SAPs (Nugent 1996: 243), and multiple reports of “recurring malpractices and manipulations that had characterized the electoral process” (Ninsin 2007: 92).

Though Nugent and Hutchful rest the outcome of the election as the result of Rawlings’ ability to depoliticize neoliberal policy prescriptions combined with his cult of personality, less publicized was Rawlings and the (P)NDC’s intimidation of opposition members and regular voters (Oquaye 1995: 263). Instances of intimidation against opposition party officials included the arrest and imprisonment of the NPP’s local Chairman in Accra, which went generally undetected in the lead up to the election. Secondly, Rawlings and his “commandos”, Rawlings’ “praetorian guards” who worked exclusively for him, set out to coerce voters by “restricting [their] freedom of movement, threatening chiefs with destoolment, threatening rural folk with shooting on elections day if they did not vote for Rawlings, [and] threatening that lives would be lost and villages burnt” (1995: 263). In light of these transgressions, critics of the official by-line assert that dirty tactics underscored the “free and fair, and free from fear” (Nugent 1996: 232) statements made by organizations monitoring the election, such as the Commonwealth Observer Group.

The period immediately after democratization ushered in the union of political and economic liberalism. However, in an era when the government (supposedly) had to be accountable to every citizen, while pursuing the IMF/WB prescriptions in the continuing ERP and SAPs, the NDC's objectives changed from mere recovery to accelerated growth. Accordingly, Rawlings' government developed the Ghana Vision 2020 plan under the tutelage of IFIs, and as a requirement by the WB so that Ghana could show that it was consolidating economic recovery by instituting measures to spur further economic growth (Hutchful 2002: 104-105; Hearn 2001: 45). This plan "described the basic goal of economic policy in Ghana as an 'open and liberal market economy', capable of optimizing economic growth and ensuring the maximum welfare and material well-being of all Ghanaians, and spoke of transforming Ghana 'from a low-income to middle-income country' within one generation through a growth rate of 8% annum"; it was a plan that Hutchful describes as "typically ambitious" for Ghana (2002: 57). However, the foundation of the plan soon developed cracks since the annual rate of growth achieved in ERP I and II was unsustainable, because the ERPs merely corrected the distortions to the economy put in place in the 1960s and 1970s, whereby the Ghanaian government spent more money on industrialization than it earned from exporting raw materials. Hence, once the government reduced its expenditure on industrialization, social welfare programs, and the civil service in the wake of retrenchment, the economic downward spiral halted and began to reverse, meaning that the "growth" achieved during this period was more of a halt to the state's haemorrhaging of funds, rather than any significant rise in GDP, which remained at a mere five percent per annum through the early 1990s (Hutchful 2002: 66). By the early-to-mid 1990s growth rates had plateaued, and after concurrent market restructuring under the neoliberal

paradigm and the state's (forced) withdrawal from active participation in the market, the rates of growth began to decrease again, though less dramatically.

In the post-elections period other processes of implementing neo-liberal reforms were also taking place. The new constitution of 1992 included the enshrinement of rights such as freedom of speech, the rights of children and workers, the right to education, and the protection of privacy and home (Quashigah 2007: 23). The constitution also included a mandate to establish the Commission on Human Rights and Justice (CHRAJ), "to investigate complaints of violations of fundamental human rights and freedoms, injustice and corruption" (Quashiga 2007: 35). Freedoms came with a price for the government, however, as more and more reports of corruption within the NDC began to spread in the Ghanaian media. According to Hutchful, the neo-liberalization of the democratic state made corruption inevitable. This resulted partly because large amounts of money were flowing into the country from the IMF/WB. Secondly, the government was forced to open patronage channels in order to court political donors for their election campaigns, who in turn expected their allegiance to be repaid through governmental divestiture of parastatals. Accordingly, the NDC became a "flabby, corrupt and ... cynical" political party (Hutchful 2002: 223). Attempts to reverse the trend of corruption from within the party cadre proved fruitless, partly because of the democratic restructuring of the Executive Branch, which made Rawlings' power over NDC personnel less absolute in the post-PNDC era, and also because Rawlings' power was diminishing as the elections of 2000 drew nearer. Public dissension within the NDC party resulted, and, in 1999, shortly before the 2000 elections, a small faction led by Goosie Tandoh separated from the NDC and created the National Reform Party (NRP), giving further ammunition to opposition parties in the run up to the 2000 elections (Frempong 2007: 152).

Capitalizing on the NDC's ill repute and deteriorating returns from the ERP

III/SAPs/Ghana Vision 2020, the NPP with John A. Kufuor as the presidential candidate won a highly contested run-off election for the presidency, while his party took half of the seats in parliament (Gyimah-Boadi 2001: 103). The NPP campaigned on promises to take a harder stance on IMF/WB-led SAPs, restore the social compact through a proposed increase in spending on social welfare programs, and usher in the "Golden Age of Business" (Hutchful 2002: 247). Under the mantra of 'Development in Freedom', perhaps as an ode to the Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen's 1999 publication, *Development as Freedom*, the NPP embraced neoliberal rhetoric by expounding on the need to prop up the industrial sectors, promoting the private sector, and managing government finances with renewed prudence. Characterizing the NDC as laissez-faire towards the private sector, the NPP advanced a curiously inverse development ethos to that which Ghana had historically ascribed; rather than employ the state and politics as avenues for status, wealth and the means to national development, the NPP was prompting individuals to achieve these measures on their own in the private sector, while at the same time promoting the state as social welfare provider with a strong development ethos (2002: 247).

One of the first steps that the NPP government took was to repeal the Ghana Vision 2020 because they claimed that its goals were unrealistic. In its place the NPP government oversaw the construction and implementation of the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS). The GPRS, which was modeled on PRSs promoted by international donors at the time, represented a new stage in the neo-liberal political and economic transformation. Accordingly, it aimed to achieve real accelerated growth by bolstering the private sector, investing in human capital, upgrading social welfare programs, and promoting further good governance standards. Alongside the

GPRS, Kufuor elected in 2001 to join the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, promoted and facilitated by the IMF/WB, which called for the adherence to stricter neo-liberal principles, such as privatization of parastatals and the further liberalization of services, namely, massive reductions in the subsidization of petroleum, electricity, and water in return for the elimination of much of Ghana's external debt (Tsikata 2007: 79). In 2001 the NPP declared Ghana HIPC, which meant that in exchange for commitment to WB/IMF prescriptions for strict economic liberalization Ghana would receive partial debt relief (Hutchful 2002: 247). However, HIPC also came with an unpopular stigma attached to the label of 'heavily indebted' and the perceived inability of the country and its people to solve their own economic woes without asking for a handout from the international community.

With HIPC and the GPRS I (number two was to begin in 2006 and extend to 2009) framing the NPP's policy plans, neoliberal economic and political principles became further entrenched in Ghana. This quickly put the government and many, if not all, NGOs/civil society organizations (CSOs) in direct opposition to each other regarding the on-going implementation of continued SAPs. For instance, the WB pushed the NPP government to privatize the public water sector due to its exorbitant cost and lack of financial returns. In staunch resistance to the privatization of a basic right, not to mention a vital social welfare provision, a coalition was formed drawn from the public, private, and voluntary sectors, both from within and outside Ghana, called the Ghana National Coalition against the Privatization of Water (GNCAPW). The GNCAPW constructed and released the Accra Declaration on the Rights to Water (ADRW, 2001: 1). Framing the anti-privatization movement around a rights-based argument was a relatively new concept in Ghana, and at least provisionally it attained success, because the government back-tracked on its initial plan after it came under national and international

pressure from CSOs to resist WB/IMF conditions. Secondly, the water privatization movement signalled that the social compact was as significant in the new millennium as it was at any previous period. As the ADRW explicates, “water is not and should not be a common commodity to be bought and sold in the market place”, and “[w]ater is an increasingly scarce natural resource, and as a result ... its ownership, control, delivery and management belong in the public domain today and tomorrow” (2001: 1).

To facilitate this new partnership among the Ghanaian government, foreign donors and IFIs, the Multi Donor Budget Support (MDBS) program was installed in 2003. “The idea of a multi-donor funding mechanism was that all donors who subscribe to it pay into one single fund, so as to give the recipient government the prerogative to determine which priority areas it wants to spend it on, within the realms of its own budgetary process” (Woll 2008: 74). However, “an important conditionality is that the money is spent judiciously and donors must be satisfied that the government is pursuing the right policies before funds are released” (Quartey 2005: 2). Hence, MDBS is aimed at promoting the government’s ability to facilitate the GPRS, which donors deem “the right policies”, as long as the Ghanaian government is also concentrating on entrenching neoliberal policy prescriptions, such as private sector growth. Hence, MDBS represents the beginning of a new era in Ghana, whereby the state is able to make limited inroads into the social welfare sphere under the auspices of poverty reduction as long as it also holds steadfast to promoting the macro and micro economic spheres, particularly the private sector, as the engine of Ghana’s development and growth. Hence, “the GPRS was ... enshrined as Ghana’s core framework for development planning ... [and t]he MDBS in turn aimed to harmonise donor procedures while stimulating greater government ownership of supported reforms by paying financial assistance directly into the government’s budget” (Woll 2008: 75). Consequently,

GPRS and MDBS work hand-in-hand, giving the Ghanaian government increasing room to manoeuvre in order to pursue new policy directions, such as the NHIS, while aligning itself even closer to donor policy priorities and prescriptions.

The by-product of this alignment is a new conceptualization of how organizations in the non-governmental sector will perform their amended mandate. The donors' new agenda requires a reconfiguration of the role that NGOs play in Ghana's development from service provision to that of a support mechanism for the government's implementation of the poverty reduction programs in the social welfare sphere. Though this change has been implemented at a gradual pace, beginning in 2003, donors, such as the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), aim to promote and bolster the role of NGOs from service provision to advocacy and watchdogs, so that they can work in support of the policy-creation process, act as the voice for the poor, and perform the duties of watchdogs for government expenditure. As DFID states, one of the perceived "risks" that "all development partners" are fearful of

relates to the way in which the Government is to be held to account in delivering the GPRS objectives. A committee on the GPRS has been established in [the Ghanaian] Parliament, but clear roles have still to be established for civil society ... to contribute towards its implementation and in monitoring and evaluation. While the Government has adopted an open stance on its policies ... there is little real scrutiny from ... civil society organisations, either because they are by-passed in the policy formulation process or because they lack the capacity for effective advocacy. (DFID 2003: 9)

Furthermore, DFID will "support independent research institutions and civil society organisations to act as watchdog institutions and knowledge generators ... [in combination with] rights awareness, and dialogue and coalition-building around key policy issues" (2003: 16). Hence, many NGOs are in the process of converting to CSOs by means of rewriting their mission and vision statements in order to conform to the donor's new mandate, whereby they

will act in both a supportive role and a monitoring and evaluation capacity to the Ghanaian government's poverty reduction strategies.

This turnabout in funding, strategy, and implementation, represents a significant shift in development practice, a shift that has involved modifying the relations between the Ghanaian government, international donors, and IFIs. However, alterations to the practices of NGO workers has been underway for several years, as half of the participants for this study are now engaged in decidedly different projects in 2007 than they were carrying out in 2002. This adjustment to the practice of development appears to constitute for what David Korten (1987) advocated when he outlined why NGOs that perform service provision at a local level should alter their practice by engaging in broader national level policy issues, which he terms as the movement from the “second generation” (service provision) to the “third generation” (working with government to assist institutional and policy constraints) of NGOs (1987: 148-149).² However, in his proposition, the movement from the local to the national, and from service provision to policy engagement, should arise in an organic fashion. Hence, Korten describes the process as akin to an awakening, whereby NGOs “com[e] to realize [that] they need to exert greater leadership in addressing dysfunctional aspects of the policy and institutional setting of the villages and sectors within which they work” (1987: 149). In contrast, the catalyst for the shift in Ghanaian NGO practices in the MDBS-era is the change in funding patterns from service provision to advocacy, rather than a drive by Ghanaian NGO workers to engage the Ghanaian government and work jointly to improve the policy and institutional settings.

The movement from service provision to an advocacy agenda signifies an important change to the development landscape for NGO workers and the civil society sphere in Ghana.

² In Korten's analysis, the first generation of NGOs were organizations such as World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, and CARE, which were oriented to relief services based on a shortage goods, such as food, water, and shelter (Korten 1987: 147-148).

As discussed in the previous chapter, debates surrounding the rise of civil society in Africa have produced varied understanding about its emergence. As was discussed in the previous chapter, there exists in academia a pervasive belief that the rise of civil society can be explained in teleological terms. Assumptions such as these give credence to Korten's hypothesis that NGOs will come to realize that "acting on their own they can never hope to benefit more than a few favored localities; and self-reliant village development initiatives are [more] likely to be sustained only to the extent that local public and private organizations are linked into a supportive national development system" (1987:149). While views such as these are backed to some degree by Ghanaian NGO workers, as will be discussed in the following chapters, the above discussion on funding trends demonstrates that donors such as DFID firmly believe that NGOs, as prominent figures of a greater civil society in Ghana, need to be "nurtured as a deliberate project of social reform" (Rutherford 2004: 127), in order to take up the position of a third generation NGO.

What emerges in the newly formed development landscape is an NGO community that is being pressured to relinquish its service provision role and fall in line with the teleological narrative of what civil society is and what its actions should be. Consequently, NGOs are now being funded to engage the government directly on policy issues surrounding the GPRS and to act as a voice for 'the people', and act as watchdogs of government expenditure. While there are civil society groups who have taken a different tact to engage the government on national policy issues, for example the Ghana National Coalition against the Privatization of Water (GNCAPW), the majority of NGOs now have the terms of their practice dictated to them by international donors. The outcome is that NGOs are pressed to conform to a more conventional definition of

what a CSO is, and what role it should play, while the state takes over the service provision sector in the social welfare development sphere.

Conclusion

In 2007 Ghana celebrated its jubilee, and after fifty years of rollercoaster politics and economics the social compact has been battered, but not broken. Over the course of the first twenty-five years of Ghana's independence the social compact was at the fore in determining the mode of governance, i.e. statist and interventionist, with the government playing the dominant role in service provision, job creation, and income distribution (Nugent 1996: 25). The consequence of this *modus operandi* was a revolving door of coup-makers, who "justified intervention on the grounds that the compact had been irreparably breached by the incumbent regime" (Nugent 1996: 26). According to Nugent's perspective one could reason, therefore, that the social compact was both the cause of, and solution to, Ghana's development ills. Considering that on independence Ghana had a sizeable infrastructure base, large foreign reserves, and an expanding economy based on the export sales of cocoa, all of which had deteriorated or disappeared by 1983 (with the help of severe droughts in both the late 1970s and again in the early 1980s) (Hutchful 2002: 7, 35), an argument could be made that the social compact hindered development, rather than divided its rewards equitably.

The latter half of Ghana's history stands in stark contrast to the first. The PNDC, while acquiescing to neoliberal economic prescriptions that helped turn the fortunes of the state, remained generally ambivalent towards promoting the private sector, and codified its administration within the same power arrangements as previous governments through a domineering statist enterprise. It was not until the introduction of democracy that the

government's power was finally diffused, by which time the pillars of the social compact had been outsourced to the NGO sector, and were generally administered with the participation of foreign institutions. Failing to devise an independent long-term development strategy of their own, the NDC and NPP reconciled to adapting to further neoliberalization measures, such as the SAPs and HIPC, in return for continuing economic aid. Consequently, it was not until the MDBS program began that the state could return to social welfare provision matters and the initial stages of reconstituting the social compact.

In its current guise, the social compact is a shell of its former self. However, as expressed to me by the participants of my research in Ghana, the relevance of social welfare programs to development is still paramount in the minds of Ghanaians. Consequently, while democracy, economic stability, and the promotion of the private sector are viewed as key steps towards attaining development, the picture is not complete until the tenets of the social compact are renewed. However, in light of the current economic and political entanglements between the state and WB/IMF, progression towards rectifying the social compact will remain stunted so long as the state is preoccupied with entrenching neoliberal principals that leave little room to manoeuvre within the social welfare sector. Nevertheless, the historical legacy of the social compact remains omnipresent. With the space provided by democratic rights and freedoms, individuals, such as NGO workers, will continue to challenge the state and advance the principles of the social compact in order to renegotiate its terms in the neoliberal age.

Chapter Four: Ghanaian NGO Worker's Positional Identities

Introduction

The central aim of this chapter is to explore Ghanaian non-governmental organization (NGO) workers' identities within the changing contexts of development. Investigating their identities is important because it is the starting point to framing their perceptions of development in Ghana, specifically, and development as a theoretical plain in general. Understanding where each individual positions him/herself relative to other social actors and the structures of development requires the recognition that NGO workers have the agency to reflect on themselves and the worlds they inhabit, and, subsequently, can communicate their ideas and concepts of who they are in contrast to the elements surrounding them. However, despite the abundance of anthropological literature focussing on development, ethnographic research that is inclusive of the people that work in development is a rarity. Further still, anthropologists' attempts to try to understand development workers at the individual level, and discern what their perceptions of development are, would appear to constitute breaking new ground. As Sherry Ortner describes, and as discussed in greater depth below, the reluctance to focus on individuals within anthropological literature may have its antecedents in the discipline's longstanding focus on collective groups of people (Ortner 2006: 131). NGOs have only recently become an important locus of study (Ferguson 2006: 90), and the practice of development has become a popular focal point for critical analysis (Hickey and Mohan 2005; Mohan 2002). What is surprising is that few ethnographers have set their sights on NGO development workers as a source of primary information, because the sheer multitude of NGO workers on the development landscape would lead one to believe that a discipline which places a premium on 'on the ground'

perspectives would view developing country development workers as a primary source of knowledge from which to draw upon.

Dorothea Hilhorst's ethnography of an NGO in the Philippines is notable, however, because her methodological approach applies "an actor orientation" to investigate the "everyday politics and practices" (2003: 5) of NGO workers in order to understand "why certain sets of actors form organizations that they call NGOs and how they ascribe and negotiate meaning for such an organization" (2003: 213). As she states, "such an orientation starts with the premise that social actors have agency They reflect upon their experiences and what happens around them, and use their knowledge and capabilities to interpret and respond to development" (2003: 5). However, while Hilhorst's ethnography promotes the qualitative and contextual dimensions of development to reveal the "real world of NGOs", she treats the examination of NGO workers qua individuals as peripheral to her study. Consequently, Hilhorst's ethnography leaves the reader with only a partial understanding of who NGO workers are, and how they individually perceive and influence the meaning of structures and institutions, due to her focus on development at the NGO level.

Thomas Yarrow recently published the article, "Life/History: Personal Narratives of Development Amongst NGO Workers and Activists in Ghana" (2008). Yarrow focuses on the "self-identification of many NGO workers as 'activists', examining the distinctive ideological beliefs that are seen to underpin this identity, and the forms of personal 'commitment' and 'sacrifice' which this gives rise to" (2008: 334-335). Yarrow's article reveals how Ghanaian NGO workers' identities are inextricably linked to development in Ghana through their historical and linear trajectories, since "their own 'personal' development [is] synonymous with 'national' development ... because both were imagined to unfold in a common temporal form" (2008:

355). Yarrow's participants consist primarily of individuals in their forties and fifties who call themselves "NGO pioneers" due to their senior positions in NGOs that they themselves founded; however, they hardly represent a cross-cut of NGO workers in Ghana. Therefore, their collaborative ascription of "activist" to their own and one another's identities symbolizes a collective representation of analogous individuals with similar historical trajectories and ideological perceptions. Consequently, Yarrow's article lacks a sense of alterity among his participants and within their collective perspectives. What will emerge from a broader range of participants is a divergence of opinions regarding an individual's level of commitment, sacrifice, and ideology, and, hence, a more heterogeneous group of identities among Ghanaian NGO workers.

Without the corresponding structure of time and a (relatively) stable development trajectory, the identities of Ghanaian NGO workers interviewed for the present study are strikingly different from those of Yarrow's. Therefore, the focal point will be on the everyday politics of development in Ghana in order to investigate how NGO workers' identities reflect the current changes within the development landscape, whereby NGOs and NGO workers are being driven from their customary role as service providers into the new donor-funded advocacy sector. Importantly, the distinction between service provision and advocacy work was described by the participants for this study as that between an NGO worker and civil society organization (CSO) worker. While anthropologists generally view NGOs to be amongst a greater civil society sphere (Ferguson 2006: 90), the participants for this study used the discursive devices of 'NGO worker' and 'civil society (organization) advocate' to highlight how the changes to the practice of development have affected those in the non-governmental development worker sector, specifically resulting from the introduction of the Multi Donor Budget Support (MDBS).

Accordingly, to the participants of this study, a CSO advocate is in essence a ‘NGO-*cum*-CSO worker’. The key defining feature is a distinction in NGO workers’ view that they are practicing advocacy as a service, which is funded by international donor organizations, rather than on behalf of a particular constituency. Hence, the analogous relationship between an NGO and a NGO-*cum*-CSO, and what separates them from ‘traditional’ CSOs, is determined by the similarities in funding sources and patterns, and the same (in)ability to set the development mandate of the organization, *rather* than the actual activity that the organization and its employees perform (see Table 4.1).

While the participants of this study define NGOs and CSOs in a manner that contrasts with anthropologists, their delineation of NGOs as service providers and CSOs as NGO-*cum*-CSO advocates will be employed throughout for the sake of brevity, continuity, and context. The final chapter will explore the definitions and how they contrast with anthropological narratives.

Table 4.1 *Ghanaian NGO Workers' Distinctions among NGOs, NGO-cum-CSOs, and CSOs*

	NGO	NGO-cum-CSO	CSO
DEFINING FEATURES	Service Provision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement development projects within the social welfare sector, water and sanitation, health, education 	Advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> former service provision NGOs became CSOs due to a lack of funding after implementation of MDBS act as 'the voice of the people' by implementing research-based advocacy projects attempt to influence the government's policies and programs supposed to act as government watchdogs over service provision and government spending 	Advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> work on behalf of constituent members draw attention to their position on policies advocate for change that will benefit members
FINANCIAL RESOURCES	External <ul style="list-style-type: none"> vast majority receive money from international donor organizations program and project mandate set by international donor 	External <ul style="list-style-type: none"> vast majority still rely on foreign donors for their funding 	Internal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> generally generate their budgets from members paying dues
RELATIONS WITH THE GHANAIAN GOVERNMENT	Indirect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> historically been bifurcated from government rarely engage with government institutions in a direct fashion 	Direct, but poor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> long antagonistic relationship forced working relationship because of MDBS puts state in a distinct advantage, because no longer make changes based on the advocacy of NGOs-cum-CSOs advocates feel they are not being utilized properly, and that their work is ineffectual 	Direct, but often antagonistic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> at times been outspoken against the Ghanaian government but mostly try to keep relationships positive so as to be able to influence government policies

While some participants have resisted the move to an advocacy role and are in the process of forming an activist identity, others have adapted to the new position. Consequently, what emerges is a continuum of identities, with those that identify themselves as activists at one

end of the continuum, and each subsequent identity moving along the continuum to the end point of civil society advocate. Due to space limitations, and in order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of my participants' identities and perspectives, a sample of four of the eight interviewees are presented here, as exemplars of the NGO workers that participated in this study, and to highlight the challenges that all NGO workers are currently undergoing in the changing development landscape in Ghana. The four exemplars chosen are Omar, Christian, Ama, and Kwabena.³ They were selected because they best represent the cross-section of NGO workers that I interviewed and interacted with during my period of research. Each of these individuals has been affected by the change in donor funding patterns in a similar fashion, however, their reactions to the introduction of the MDBS program has been different. Therefore, based on individual levels of commitment, sacrifice, and ideology, their position in the greater civil society sphere is altered, and the positions that they hold on Ghana's development landscape and in relation to one another represent a distinct cross-section of NGO workers.

The perspectives of Omar, Christian, Ama, and Kwabena are analyzed in conjunction with Sherry Ortner's (2003) recent theorizations on the concept of agency and Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte Jr., and Cain's (1998) exploration of identity. As Sherry Ortner explains, "the opposition between 'structure' and 'agency' seem[s] to suggest a heroic individual ... up against a Borg-like entity But nothing could be further from the way I envisage social agents, which is that they are always involved in, and can never act outside of, the multiplicity of social relations in which they are enmeshed" (Ortner 2006: 130). Holland et al. (1998) second the agency-within-context theme while employing their concept of positional identities: "Positional identity ... is a person's apprehension of [their] social position in a lived world: that is, depending

³ The names of all participants have been changed to protect their anonymity

on the others present, of [their] greater or lesser access to spaces, activities, genres, and, through those genres, authoritative voices, or any voice at all” (Holland et al. 1998: 127-128). Therefore, what this chapter attempts to reveal is how Ghanaian NGO workers’ agency is employed within the context of the everyday politics of development to create the identities from which they can and do voice their understandings of themselves and the development world.

Putting Identity and Agency in Context

There is a conspicuous lack of discussion in anthropological studies regarding identity and agency in relation to individuals. In part, this is because the discipline has traditionally focussed on collectives or groups, and in part because, as Ortner discusses, citing Jean and John Comaroff (1992), concepts that lend themselves to analyzing individuals run a danger of ethnocentrism. “Many anthropologists have been wary of ontologies that give precedence to individuals over contexts. For these rest on manifestly Global Northern assumptions: among them, that human beings can triumph over their context through sheer force of will, [and] that economy, culture, and society are the aggregate product of individual action and intention” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 10, cited in Ortner, 2006: 131). Examples demonstrating their assessment are readily available. For instance, Peter Geschiere and Birgit Meyer (1998) demonstrate their preference for context over that of the individual. Their focus is on how processes of globalization, which are purported to engender cultural homogenization, have the opposite effect, actually “reinforcing cultural heterogeneity” via people’s propensity to “search for fixed orientation points ... [and] affirm old and construct new boundaries” (Geschiere and Meyer, 1998: 602). Accordingly, the “flux” of globalization triggers the “closure” of identities. However, Geschiere and Meyer refrain from analyzing why individuals make the decision to

enact closure, and how this decision-making process would require an acknowledgement of an individual's agency to do so.

According to Ortner, this reluctance to examine how individuals decide to enact closure can be overcome through her concept of "intentionality".

'Intentionality' here is meant to include a wide range of states, both cognitive and emotional, and at various levels of consciousness, that are directed toward to some end. Thus intentionality in agency might include highly conscious plots and plans and schemes; somewhat more nebulous aims, goals, and ideals; and finally desires, wants, and needs that may range from being deeply buried to quite consciously felt. In short intentionality as a concept is meant to include all the ways in which action is cognitively and emotionally pointed *toward* some purpose. (Ortner 2006: 134 author's emphasis)

Ortner's intentionality would help to explain Geschiere and Meyer's comprehension of identity closure by placing the actor at the forefront of the process of identifying and fixing orientation points in order to enact identity closure by differentiating from, or assimilating to, other people's identities. Here, intentionality would engender agency if Geschiere and Meyer asked the questions about how and why someone made the deciding factor of when to fix their orientation points, and what those points are.

The above demonstration reveals that, while identities are shaped in an often contradictory fashion, according to supposed Global Northern modes of logic, i.e., that global processes produce heterogeneous identities rather than homogeneous ones, Ortner's concept of intentionality presupposes that people's decision-making processes are shaped and defined in their locality and context. Furthermore, as Geschiere and Meyer explain, part and parcel with local identity creation is the understanding that identities are not static, but are instead constantly being shaped and defined, and that the process habitually repeats itself. Therefore, intentionality and agency are constituent elements in a process of identity creation that has no predetermined

end or definition, because complex local and global processes create a semblance of historical flux that does not necessarily conform to a predetermined trajectory.

Yarrow's participants described their life histories in a narrative defined as "activist". This is due, in part, because all of Yarrow's participants, barring one ("Francis"), are "NGO pioneers" (Yarrow, 2008: 338), people who achieved success in the Ghanaian development world and "NGO movement" (2008: 338), and who rose to become elite members of their field. As Yarrow states, "these individuals hold prominent positions within a variety of National NGOs, many of which they founded" (2008: 338). Hence, this is very much the view from the top, or, one could also say, near the end, since, having reached the top rung of their professional ladder, there is little room left to achieve greater heights within the local NGO community. In a sense, Yarrow's informants are enacting closure whereby their activist identity, told through the narrative structure of recounting their life histories, employs intentionality in order to "cognitively and emotionally point *towards* some purpose" (Ortner 2006: 134). This retelling of their lives through the genre of the activist narrative is akin to agency in redux, whereby the moments that Yarrow's participants enact in their life histories are strategically placed within a continuum that points toward the purpose of arriving at activist in their lives.

Many of participants in this study were unprepared to enact this closure regarding their identities. This is due in part because the majority of participants felt that their lives were on a trajectory that is still unclear. For instance, while two of participants, Kojo and Akua, are nearing retirement and have reached the top/end of their professional hierarchy, the other six individuals are enmeshed in a process of trying to navigate a course whereby their place within the changing parameters of development in Ghana becomes clear. Development in Ghana is undergoing a rapid change as the government is consolidating development efforts and squeezing

NGOs out of the sphere, with the cooperation of international donors, most notably the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). Considering that the “NGO-ization” of development only began in earnest in the mid-1980s (Hutchful 2002: 184), and that by 2006 the trend was in reverse, many NGO workers find themselves in a precarious situation whereby their future prospects are uncertain and beyond their control.

Accordingly, present day Ghanaian NGO workers demonstrate what Holland et al. theorize as “positional identities”; identities are elucidated through the “lived worlds ... of power, status, relative privilege, and their negotiation ... aspects that have to do with one’s position relative to socially identified others, one’s sense of social place, and entitlement” (1998: 125). Positional identities, then, correspond with Hilhorst’s “mutuality of actor and structure” (2003: 5), because, an “actor-orientation recognizes that people operate within limitations of structural constraints, but emphasizes that such constraints operate through people” (2003: 5). Therefore, an individual’s colleagues, working space, and hierarchical position within the NGO sector all become constituent elements of both the structure and context within which an NGO worker's identity is formed. However, identities are not static since the elements of identity creation (structure and context) are constantly changing, meaning that a person’s positionality will follow suit, and hence identities are not created or defined in totality.

In order to understand how a person navigates the changing structures and contexts of the development landscape in Ghana, Hilhorst’s actor-orientation and Ortner’s intentionality will be employed. “[An actor] orientation starts with the premise that social actors have agency. They reflect on their experiences and what happens around them, and use their knowledge and capabilities to interpret and respond [in relation to the structures and contexts to which they are positioned]” (Hilhorst 2003:5). The form of response is intentionality, “all the ways in which

action is cognitively and emotionally pointed *toward* some purpose” (Ortner 2006:134).

Therefore, agency-*cum*-intentionality helps to explain how, when, and where Ghanaian NGO workers position themselves and decide to “open” and “close” their identities in the present climate of developmental flux

Understanding how Ghanaian NGO workers interpret their lived worlds requires placing context and agency within the same focal point, in order to comprehend how identities are constituted, adjusted, and reconstituted, based on the flux of the everyday politics of development in Ghana. Similar to Yarrow’s participants (2008), the interviewees for this project stressed that development in Ghana is a process. However, many of the participants for the present study perceive development as antithetical to invoking their identity because the donors once again are supporting the state and marginalizing those within the NGO community. As Said explains,

If the statistics were taken now, by 2000 into 2003, the numbers [of NGOs] have started shrinking.... And why? Multi donor budget support came, 250 to 300 million dollars is being given directly to the government every year to allow the ministries and agencies that provide services to [the] regions. They have no need for NGOs ... anymore, you know. (Said, 14/04/07)

Therefore, the identities that emerge are less cohesive and more ambiguous due to NGO workers’ intentionality being cognitively and emotionally driven away from NGOs in the conventional service provision role and towards development work in other spheres, most notably the emerging CSOs, many of which receive their funding from the same donors as the Ghanaian government. Understanding the divergent paths that intentionality is taking them, and why, is the topic of the rest of this chapter.

Activist Identity: To Be Or Not To Be?

While Yarrow's article (2008) traces the historical narratives of his participants' activism, he does not include perspectives on the recent rupture in the developmental landscape, which is causing alarm for many NGO workers in the present and for the future. Much like the unprecedented changes to development in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which cleared the way for Yarrow's activists' participation in development, the same forces that nurtured the NGO sector then – IMF, WB, international donors - are now prompting it to change and reengage with the state. This means that the bifurcation of development between the NGO sector and the government, which was established when the rise in NGOs coincided with the retrenchment of the state in the mid-1980s, is now reducing, and as a consequence, development is becoming an increasingly politicized environment. As Hutchful explains, this bifurcation meant that during the 1980s and 1990s NGOs “were almost completely devoid of any activist political connotation, [which] made them attractive (or tolerable) to African governments” (Hutchful 2002: 183). However, as Christian explains, the interstice between the non-governmental and the governmental spheres is now reducing as the new donor-driven advocacy mandate for NGO workers propels them into closer quarters with the state, making development work increasingly politicized, and liable to the pitfalls of an increasingly politicized environment for conducting development.

All the donors who were supporting NGOs have decided to give all their money to government budgetary support. So, how can an NGO that is critical of the government access money to do [development]? Because, you see, service delivery is [now] the mandate of [the] government. So, [if] you were critical of them and you think they will give you money [for service] delivery, [then you now have to do] somersaults and sing the party song, then they will give you funding. (Christian, 16/05/07)

Therefore, what is transpiring in Ghana is an alteration to the context of development within the greater associational sphere, whereby people must choose to either stay within a shrinking NGO sector, adopt the role of advocate, - or choose a third alternative or indeterminate option.

Importantly, the distinction that the participants make among a community activist, NGO service provider and CSO advocate, and where these positional identities fit on the continuum, is largely based on two interconnected factors. The first factor is the way in which individuals have shaped their identity within the changing development landscape in Ghana resulting from the implementation of the MDBS program. The second factor relates to how participants defined NGOs and CSOs in the wake of the MDBS's introduction, as discussed above. Accordingly, their identity positions are enmeshed in the process of deciding whether or not they are willing to adapt to the new civil society advocacy sector that donors are promoting in the MDBS era. This means that their place within the continuum is determined in large part by where they place themselves in relation to their colleagues who have, or have not, moved from NGO service provision to CSO advocacy. Consequently, the positional identity position that is closest to the new MDBS/CSO advocacy represents one extreme end of the continuum, and each subsequent position is determined by how far they place themselves from the MDBS/CSO advocacy positional identity.

What emerges below is a continuum of positional identities that is largely determined by Kwabena and Omar, because they have each moved the farthest away from the NGO service provision position, but in opposite directions. Kwabena represents one end of the continuum, because he has moved from NGO service provision to CSO advocacy, thereby altering his own position and expanding the range of identity positions. Similarly, but at the other extreme, is Omar, who is resisting the trend in funding to CSO advocacy and moving from NGO service

provision to coalition groups and community activism, both of which lay outside the bounds of international donor agency funding in the MDBS era. Hence, while these two individuals previously held similar positions as NGO service providers, their subsequent relocation has broadened the sphere of non-governmental development workers' positional identities, creating the continuum. In contrast to Yarrow's (2008) participants, what emerges below are polyvalent identities based on how each NGO workers' level of commitment and sacrifice, combined with their ideological perspectives, have shaped their views of development work in the MDBS era. This means that the sum total of their commitment, sacrifice, and ideology does not equate to that of a single activist identity, but rather, a multitude of identities ranging from activist to advocate.

Omar and Christian: Positional Identities at the Margins

Omar represents the starting point on the continuum, because his identity is both indeterminate and in transition to an alternative identity of "community activist". Describing himself, Omar states, "I don't want to lead a life where I haven't created any presence, any contributions to people's lives." Accordingly, Omar's identity is shaped in part via an altruistic dimension that a number of other NGO workers also exhibited. For example, Omar states that, "[development] gives me personal satisfaction in terms of what my life is used for So, you know that your life is not worthless, it is worth living, and you contribute something to people, you know? That is basically what keeps me moving ..., sometimes you get frustrated; things that you want to do you haven't been able to do, but it is not a bad thing" (Omar, 30/04/07). Consequently, in the present context of the changing landscape in Ghana, Omar chooses to work for an NGO that receives little funding, and which specifically targets issues and projects that are

overlooked or lie outside the bounds of customary NGO service delivery, so that he can “contribute something to the people”. Accordingly, the ‘sacrifice’ that Omar is making by choosing to work for an NGO that offers little in financial remuneration or career advancement is offset by the ability to participate in work that provides “personal satisfaction” and gives back to his community.

As an example, when the NGO Omar works for was part of a social accountability project that was funded by the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID), the proceeds that he and his organization received for their contribution were higher than what they would normally receive from an international NGO or the Ghanaian government. Consequently, the premium that comes along with working for foreign donors allows Omar and his NGO to use the above average funding received to reinvest in projects that lack financial support. “[The NGO I work for] gets its funding from diverse areas, based upon the issue ... In terms of the [projects we work on to help displaced people near] mining [operations] we don’t have funders yet, [so] we use some of the funds we get from other projects to do this” (Omar, 17/05/07). The propensity of an NGO to spread sorely lacking funds amongst divergent projects, rather than into the salaries of NGO workers, displays a level of commitment and sacrifice that is rare in the NGO sector, based on my own observations.

In contrast, the majority of NGOs would be worried about the strict accountability measures concerning how the funds are spent, which are conditional by donors. However, because the link between Omar’s NGO and DFID was diffused through several intermediate parties, he was able to evade many of the stringent financial reporting methods that NGO workers frequently complain about. As Omar stated to me, he felt no qualms about diverting

funds because he felt that the social accountability project would not change or improve the lives of ordinary Ghanaians.

For instance [one of the intermediary NGOs] is a bit flexible.... But if you are unfortunate and you get involved with a project that is funded solely by DFID, and *you* are going to report to DFID ... then you are dead. You are not able to do any analysis outside the framework in which they've given you, so you have to follow that. I think this is some of the reasons why you have a lot of people and projects around, and people write brilliant reports, and nothing changes, there are no improvements. (Omar, 17/04/07 emphasis in the original)

Accordingly, the diverting of funds to projects that Omar and his colleagues regard as falling outside the bounds of government and donor interests is deemed a moral imperative, because they have the potential to assist people's lives.

A further aspect that places Omar's identity within the indeterminate/alternative position on the continuum of NGO workers is his contribution to development work outside the NGO sphere, and how these activities make him question his role and identity as an NGO worker. Omar volunteers as a member of a number of coalitions by contributing his time, skills, and energy to pursuits that are aligned with his ethos. Accordingly, Omar describes his participation in multiple coalitions thusly:

Most of the [coalitions] I don't have a formal relationship [with], because some of the [coalitions and] networks are quite loose.... They don't have a rigid membership.... When you show interest in the work [and] you want to contribute, whether money, or your skills, or your time, then you are accepted as a member. So, you don't formalize the relationship.... You are there as equals, who have diverse experiences and diverse resources to contribute to the networks. So ... my relationship with organizations I work with is a horizontal relationship, structured along a horizontal movement. (Omar, 17/04/07)

Omar contributes to coalitions and networks that span various spheres, from anti-water privatization, gender equality, assisting communities affected by mining operations, and environmental protection. The common factor amongst these voluntary associations is that they

are all politically-oriented and target government legislation that has, or has the potential, to negatively affect Ghanaian citizens in one shape or form. Operating outside the NGO sphere allows for a different type of engagement, as Omar describes:

For instance, we are doing social accountability and access to Health Services by the poor, and in doing that you are given a tool to use to do the evaluation. So, if, for example, you are using a tool like community scorecards, you know what results you are supposed to generate, but you do not have the leeway to delve into the politics of [people's] access [to healthcare services]. In doing that you might be taking out the political environment, and [taking it] out of the whole study. If you live in a political environment where the dominant idea is that everybody is equal... and is a human being and has value in life - that is a political setting. (Omar, 17/04/07)

Omar goes on to describe a different scenario when, during the run-up to the 2000 national elections, coalition and network volunteers, such as himself, were actively placing gender equality into national dialogues and, consequently, “raising questions that go beyond domestic violence, like gender representations in parliament, gender representations at cabinet levels, and stuff like that. Now, [this has resulted in] some organizations and political parties want[ing] to be seen as gender sensitive, so gradually the debate about gender is getting into almost all of the sectors” (Omar, 30/04/07). The difference between NGO work and that of coalitions is plain in Omar's eyes; working outside the bounds of the NGO sector allows for the political engagement of issues that affect a wide range of Ghanaians, and, more importantly, allows for the commitment to the issues to unfold at its own tempo rather than the work being cut-off once the donor or funding agency decides the project is finished.

While Omar offered little in the way of an ideological opposition to NGO development work, his frustration at the inability of development projects to go beyond the research and service provision role has propelled him to search for avenues outside the NGO community to follow through with the political nature of development. A corollary effect of this search for

developmental realization has been a reflexive turn in what it means to be an NGO/development worker. As he states,

People say, oh, okay, you are described as a development worker, and I say, okay, what am I going to develop? Because, I don't consider what I'm doing [development]. Every country has the potential to move from one point to another. So, if you're going to use that term it should be used for everybody. It should not be used based upon your geography, or your per capita income, and stuff like that.... In Canada they will be calling them community activists, or social workers, [but] when you are here you are not called [a] social worker, you are called a development worker – we are doing the same work! (Starts laughing). (Omar, 30/04/07)

Consequently, working with coalitions has afforded Omar the space to question his identity as an NGO development worker. Feeling that NGOs are limited in their ability to fulfill his goals, Omar attempts to distance himself from the identity of a *Ghanaian* development worker, and Ghanaian NGO workers, via his relative position to colleagues from North America and South Africa. Positing himself as a “social worker” or “community activist”, Omar displays what Ortner terms intentionality, as noted above, action that is “pointed *toward* some purpose” (Ortner 2006, 134 emphasis in original). In the case of Omar, his feelings of frustration with NGO work combined with an altruistic disposition have compelled him to migrate from that of a normative development worker employed within the NGO sector down a divergent path and into the broader associational sphere. Here, Omar can parlay his goals of getting “personal satisfaction in terms of what [his] life is used for”, in a space where there is an equitable and “horizontal relationship” between coalition members, while committing to developmental realization.

Compared to the other participants in this study, Omar exhibits a willingness to deviate from the NGO development worker mould that is unusual. While many expressed frustration with the way that development has been practiced, few were willing to sacrifice income and time to the degree that Omar has in his participation in coalitions and community activism. As he

states, “we work 24 hours a day and seven days a week, and sometimes we don't take a break in the year. You can be on a holiday and be called to do work” (Omar, 30/04/07). Omar’s reflexivity about his identity was not unique however. For instance, Christian, a middle-aged NGO worker based in Tamale, Northern Ghana, has worked in the service provision sector since the early 1990s, primarily engaged in water and sanitation projects funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The recent changes to the development landscape eliminated his position, because the Ghanaian government has assumed the role of service provider. In order to be gainfully employed, Christian entered the CSO sector, working on similar social accountability and advocacy projects as Omar. Like Omar, Christian has also chosen the unorthodox option of an indeterminate identity. However, unlike his compatriot, he has not distanced himself from his fellow colleagues in such a fashion by declaring himself a social worker or community activist when faced with having to conform to the “Northern NGOs dream” of spurring NGO workers in to the position of CSO advocates.

When the NGOs moved away from service delivery to advocacy, I said ah, we are in trouble. Like, when you go to the poorest areas and you go and see the poverty, I mean, you go and gather people to do advocacy, and some of the people haven't eaten the whole day. They sleep on one side and then they get up and say oh, now we are not going to do service provision, we are going to go to advocacy. So, all of a sudden all of the NGOs in the South realign their vision and mission [statements] to conform to the Northern NGOs’ dreams. (Christian, 14/05/07)

The uneasiness that Christian feels towards these projects, about “realigning” his vision and mission, has led him down a different path from Omar. Christian left the NGO that employed him, resigned from development work - and Ghana -altogether, and went on a self-imposed “sabbatical” to the United Kingdom (UK) to study and earn a Master’s degree. Christian’s position in the changing context of NGO work was that it was better to remove oneself from the sphere of development than be compelled into an uncomfortable position, as a

donor-backed political advocate, a role that he felt did not address the most pressing need of helping impoverished people put food on the table.

According to Christian, development is not just a vocation, or about working for an NGO and doing development work, it is part and parcel a “calling” based on your own vision and mission. Hence, his aversion to enlisting in the CSO advocacy position constitutes an instance of identity refusal.

It is a calling. I mean, in the sense that you do it for a greater good rather than personal gain. [However,] most people find it appropriate to just form an NGO, write a proposal, and then get money.... You should be part of the process of changing your own situation, your own community's situation; it shouldn't be just waiting for somebody [to give you money]. You should first have that commitment to engage, and to do it, and when somebody comes to give you help that is fine, as opposed to just looking for money in order to do this. (Christian, 14/05/07)

The consequence of Christian’s refusal to identify himself with people and NGOs that are non-aligned with his own level of commitment and willingness to make sacrifices for their “calling” has been a self-imposed exile. While his academic sabbatical provided time to reflect on his position in the development sphere in Northern Ghana, it also meant that he has had to endure life without being engaged and being part of the “greater good”.

Ama and Kwabena: Positional Identities at the Other End of the Continuum

While Omar and Christian are flexible enough to sacrifice income and hierarchical position for their development ethos, for many NGO workers, working for less pay – or no pay – is unacceptable, or simply not an option. Prior to working in the NGO sector, Ama worked for both North American and European development agencies and departments in Ghana prior to entering the NGO sector. Today, she is employed as a Project Coordinator for an international NGO that provides capacity-building support to Ghanaian parliamentarians. Much like her North American and European counterparts, Ama also has a house and mortgage, makes

monthly payments on her new car, and enjoys trips outside the country to visit friends and family, and to experience new places. Firmly planted within her service provision role, Ama defends the role that NGOs have cultivated, exclaiming,

I think it is an effective way of getting things done. NGOs work better. They are spread out in the the communities. They know what the community issues are. Government is not able to spread itself to that scale, and the [the local branches of government] don't have the capacity. When you look at NGO, community, and local government [relations], there is more dialogue there, they are much more involved at that level, because the local government relies on them a lot. [The NGOs] do the mobilization, the training, the teaching. The local government doesn't know all the issues. Just because they are in the Districts, that doesn't mean they know all the issues about health, water or sanitation. So, the NGOs go in and provide these services. (Ama, 18/04/07)

In Ama's opinion, the space that NGOs occupy should be firmly entrenched within the development sphere rather than altered within the current landscape, because NGOs have built a foundation as effective service providers and are strategically located throughout Ghana from the largest cities to the smallest villages.

Secondly, Ama feels that reconfiguring the development landscape while politicizing the development sphere should be resisted by NGO workers. As she explains, resistance from within needs to be brought forth and aimed at international donors who support the government's expunging of NGOs from the development sphere.

[NGO workers] feel that they know the country's issues, because they are the ones on the ground. [What they should be saying, is] "You cannot come in and dictate to me what to do, when you don't know exactly what happens on the ground or in the country. We know the issues, the problems, and how to get around them. So, who are you to dictate to us what to do and what not to do?" (Ama, 18/04/07)

Accordingly, with their strategic placement, wealth of accrued knowledge, and ability to provide service efficiently, Ama feels that NGOs' place within the development sphere in Ghana should be consolidated and concretized rather than divested and reconfigured. In part, her opinion rests

on the perception that the NGOs sector, as bifurcated from the national political arena, means that there are fewer opportunities for politicians and politics to impede development. However, despite her feelings, she feels there is little recourse to preventing the sector from shifting to the new civil society-oriented advocacy agenda, as advanced by the international donor community and the Ghanaian government.

Her perspective is augmented by her pessimism towards politicians. When asked if entering the political arena could be a future step to pursue development work, she responds:

No, no, no, I've worked for parliament[arians] for too long and it makes me cynical. If I should, I wouldn't want to work for [the national government]. Maybe I would want to work at the local level, because I think it is much better. At the national level your impact is not felt. In Ghana people have a perception of what MPs do. I mean, they just think that you can provide everything when you cannot, because of the control of funds [by international donors and the government executive branch], and various things like that. (Ama, 18/04/07)

Consequently, her personal knowledge of how the government is run at the national level reinforces her belief that the place of NGO workers employed in service provision is critical. In other words, she resists arguments that promote the government as the dominant player in the service provision sector, *and* that those in the NGO sector need to exit in order remain committed to development in Ghana.

On the continuum of identity positions, Ama represents the demarcation between Omar's and Christian's "conviction" and those that she deems as "professionals". As Omar states,

[Christian and I] see it as something which is addictive, it is a conviction. If you have that kind of conviction [then] you find it difficult to renege on it. When you do the work and then you benefit from on it [financially] then fine. Sometimes, people get money out of it and then they pump it into a social movement, which doesn't bring any money. But, maybe, if you treat it as a professional thing it is something different, and there'll be people that will just treat you as a professional. Like, you just go there and you make

your money, get your comfortable house and comfortable car, then build a comfortable family and then you'll be celebrated as a successful person in the community. There are all those things that are out there, so you have to pick which of them you want. (Omar, 30/04/07)

While Omar and Christian's altruistic ethos and convictions may lend themselves to picking the side of financial hardship via their involvement in community activism and self-imposed sabbaticals, the majority of Ghanaian NGO workers interviewed were on the "other" side; they wanted a "comfortable house and comfortable car" for themselves and their families *and* to be able to contribute to national development. However, Ama's position within the current NGO service sector is becoming tenuous. As more and more NGOs, and consequently NGO workers, shift their missions and visions towards the new civil society sector, Ama's tenure in the middle ground between the activists and the advocates could be short lived.

Further along the continuum of positional identities lies Kwabena. Kwabena is in his early forties, and currently works as the Executive Secretary for an umbrella organization based in Accra, which is funded by an assemblage of foreign donor agencies. Kwabena's CSO attempts to ally all the agencies in Ghana that work a particular sector including local, national, and international NGOs and governments, nationally and internationally, in order to facilitate dialogue between all the "stakeholders", including community-based organizations formed by village members. Prior to his current job, Kwabena began his career as a project officer with the Ghanaian Ministry of Health. After several years, work in the NGO sector began to occupy most of Kwabena's time and energy, so he resigned from the Ministry of Health. However, in 2003, funding from foreign donors dried up as financial support began to shift back to the government for healthcare related projects and programs; thus Kwabena was forced to shut down the NGO and search for work. Fortunately, he was able to use his contacts in this particular sector to find employment with his current organization. Although working in an executive position for a

nationally-based organization would represent a few steps up the ladder from Kwabena's previous positions, he still finds it necessary to supplement his income by taking short compact jobs working for NGOs and donors as a facilitator for workshops, forums and training programs, primarily in the water and health care sectors.

Kwabena's situation reflects the changes that development has gone through in Ghana during the last twenty years, gaining a comfortable position with the national government as a civil servant, only to leave in order to pursue development in the NGO sector, and finally to make the transition to the civil society sector as an advocate. As he explains, Kwabena left the government because, "I felt a drive to experience what happens in the development world, because in my first position in the Ministry of Health I worked with a lot of development workers and I wanted to have a feel of what development meant and what things looked like on that side" (Kwabena, 27/03/07). Initially encouraged by the results of his NGO's work efforts, Kwabena felt secure enough to relinquish his position within the government, only to have his funding dry up shortly thereafter, and to have to search for employment in the burgeoning donor-supported civil society sector.

Kwabena is not entirely discouraged by his present circumstances. As he notes, having worked in the governmental and NGO sectors he is well positioned to combine his previous experiences with his present mandate to influence policy issues in Ghana surrounding this sector; "Whether it is a policy [or] a program that the government is implementing, the next crucial role for CSOs is to ensure that ... the communities understand [the government and its procedures] properly, are able to assess them, and where they are not satisfied they are able to effectively engage with whoever is responsible, whether it is the policymaker or this service provider, to [voice] their dissatisfaction or alternative opinions in the process" (Kwabena, 27/03/07).

Echoing a perspective that other participants expressed, Kwabena felt that advocacy work should have been instrumental within NGOs' agendas from the beginning. However, now that donors are funding organizations such as Kwabena's, the space has opened up for CSOs to engage the government regarding policy, accountability, and resource allocation issues.

Now, besides the shift in donor confidence from NGOs to the government as the better source for channelling funds, NGOs themselves have also come to realize that there is no amount of service delivery the NGOs can make to actually make an impact. It would be more effective to ensure that the right policies are made, because even if you give Ghana one billion dollars to put into water, and the policy environment for water management is not good, only one million dollars will not go to waste. So, NGOs think that they should go to advocacy and be looking at the planning issues, the equity issues, and the accountability issues.... So, issues of budget monitoring, issues of resource tracking, issues of policy advocacy, all have become a new paradigm for NGO work. (Kwabena, 27/03/07)

While Kwabena may be a pioneer of sorts, having led one of the few CSOs that actually provide a national forum and which draws members from both Ghanaian and international NGOs and government representatives to discuss policy and advocacy issues, there is a caveat to his present post. Funding by international donors of CSOs in Ghana to carry out advocacy agendas aimed at engaging public policy is only in its infancy stages, and Kwabena's organization is being funded by multiple sources, any one of which could withdraw its support without notice. Hence, Kwabena's tenure in his current position is to some extent considered precarious. As of now, he has been fortunate enough to be able to apply his acquired skills and experiences in a position that combines his knowledge of both the NGO and government sectors. However, as he notes, "It is not like I have identified an issue and I want people to come together to remedy that situation You must dance to what someone else has already framed, then if you can fit in, you fit in" (Kwabena, 2/05/07).

In stark contrast to Omar, Christian, and Ama, Kwabena finds himself in the position of having to follow the funding trends of development in Ghana out of necessity for work and pay, and is generally amenable about accommodating to the changing landscape. Despite his remarks about dancing to someone else's drum, his perspective about working within the development sphere is shaped in part by pragmatism, and in part by apathy. For example, he describes his motivation for continuing in development, despite its instability;

Others will say they're doing [development] so that they will help their people, but as my village Assemblyman said, "Nobody just jumps into politics because they want to help their village people. First, you must look at how you're going to satisfy yourself first, before you think about your village people." [So], no person just jumps into politics [or development] on the pretence that they want to help people, you must have a personal benefit that you are driving up first, before you can think about helping people.
(Kwabena, 2/05/07)

Admitting that his interests in development are not entirely selfless, Kwabena distinguished himself from many NGO and CSO workers who at least gave lip-service to the altruism imbued in many development dialogues and narratives. However, Kwabena does not present himself as a person working in development purely for personal gain either, because he owns neither a house nor a car, and is constantly ridiculed by his colleagues for having a "HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries)" cell phone.

Therefore, Kwabena's identity is neither shaped by an overriding level of commitment nor a willingness to sacrifice stability for a developmental ethos. In fact, he suggested that his current position in the CSO sector may be only temporary, leaving the door open to distancing himself even further along the continuum of positional identities away from Omar, Christian, and Ama. Stating that his career in development, thus far, has been an ideal training ground for taking the next step, Kwabena seems to be looking over the horizon to what possibilities may be in his future.

I am also looking at what my future professional career will be like. I'm leaving a foundation for a type of professional assignment in the future that enables me to understand exactly the context in which this can be done and that cannot be done. Because one thing I don't like in my life is criticism, not like I don't want to be criticized, but I always fear that I will do something that will not meet the aspirations of the people. When a Minister does something and it is way off, and people comment to him, you feel so embarrassed, the way the guy has been so ignorant about the issue that he is talking about. So, it makes me feel that you really have to be as perfect as possible in your professional practice, and development work is one of the things that is promising to be a teaching avenue or medium in that regard. (Kwabena, 02/05/07)

Looking to where development is headed, it would make sense for a pragmatic person to position himself/herself for a potential “future professional career” with either a governmental body or international donor agency. Kwabena's experiences working in the government, NGO, and now CSO spheres could create a good “foundation for a type of professional assignment” that involved working and interacting with individuals and organizations from all relevant development spheres. Considering how unstable the development landscape is and how adaptive Kwabena has been to its changing parameters, thus far, leaving the door to one's identity open rather than closed would appear to be a smart strategy in a period of development in flux.

Multiple Identities in Flux

What emerges from the above portraits is a disparate set of identities that stand in contrast to Yarrow's (2008) participants' collective identity of activism. The primary reason for this disparity is the present-day context of development in Ghana, which is compelling NGO workers to rethink their positions in relation to one another, and their positions in the development landscape all together. Hence, what their actor oriented perspective reveals is that the everyday politics of development in Ghana is no longer *everyday* – because development is undergoing seismic changes, which are resulting in NGOs shutting down and NGO workers

being forced to look for employment in the civil society sector, or struggling to keep a foothold in their current positions. Consequently, this flux has forced the opening of NGO workers' identities, resulting in the search for new orientation points within the changing boundaries of development in Ghana, and thus a greater heterogeneity of identities. Employing their intentionality within the context of flux has led these four NGO workers not only to examine their place within the altering landscape, but also to choose differing orientation points to negotiate their identities within the new boundaries of development.

In contrast, Yarrow (2008) has assembled his participants' commitment, sacrifice, and ideology, the building blocks of which create the identity of an activist. Therefore, couched within historical narratives, Yarrow's participants are in a sense enacting closure, because the sum of their "pioneering" efforts can be encapsulated within the static identity of "activist". In contrast, Omar, Christian, Ama, and Kwabena are standing at the threshold of the interstice between NGO worker and the unknown. Thus, their identities on the proposed continuum represent differing points based partly on each participant's level of commitment, sacrifice, and ideological underpinning, and where these elements point each individual in the changing development landscape. Only Ama is willing to enact closure within the context of development flux, because she believes that her place within development *should* remain the same due to the efficiency of NGO workers, locale, and knowledge of local and national issues. However, Ama recognizes that the donors and government hold the power to determine NGOs' futures. Consequently, her belief that development should remain within the provenance of the NGO sector is a counterpoint to the prevailing wisdom that increased governmentalism in the service delivery sector will produce better results.

Ama's account represents an interesting convergence between her NGO sector colleagues and Yarrow's participants as discussed above. On the one hand, she is prepared to enact identity closure and assign her positional identity based on similar reference points; she has established herself at the top of her field, has benefited from the cleavage between the development and governmental sector, and she has attained a "comfortable life". However, on the other hand, she does not share Omar and Christian's radical politics, and it is doubtful that she would sacrifice her safety or well-being due to her level of commitment in order to continue development work. Ama is also at odds with her contemporaries, because she is the only one out of the four who has the determination to stay within the NGO sector. While Omar and Christian are in the process of detaching themselves from the NGO sector, and Kwabena has followed the funding currents to his present position within the donor-backed CSO sector, Ama applies her intentionality – "the ways in which action is cognitively and emotionally pointed *towards* some purpose" (Ortner 2006: 134 author's emphasis) – to maintain the position she currently occupies. The reason she chooses to remain in her position as an NGO worker is not based on a gender dimension, whereby if she left the NGO sector she would have less opportunities for employment. Instead her current job as an NGO worker, in contrast to Kwabena's previous position in the service provision field, provides Ama with a higher-than-average income, opportunities for future advancement in the field of development, while allowing her the space to remain distanced from the emerging trend of CSO advocacy work that she views as antithetical to Ghana's prospective development. Hence, she is determined to keep her service provision role in the NGO sector because it provides her with both a high standard of living and a satisfactory role in Ghana's development community.

In contrast, Omar and Christian, and in a different sense Kwabena, have applied their intentionality to reposition themselves within the current context of developmental flux. While Christian has used the opportunity to go on a self-imposed sabbatical, leaving his positional identity undefined, Omar has cultivated an activist identity that has similar parallels with Yarrow's participants. Omar's commitment to making a "contribution to people's lives" has meant that he has forgone career advancement and a salary like Ama's, which would afford "a comfortable life". Therefore, his commitment begets sacrifice, and his ideological outlook is such that he would rather work outside the boundaries of the NGO or CSO sectors, as part of a coalition of individuals and organizations that share the same ethos and work along a "horizontal" structure, rather than surrender his ideals. In comparison, before Yarrow's participants became "pioneers" in the NGO movement, they applied the same logic to their positional identities; going underground, or going to jail, or simply forgoing stability, rather than acquiescing to the dominant powers of the Ghanaian state or IFIs. For instance, Yarrow describes how Yaw left his government position as an economic advisor in 1984 due to "ideological disagreements", just as the structural adjustment period was beginning, and then began campaigning against the Jerry Rawlings-led government as a member of Marxist and workers movements (2008: 342). For his actions Yaw was imprisoned, and once released he went into exile in the United Kingdom, where his agenda turned to "put[ting] pressure on the Rawlings government by writing and talking about the situation in Ghana" (2008: 342). Hence, for the sake of his ideological views, Yaw elected to leave the government and actively work against it, rather than acquiesce to the state's dominance and become silent.

While Omar does not express an adherence to a particular ideology, his ethos is in line with many of Yarrow's participants, who described their "consciousness" emanating from

“within”, and leading to a “social perspective” (Yarrow, 2008: 344-345). Consequently, the activist identity that Omar purports emits from a desire or spirit to lead a life that gives “presence and contributions to people’s lives.” In order to fulfill his goal he is intentionally positioning himself at a distance from both the identity of an NGO development worker and his current colleagues in the sector, in order to engage the same powers that be, the Ghanaian state and international donors.

Lastly, Kwabena represents the place on the continuum that could be characterized as an island of his own, exhibiting little in the way of commitment, sacrifice, or ideology such as with Omar and Christian, or the resolve of Ama to remain in the NGO sector. Kwabena follows the ebb and flow of development funding, and finds himself positioned in a unique space. While it may appear that Kwabena exemplifies the NGO worker who is ‘only in it for the money’, his identity should instead be considered as an amalgamation of experiences and skills, rather than opportunities to profit from development, because Kwabena is neither getting rich nor working his way up the ladder to bigger and better things. In fact, every step he has taken in the development sphere has led to further financial vulnerability.

Much like his pragmatist view that he must look after himself first, and then he can “look after his people,” Kwabena perceives the changes in development in a similar fashion, development – whatever form it may take today or tomorrow – must conform to financial constraints before it can benefit Ghanaians. Today, atop a CSO that engages in advocacy with NGOs, the Ghanaian government, and international donors, Kwabena is employing his agency to both take care of himself (moderately) and then his country’s development, while leaving the door open to further continuation along the same career trajectory, possibly back within the governmental sphere. Therefore, his position on the

continuum as advocate distinguishes him from his colleagues because, for Kwabena development represents a field in which there is a constant set of negotiations underway between the self and the practice, between the NGOs and the government, and between the government and the donors, without a predetermined end. In order to remain part of the development apparatus in Ghana, he must deploy his skills and experiences to take care of himself and the people.

As Holland et al. describe, positional identities are elucidated through “the lived worlds of power, status, relative privilege, and their negotiation” (Holland et al. 1998: 125). How people navigate these lived worlds rests on their intentionality and actor oriented perspectives. Thus, when Omar perceives the development landscape changing, his intentionality points him towards the role of activist in order to employ his commitment, sacrifice and ideology. Similarly, Christian exercises his intentionality by disassociating himself from the development sphere altogether and exercising a form of identity refusal, ultimately sequestering himself in the U.K. to return to his studies. Conversely, Ama’s perspective on the changing landscape motivates her intentionality towards resisting the identity change, choosing to uphold her current position amongst her colleagues and her employer. While Kwabena’s survey of the altering topography prompted him to engage in neither fight nor flight, and shifted his position into the CSO sector for pragmatic reasons. Ultimately the four portraits presented here show that the same event – the change from service provision to advocate within the funding trends of development in Ghana – produced strikingly different reactions, and consequently distinct identity formations. In comparison to Yarrow’s study, which focused primarily on a collective of “NGO pioneers” as “activists” who are now residing atop their own NGOs, the individuals in this study represent an assembled group of vulnerable persons whose trajectory is uncertain and

contrasted, and who are intentionally developing different identities or resisting a change in identity.

Conclusion

What is most striking about Yarrow's article is that, after the lengthy portraits of NGO workers are concluded, he does not apply the individual narratives within a discussion of development in Ghana specifically, or development along a theoretical plain in general. This is especially surprising considering the journey that his participants' life histories reveal, including; a early "consciousness of [a] wider social and economic inequality" (Yarrow, 2008: 341), which became crystallized within Marxist ideologies popular in the early 1980s, only for the political and economic tide to change with the onset of neoliberalism, and finally for democracy to usher in the rise of NGOs in the development sphere. Considering the transformations that occurred to both Yarrow's participants and Ghana over this two decade period, it is surprising that Yarrow's article mainly focuses on how his participants perceive themselves. Hence, the body of knowledge that Yarrow's participants would have gained from experiencing major changes to both how development operates and the political environment in Ghana, while applying their commitment, sacrifice, and ideology, Yarrow's article lacks an in-depth analysis of how his participants' lives shaped their views, and how they see the future of development unfolding.

While the present study only gives a snapshot of how NGO workers are constructing their identities in reaction to the changing development landscape, the purpose of investigating their positionality is so that they can engage developmental dialogues from a situated standpoint. Therefore, examinations in identity studies are only one part of understanding how NGO workers, activists, and CSO advocates view development in general, and development in

Ghana more specifically. The following chapter examines how the participants for the present study view the changes to the development landscape, and how their perspectives and narratives can engage critical dialogues about development, based on what their commitment, sacrifice and ideologies over their lifetimes have taught them.

Chapter Five: Ghanaian NGO Workers' Positional Identity Perspectives

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate Ghanaian non-governmental organization (NGO) workers' perspectives of development. Understanding how Ghanaian NGO workers perceive the changes to the NGO sector and the shifting development landscape is critical, because their perceptions have ramifications for how they choose to position themselves within the landscape, and how they identify themselves in relation to one another. Their perspectives both shape, and are shaped by, the knowledge that they have gained through living and working in a developing country which has provided them with critical insights into development in Ghana.

In order to analyze Ghanaian NGO workers' perspectives of development, we must return briefly to the analysis in the previous chapter, which investigated Ghanaian NGO workers' identities, and to establish the relationship between Holland et al.'s (1998) concept of positional identities and NGO workers' perspectives. As Holland et al. state, "[a] positional identity ... is a person's apprehension of [their] social position in a lived world: that is, depending on the others present, of [their] greater or lesser access to spaces, activities, genres, and, through those genres, authoritative voices, or any voice at all" (Holland et al. 1998: 127-128). Following Holland et al., the focus of this chapter is on Ghanaian NGO workers' "voices", or, rather, what the "voices" stemming from the multiple positional identities say about development. As Holland et al. go on to describe, "a person engaged in social life, a person involved in an activity or practice, is presumed to have a perspective. One looks at the world from the angle of what one is trying to

do” (1998: 44). Hence, the social, economic and political positionality of an NGO worker helps to determine the angle from which they view development and, thus, their perspective on development processes. Consequently, positional identity perspectives afford a unique point of view of a dramatically changing landscape in which NGO workers have a direct stake.

The perspectives that emerge from NGO workers’ positions, however, are not uniform. Rather, their perspectives contrast with one another due to the varying positions the NGO workers occupy. For example, Christian states, “the Northern NGOs dream and the Southern NGOs run the dream.” This means that from his vantage point the donors’ ability to dictate the terms of how development is “run” is nearly absolute. Conversely, others are more sanguine regarding their perspectives of development in Ghana. For instance, Akua states,

I see a process rather than a finality, and I don’t see it as a process of a degenerative one [*sic*] but a regenerative one. So, the next fifty years, I hope that we can consolidate some of what we have created and [that] some of the lessons we have learned can be consolidated, so that we no longer are this country with wonderful potential, but a country that arrives and fulfills some of its potential. (Akua, 08/05/07)

While parity does exist between Ghanaian NGO workers’ perspectives, Christian’s and Akua’s statements demonstrate that the perspectives put forward here are not necessarily shared across the gamut of participants for this study.

In order to assemble participants’ perspectives, the organizational form employed in the previous chapter will carry over here. Participants’ positional identities were placed on a continuum based on their self-identification as a social activist, NGO worker or civil society advocate. Thus, an individual such as Omar, who identifies himself as a “community activist”, was contrasted with Kwabena who identifies himself as a civil society advocate. Consequently, when their positions are placed on the continuum, Omar and Kwabena are distanced by how they identified themselves relative to one another based on Holland et al.’s concept of positional

identities. This chapter will follow the same methodology and form of the previous one while employing NGO workers' positional perspectives to determine where each is placed on the continuum. What will emerge is a range of perspectives of the development landscape representing differing positions on the continuum.

This chapter is in three parts. First, it provides a brief overview of Holland et al.'s (1998) conceptualization of positional identities and how they inform Ghanaian NGO workers' position relative to one another along the continuum. This leads into an exploration of how the positional identity of NGO workers contributes to their perspectives on development in Ghana. Secondly, this is followed by an examination of NGO workers' perspectives based on their positionality. This section examines the nature of their positional perspectives and what factors influenced their perception. Given that the nature of knowledge, perception and identity, is constantly changing and in flux, what is offered below are short ethnographic vignettes of each NGO workers' perspectives within that altering development landscape. Finally, the chapter presents an analysis of how the NGO workers' positional identity perspectives are influenced both by the changing development landscape and each other's positionality. Furthermore, this provides insight into how the process and formation of both identities and perspectives are disparate and incomplete.

Conceptualizing Positional Identity Perspectives

The previous chapter employed Holland et al.'s concept of positional identities as elucidated in *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* (1998) to examine the identities of four Ghanaian NGO workers. In order to organize their identities, each participant was placed at a point along a continuum, starting with Omar, whose identity of community activist was

juxtaposed with Kwabena's identity as a civil society advocate. The factors taken into account included their level of commitment to development, their ideological underpinnings, and their willingness to make sacrifices based on their ideological underpinnings. However, these factors are not the sole determinants of NGO workers' identities, because their positionality was also based on how they employed their intentionality, the term given by Sherry Ortner to mean "all the ways in which action is cognitively and emotionally pointed *toward* some purpose" (Ortner 2006: 134, emphasis in original). Intentionality, therefore, helps us understand how commitment, ideology, and the degree to which someone is willing to make sacrifices "points" NGO workers "towards some purpose". Hence, Omar employs his intentionality to identify himself as a "community activist", because he is willing to sacrifice income and status for his commitment to lead a life "[that] is worth living, and ... [to] contribute something to people" (Omar, 17/04/08). In contrast, Kwabena states, "You must have a personal benefit that you are driving up first, before you can think about helping people" (Kwabena, 02/05/07). Consequently, intentionality prompts individuals to proceed along differing trajectories that, when compared to each other, create divergent positional identities.

When positional identities are placed along a continuum, they are inclined towards variation and deviation, because the continuum highlights the differences between people. However, as Holland et al., describe, positional identities are generally constituted through the more mundane or normative aspects of life. As they state, positional identities happen "through ... day-to-day encounters and [are] built ... by means of ... indices of positioning, that newcomers gradually learn to identify and then possibly to identify themselves with – either positively or negatively, through their acceptance or rejection" (Holland et al. 1998: 133). Furthermore, as mentioned above, identities are elucidated through the "lived worlds ... of

power, status, relative privilege, and their negotiation ... aspects that have to do with one's position relative to socially identified others, one's sense of social place, and entitlement" (Holland et al. 1998: 125). "Power, status, [and] relative privilege" (Holland et al. 1998: 125), as significant features of the "indices of positioning", constitute the normative and mundane aspects that people "gradually learn" in their "lived worlds" in order to shape their positional identities because these factors remain largely static on a day-to-day basis.

Understanding NGO workers' positionality in the NGO sphere, therefore, requires little effort to identify variances between NGO workers, because the literal and figurative positions that they hold are changing, as some NGOs close their doors and civil society organizations (CSOs) open new ones. For example, MDBS is dramatically affecting the relationships between development parties such as international donors, the Ghanaian state, and NGOs. While not a cataclysmic event, the MDBS program is prompting large scale changes to the development landscape, because it reformats how development is organized. As a result, some people are transitioning to positions with new job descriptions and titles, new coworkers, new income levels, and new working spaces. This means that a few individuals, such as Omar and Kwabena, as described in the previous chapter, are actually moving in opposite directions from each other on the development landscape as the NGO sphere is expanding due to the inclusion of CSOs, which constitutes a unique phenomenon in the history of NGOs in Ghana, which, up until the introduction of MDBS, was fairly stable and coherent. In contrast, Ama and Christian reacted quite differently. Ama has attempted to cement her position as an NGO worker, but Christian has suspended his identity as an NGO worker, perhaps only temporarily, while he completes his Master's degree in the United Kingdom. Hence, while Omar, Christian, Ama and Kwabena previously occupied the same analogous space as NGO workers, albeit with varying positional

identities, they are now dispersed across a broader development landscape. How and why they have (re)positioned themselves where they are is based, in part, on their own preference for and understanding of where they want to be, and, in part, on the limitations of their own degree of power, status, and relative privilege in development circles, not to mention practical issues such as retaining or finding a new job.

Importantly, the act of repositioning oneself is also largely based on an individual's perspective of the development landscape. For instance, Omar states, "in the structure of formal organizations you might sometimes have that master-servant relation ... and that stifles your development, and also your perspective" (Omar, 17/04/07). Hence, Omar's perspectives are influenced by what he perceives as a domineering top-down relationship that requires NGOs and NGO workers to act within a strict donor-driven model. Consequently, Omar is motivated to work with organizations that distance him from the institutions that he identifies as "master", because he is opposed to 'his' development and perspectives being "stifled". In order to circumvent the master-servant relations, Omar balances his NGO work with his participation in coalition groups that are focussed on social equity issues, coalitions that are free to set their own agendas and criteria because they work on a voluntary basis and do not necessarily require funding from donor organizations.

Omar's interpretation of the power dynamics between NGOs and donors is emblematic of a positional identity perspective. Omar's perception of the relationship between NGOs and donors is not necessarily shared amongst all NGO workers, and, therefore, his perspective is particular to his location at the 'community activist/coalition member' end of the continuum of positional identity perspectives. Secondly, the identity that he has created for himself, as a community activist, corresponds to his position; Omar intentionally works for an organization

that is at the margins of the development community, and that primarily takes on issues that receive little funding, while at the same time engaging in activities outside the “formal” NGO sphere as a volunteer with numerous coalitions focussed on social equity issues. His perspective, therefore, is based on his own “engage[ment] in social life ... [and his] practice” of being an NGO worker at the margins, the place, or “angle”, where he “looks at the world from ... what [he] is trying to do” (Holland et al. 1998: 44). Hence, Omar’s placement along the continuum is self-imposed, whereby he situates himself at a distance from other NGO workers. What emerges in the discussion below is an elaboration of what Omar and the other participants in this study perceive as the nature of relations between the NGO, the Ghanaian government, and international donor spheres, and how the dynamics between them shape the development landscape from their perspectives.

Holland et al. state that, “a person engaged in social life, a person involved in an activity or practice, is presumed to have a perspective. One looks at the world from the angle of what one is trying to do” (1998: 44). This presumption represents something of an anomaly, because the concept of identity, which is at the heart of their study, is meticulously constructed in a complex narrative, whereas perspectives would appear to be axiomatic according to Holland et al. Still, it is important here to try and place a finger on what their idea of perspective is, and how it relates to the discussion of Ghanaian NGO workers’ positional identity perspectives. In the footnote to the above quotation, they go on to state that Holland and Reeves (1994) describe perspective not only as the ‘angle’ from which one views the world (through one’s position in activity), but also one’s ‘take’ on activity, the understanding one comes to have of activity (from one’s position in it). They emphasize that the objectification and development of a perspective are collective, historical, and contingent achievements (1998: 296). Holland et al.’s

interpretation of perspectives, then, is that they are fluid and open-ended processes similar to identities, and can be opened, closed, and shaped by ones position relative to other people and structures, as well as factors such as time and place. As they go on to state, “in this view, perspectives are always at least an incipient, though as yet inarticulate or symbolized, identity” (1998: 296).

The outcome of these processes is a perspective that has “an agenda and momentum of its own”, which, “especially when supported by others of like perspective, afford[s] some self-control and agency” (Holland et al. 1998: 46). Hence, Ghanaian NGO workers’ positional identities and their perspectives on development are mutual processes that feed off each other, and provide material for NGO workers’ intentionality, meaning that their perspectives help point their identities “*towards* some purpose” (Ortner 2006: 134, emphasis in original), and vice-versa. As Holland et al. describe, the interplay of identity and perspective is heuristic, meaning that, ultimately, “the process is a composite one of slow, sometimes erratic, but continuous change” (Holland et al. 1998: 46). Consequently, what emerges below are partial and unfinished perspectives that flow from the different angles and positions that Ghanaian NGO workers hold on the continuum of positional identity perspectives.

NGO Workers’ Perspectives of the Altering Development Landscape in Ghana

Omar

Ten years ago donors got involved with NGO funding, and they were funding NGOs to do service provision, and, everybody, *everybody*, who set up an NGO, they were providing service in sanitation, education, you name it. Then, the few who were not in this service provision were seen as the rabble rousers, who were critical of government, and they're not contributing anything to development, and stuff like that. Suddenly, this whole idea of [an advocacy] ... approach to development came up, and suddenly donors are putting ... money into it, and telling [NGOs] that ‘now we don't fund any services anymore’, and ‘we would like to fund civil society to do advocacy, to keep [the] government in check and make sure the government takes the right money and does the

right project'. And that is how the donors have [changed the] relations [and] shaped the NGO landscape today. So, you find very few NGOs [doing] service provision [now]. (Omar, 17/04/07)

Omar's statement about how development has changed over the last ten years is revealing for how direct and succinct it is. Initially, Omar's narrative simply relays a play-by-play of the recent history of donor funding trends in Ghana; how donors began to fund large numbers of NGOs to do service provision in the early to mid 1990s, which was then followed by a shift in funding to civil society to perform advocacy work after the beginning of the next decade. However, there is also a noticeable tone of acrimony in his brief historiography, because Omar's narrative reveals that his view of the relations between donors, NGOs, and the Ghanaian government is asymmetrical due to the donors' ability to dictate the development agenda and, consequently, shape the development landscape in Ghana. As he states,

[Donors are] not development partners, they are just lending organizations, and you should call them that If you call someone a development partner that means you are almost on equal terms, and also on the [same] level ... you all have the same agenda, but I don't think the government and donors have the same agenda. Most of the [NGOs] and [the] government have to take the donors' issues, because they have the money. So, they [NGOs and the government] cannot call [donors] partners. They are not. A partnership is [between] equals, and I don't think there's any equal relationship with them. (Omar, 30/04/07)

Omar is highly critical of the current state of development in Ghana, as revealed in statements such as the above. Candid and brusque, Omar's comments also distance him from most of his fellow NGO workers, because he expresses his perspectives of development in Ghana in a rather bleak fashion.

In part, Omar's views can be attributed to his positionality; at the margins of the NGO sphere, Omar has, to a certain extent, created the identity of a community activist, because he wants to distance himself from such processes as discussed above. Secondly, the act of distancing one's self from the general milieu of day-to-day NGO life has meant that the space

from which Omar's perspectives originate is becoming increasingly detached from the relations that he describes. In other words, Omar is almost an outsider peering in on how development is unfolding, though with a firsthand view and the practical knowledge with which to frame his perspectives. Ultimately, as Omar sees it, the environment in which development is being *practiced* is becoming antithetical to how he wants to practice *his* development, because of the "master-servant relationship ... that stifles your development and also your perspectives" (Omar, 17/04/07). Hence, his narratives take on an oppositional stance, meaning that from the angle in which he perceives development, what Omar is trying to do when he is working in development is drifting further away from the type of development is headed, i.e. civil society advocacy.

To illustrate this point, Omar gives a lengthy example of how a healthcare workers' strike affected an advocacy project that he was a part of as a member of the NGO that employed him. Because the project involved working with health care providers and sensitizing them to the needs of people who are disabled, Omar felt that putting the program on hold was the only option for the time being, despite the project's looming deadline. He spoke with the representative of the Ghanaian NGO that was overseeing the project, explained his situation, and eventually reached a compromise that suited Omar's sensibilities. The project at his end was suspended until all parties were able to attend the advocacy session. As he describes, this situation was unique because if he had been working directly under a foreign donor, "or a [Ghanaian] organization that has the same principles as [donors]" (Omar, 17/04/07), he would have received pressure to complete the objectives of the project regardless. "You don't say [to the disabled people you are working with] that, because my boss wants the results on Monday, I will [have to] go there and doctor something [up to be] presented to him. I will not do that" (Omar, 30/04/07). Elaborating on this scenario, Omar states,

Sometimes [relationships between NGOs and donors can be characterized as ‘patron and client’]. Sometimes that is what happens ... when people want to just appease the boss, and then they will be getting funding and [do] all those things, [such as] writing brilliant reports, writing anything that the boss wants to see and hear.... I don't do my work that way, and sometimes I have problems [because] of this. [If the boss] wants me to go into the field and do my work, and I tell them.... “No, it's not possible.” ... I will not do that. I know what I want, and I know what I want to do.... I want to do something that makes changes, creates an impact, and also build[s] relationships. (Omar, 30/04/07)

There are significant insights into Omar's positional identity and his perspectives of development based on the above sequence of events and follow-up quote. First, Omar distances himself from other NGO workers, people he claims just “want to appease the boss ... [so] they will get funding”, by stating that that he won't “work that way”, and, because of his convictions, he sometimes encounters “problems” with funding organizations that have different principles than his own. Here, Omar's conviction “to do something that makes changes” represents his intentionality, which points him towards working with organizations and on projects that will have an “impact, and also build relationships” with community members, such as the disabled peoples he was working on behalf of, and also healthcare workers and hospital administrators. Accordingly, Omar's position at the margins of the NGO sphere provides the angle from which he perceives other NGOs, NGO workers, and projects that they work on, and from this vantage point, he perceives with disgust how others operate with what he claims is a higher concern for accountability to donors than making an “impact” with local community partners.

In the contemporary climate of change, wherein the MDBS program is altering the development landscape and donors are placing a stronger emphasis on civil society engagement in advocacy at the expense of NGO workers providing service provision, Omar, too, is altering his form of participation within the NGO sphere. He combines his NGO duties with work in coalitions in order to overcome the restrictions spoken of above, as well as other factors that

“stifles [his] development and [his] perspectives” (Omar, 17/04/07), by circumventing the restrictions placed on NGOs and CSOs charged with advocacy agendas. As he explains,

At the macro level [the donors] will be putting their money into programs or reforms that they recommend, and [then] they come down and they say that they are going to fund civil society, to give civil society voice, so that they can hold government accountable I don't think it is going to go anywhere Civil society has no room to determine how much the World Bank will contribute to the government's pockets, or to determine which project they should fund or which one they should not fund. Almost everybody who cares in civil society is calling for state funding of education, and that is not what the donors would support.... So [the donors say] “we have the right to determine what happens at the top. ... You guys at the bottom, struggle with each other and try to see if you can change some little things that might not have any serious bearing on what happens at the top”. (Omar, 17/04/07)

Identifying that the weaknesses of NGOs and CSOs lays in their inability to have a voice at the “macro”, or national, level, Omar exclaims, “that is not [even] seen as a space where you can have some participation” (Omar, 17/04/07). Hence, Omar works with coalition groups so that he, and like-minded people, can circumvent the weaknesses of NGOs and CSOs and engage the issues of concern to them, on their own terms. From his perspective, coalition groups have the power to engage the issues in a public forum, whereas organizations that rely on donor funding and the government's willingness to engage with them lack the power to seriously critique policies that have been shaped by both parties, notably without the inclusion of the non-governmental sector.

Omar describes coalition groups as “quite loose”, with a “horizontal” structure, whose membership lacks rigidity and are composed on a voluntary basis; “when you want to contribute, whether money or your skills or your time, then you are accepted as a member. So, you don't formalize the relationship, so you are there as equals who have diverse experiences and diverse resources to contribute” (Omar, 17/04/07). Being independent of formal organizations for funding, to Omar, coalition groups represent a movement in development that is based on

equality, where individuals and partner organizations coalesce because they have the same agendas, and remain together so long as the spirit of equality and their agendas are concordant. Secondly, coalition groups afford the opportunity to delve into issues that are politically-oriented, which, Omar criticizes, is sorely lacking in the donor-backed advocacy agenda. “[When] we [were] doing social accountability and ... access to health services by the poor [and disabled], [we were] given a tool to use to do the evaluation ... [and we] knew what results [we] were supposed to generate, but you do not have the leeway to delve into the politics of the access” (Omar, 17/04/07). In response, Omar views coalitions as communities, which, while not free from internal politics, are by their nature free from the structure of formal organizations, and, consequently, can move towards issues that are politically charged, such as water privatization, environmental protection, and rights for the disabled. This is why he identifies himself as a community activist, because he feels that “without strong social movements, we are all doomed” (Omar, 30/04/07).

Hence, Omar’s perspective of the changing development landscape is determined largely by his views of the limitations of an advocacy agenda. For him, working with local NGOs that do not have “the same principles as [donors]”, and particularly the coalition groups he is involved with, represents an opportunity to overcome what he perceives as the inequity in relations between donors and Ghanaian NGOs, and also an opportunity to pursue development that will “make changes, create an impact, and also build[s] relationships”. Hence, Omar is unique amongst the participants for this study, because, unlike Christian, Ama, and Kwabena, as described below, the changes to the development landscape have motivated Omar to extend the boundaries of the civil society sphere by moving further away from mainstream NGO funding trends in the MDBS era.

Christian

When asked how the role of NGOs has changed in the recent past, Christian answers thusly:

Basically all of them [have changed], because there are funding opportunities, and you can continue to pay salaries, and that is what I call neo-colonialization of NGO work. Because an NGO should have a passion, you should have a passion for the mission of your vision, and your mission and your vision should drive you. But if someone [else's] vision is what is going to drive you, I'm sorry, for me that is not development. You should be doing something, and wanting to do something, to change your circumstances, and if somebody comes along to help fine, but if because he is giving you money you have to change what you feel is the problem confronting you, [well], I know my house better. I'm not saying that [advocacy] is not important, but I say let's do it in hand in hand, let's put the food on the table at least for people to have energy to shout. (Christian, 14/05/07)

Christian's views on the altering development landscape stem from his perspective that working in the field of development is a calling rather than simply a means of earning an income. However, with the rise of NGOs in the early-to-mid 1990s, and the recent shift from service provision to advocacy, Christian feels that the NGO community in Ghana has become overwhelmed with individuals and organizations that are in it for the 'wrong' reasons.

The booming of NGOs has kind of bastardized the whole concept, and the way it should have happened in terms of development. I would call the NGO work with communities ... a call[ing]. But, it is no more a call[ing], it is [now just]... economic expediency ... that is caused by the incapacity of the government sector to absorb the [abundance] of [un]employ[ed].... Most people find it appropriate [now to] just form an NGO [and] write a proposal and then get money. (Christian, 14/05/07)

The combination of his views on the development landscape and his intentionality has influenced Christian to take a "sabbatical" and retreat to the confines of academia in the United Kingdom. Hence, Christian's positional identity of 'indeterminate' is based on his conviction that development work requires an altruistic ethos. But because of the shift in development agenda based on the donor's new preference for advocacy at the expense of service provision, and the cumulative effect of opportunism by his NGO colleagues, he felt compelled to withdraw,

at least temporarily, from the development community in Ghana. Therefore, in a similar vein as Omar, Christian's views have led him to move away from the donors' trends for funding development in the non-governmental sector, that of CSOs, and hence establish his place on the continuum of positional identity perspectives close in proximity to Omar, whose work is driving him into coalition groups who don't require any funding from donors at all.

Christian's perspectives on the development landscape are primarily revealed in narratives that have an almost forlorn sentiment, as if he is nostalgic for the 'old days' when development workers were selfless activists committed to development despite the low pay and general instability of the sector due to erratic funding trends. As he describes, development should be done for the "greater good" rather than personal gain (Christian, 14/05/07). However, he views the majority of present-day NGO workers in Ghana as "self-centred ... opportunis[ts]" (Christian, 16/05/07). In particular, Christian questions what he believes is a misplaced perception regarding donors' perceived benevolence and authority, exclaiming they "look at the foreign NGOs [and donors] as their saviours, they look at them to be without a blemish, [like] they are the alpha-omega" (Christian, 14/05/07).

To explain his views on NGO workers, Christian gives an example of a situation that occurred prior to his departure from the development community. Christian was a member of a team working for an NGO that was transitioning from service delivery to research and advocacy in 2002-2003. His organization was conducting a social accountability project funded directly by a foreign government's international development department which investigated citizens' perspectives regarding numerous Ghanaian governmental programs. Christian's organization trained members of local and regional NGOs from across Ghana who were to carry out the research in their own communities and areas. Then they facilitated the research process, followed

by compiling the results and publishing the findings. Before the second installation of the project the following year, the donor organization decided to compact a Ghanaian NGO to run what was becoming a long term initiative focused on assessing citizen's views of governmental programs and engaging their perspectives with governmental representatives in an open forum. Problems arose for Christian when members of the Ghanaian NGO running the initiative began acting like superiors, i.e. like "fund managers", rather than "NGO workers", and were chastising Christian's organization for not spending the project's money fast enough.

The frustrating thing is, [they said] "spend the money, spend the money You have to spend the money faster", [because] we are under spending, [and I thought] should we be informed by our work in development by that? That for me [was a] problem. Is it about impact you want, or do you want faster expenditure just to meet donor funding schedules? We should not deceive ourselves, [because] on [the] one hand we want to ... [be able to] bring [a higher] quality of life to people, to change their situation, [but] on [the other] hand we are also responding to project's funding expediency, and these are the problems. (Christian, 14/05/07)

Christian goes on to describe how the Ghanaian NGO running the program had a manual directing them on how funds were to be spent, but, importantly, they lacked a focus regarding how the projects were to be organized and what ends they were to achieve. Consequently, organizations receiving funding directly from the initiative were also receiving funding from his own organization, resulting in "no coordination -just duplication" (Christian, 14/05/07).

Secondly, in Christian's opinion, the initiative lacked purposeful direction, explaining "I think we were over-ambitious to tackle three major policy issues [in the first phase of the project], it didn't give us the opportunity to deepen the study" (Christian, 14/05/07). For the second phase of the project, the original framework dictated three new policy issues would be selected on which to gather citizen's opinions instead of continuing with the original policies, and, hence, furthering a deeper understanding of them. When he voiced his opinion that the

project's second phase should be a continuation of the first, the reaction that Christian received shocked him.

I communicated strongly to [the initiative's directors] when the[y] ... met us. I didn't mince words. I told them, “why are you calling people to bring the next policy issue you want to assess, when you ... haven't followed through [with the first one?]. I do not want to be party to a project which raises [the] expectations of the community and [then] dumps them in the middle of nowhere. What do you take the communities for? Why won't you say the next year's projects should be followed through, and we want concrete actions on issues that are measurable, and where we can see that this is [happening] ... and this is where we [should] move [to]?” I think some [of the] people [from the funding organization] who came to do the monitoring ... did listen. And I communicated this personally to my organization, too, that I do not see the relevance [if we don't move it forward], and it was like a battle in my own organization. (Christian, 14/05/07)

Explaining further that junior members of his own organization were confounded by Christian's confrontation with the donor organization, Christian was abashed and frustrated with his own coworkers' unwillingness to challenge what he perceived as the donors' short-sightedness. “I said, ‘I beg your pardon, do you want [the funding organization] to ... dictate to us, as opposed to what confronts us in real life in communities that we live [in] and go through ... every day?’... [T]he fact that [they are] funding us [does not mean] you cannot tell [them to their] face and say sorry, even if it means [the funding organization] says to us, ‘this is how we want you to spend [the money]’.... You should say sorry, and they should take their money [somewhere else]” (Christian, 14/05/07). Ultimately, the second phase of the social accountability project conceded to Christian's proposition of focusing on citizens' opinions about a single Ghanaian government policy in order to “deepen the study”. However, after Christian left to take up his studies abroad the third phase of the project began to falter and eventually came to halt before any “concrete actions on issues that are measurable” could be made, due to dwindling funds and a lack of leadership within his (former) organization.

What the above narratives reveal is a perspective about how development *should* be conducted, and how Christian's forays into the emerging field of advocacy presented challenges to this process. Omitted from this ethnographic vignette are the lengthy examples that Christian recalled about community members who were elated when their village obtained a borehole from which they could receive clean water, and how fulfilling facilitating this endeavour was for Christian while in his former service provision role. Hence, for Christian service provision development work represented an opportunity to help communities receive tangible benefits, and for Christian to feel as though he was helping to make a difference in people's lives. Instead, Christian's narratives regarding the development work he has participated in during the present decade are imbued with rancour; how the proliferation of NGOs in Ghana "bastardized the whole concept and the way [development] should have happened"; how present-day NGO workers are "self-centred ... opportunis[ts]" who are overly concerned with "economic expediency" rather than "follow[ing] through" with projects that aim to provide "concrete actions on issues that are measurable [and] help the people"; and finally, how development workers should be willing to say "sorry" when the terms of a project that a donor puts forward do not "confront [the real life problems] in communities that we live [in] and go through ... every day".

Considering Christian's self-proclaimed altruistic ethos, it is not difficult to see why he has decided to temporarily remove himself from the everyday practice of development and intentionally position himself at a distance from the general milieu of NGO workers in order to take on an indeterminate identity relative to his future or potential positioning within the NGO sector and political ideologies. His perspective that the changes to the development landscape have "bastardized" what was once a place where he found his "calling" in life, a place where he and other selfless activists could "commit [themselves] to the struggle" (Christian, 16/05/07), is

therefore a reflection of the reality facing many NGO workers; that the development landscape is changing and development workers must employ their intentionality to reposition themselves and change with it. However, Christian is unwilling to commit to either a community activist agenda like Omar has, or attempt to find a niche position in the new development landscape that allows him to sustain a service provision position, as discussed below in Ama's case, and hence his positional identity and perspective is undetermined.

Ama

I think that development is not development when the government and the politicians think that they can just provide a resource or an input and immediately they think that that will develop the country, or the community, but it doesn't work that way. Development is not just provision of infrastructure ... there are other factors that make up development, [such as] maintenance [and a] qualified staff to maintain it. They think [that] just providing a school [is development], but it won't work, [because] you need the teachers, you need the text book[s], the students must be able to afford the school fees, [so] there are a whole bunch of factors put together. Just a provision of *one* item or just a school - and that is what we are doing in Ghana, we are building so many schools, but we don't have teachers there, and that is not development. (Ama, 09/05/07 interviewee's emphasis)

Ama's perspectives on the development landscape are somewhat different than those of Omar and Christian because her employment experiences are unlike theirs or any other participant for this study in fact. After working for two foreign governments' development agencies, Ama transitioned to become a non-governmental organization worker and is currently employed in a service provision role. Her job primarily involves conducting capacity building projects for Ghanaian parliamentarians whose work is directly involved in Ghana's poverty reduction strategy (GPRS). Ama's above quote, then, reflects her firsthand knowledge gathered from years of service working with and on behalf of both foreign and Ghanaian governmental workers and institutions.

Ama describes herself as “cynical” (Ama, 18/04/07) regarding how government bodies approach development, because “the government and ... politicians think that they can just provide ... an input and immediately ... that will [be] development” (Ama, 09/05/07). In her perspective, development requires more than simple additions to a community's general infrastructure. It requires a commitment to support communities with schools *and* teachers, as well as the long-term maintenance of such institutions. Hence, Ama’s view that governments conceive development in terms of inputs is juxtaposed with her perspective that quantitative measures do not necessarily equal an increase to the qualitative aspects of life. The narrow view of how development is conceived by governments is part of the reason that she left her post at a foreign governmental body and entered the non-governmental sector; to be able to support and facilitate Ghanaian governmental programs and development processes so that her experience and perspectives can influence development policies.

Secondly, Ama’s perspective of development also explains her positional identity. While she prefers to work in the NGO sector she is reticent about the changes that are underway whereby NGOs are shifting to a donor-driven advocacy agenda, because it means that development workers have to engage and confront the Ghanaian government directly about policy initiatives, in a similar fashion as described by Omar and Christian. Accordingly, Ama is deterred from entering this new stream of development work because she feels that at the national level, the government and NGO sectors have an antagonistic relationship.

If you are looking at [national] level NGO and government dialogue, it hasn't really changed much.... [The Ghanaian] government hardly deals with the NGOs It is mainly donors that deal with the NGOs, so that linkage from NGOs to [the] government, there is hardly any dialogue whatsoever, and if there was, the government would see them as criticizing what they did [It is only] when you look at NGO and communities, or NGO and local governments [that] there is ... dialogue ... but not at the national level. I mean Government will listen to [them], but ... Anyways, there is some perception that some NGOs are pro-government and some are against [the] government

.... and this affects the way the selection of NGOs for certain activities [is carried out]. (Ama, 18/04/07)

Hence, Ama chooses to remain within her present position because she feels that entering the NGO sphere in an advocacy capacity will mean she will wind up tackling policy issues for which “the government would see ... as criticizing them”, and therefore she would have to be a part of the antagonistic relations between the NGO and government spheres. Consequently, Ama prefers to remain with her present NGO whose mandate is diametrically opposed to the new wave of advocacy work, because its mandate is to provide a supporting role to the government’s development efforts.

Ama’s perspectives on development are also highly influenced by her views regarding the shortcomings of how foreign government development agencies implement development projects. Citing an example of a project she was a part of while working for one such development agency, Ama describes how working in conjunction with the Ghanaian Ministry of Education, a foreign NGO, and her employer on a project aimed at increasing girl-child education led her to become disillusioned with how foreign development agencies approach development. Initially, however, Ama described the project in enthusiastic terms, because “it was beginning to show some good results”. However, her tone quickly changed to frustration when she detailed how and why the project came to a halt despite these early positive results.

I was working on [a foreign development agency's] girl-child education project, and it was a very good project. I joined it when it was in the second phase ... and it was beginning to show some good results. But [the foreign development agency] just felt, “okay, we have had enough”, [because] the Ministry [of Education] doesn't seem too interested, because when it came to putting together another proposal the Ministry just left everything with the implementing agency [(foreign NGO)] ... to develop the proposal [for] them. [So, the foreign development agency] said, “well, that isn't good enough, if you are not interested we are pulling out”. The [project] was a good thing, it was really good. [So,] the disadvantage [with] most of the donor projects is the timeline. You know, you come in and say we are funding this for four years and that is it, and whether you achieved your objectives or not we are pulling out at four years, and that is the bad

part of some of these development projects; they don't really go the necessary lengths. (Ama, 18/04/07)

From Ama's point of view the project was a failure for several reasons. First, the time limitations that foreign government development agencies place on projects is a significant hindrance because, even though "it was beginning to show good some good results", the fact that it was mandated to end at a certain date meant that the project was evaluated based on time and not results. Secondly, the Ghanaian government's perceived lack of interest towards the girl-child education project reaffirms Ama's perspective of how the Ghanaian government prioritizes development; "the government and the politicians think that they can just provide a resource or an input and immediately they think that that will develop the country ... but it doesn't work that way. Development is not just provision of infrastructure ..." Lastly, by deferring the writing of the proposal to a foreign NGO, an NGO that could provide zero funds in and of itself to the project, the Ministry of Education was displaying a level of contempt that, according to Ama's perspective, was usually reserved for Ghanaian NGOs. After communicating with the foreign development agency via an NGO, they got the message that the Ministry of Education was "not interested", and consequently the whole project came to an end despite showing good results for young girls.

The above narratives convey a perspective of the development landscape that is particular to someone who has spent her working life primarily from within 'formal' organizations. In part, this is because Ama lacks the practice and experience that other participants in this study have gained while working for 'grassroots' types of NGOs. Also, there are no overtures emanating from Ama about how she wants her life to be used 'for good', and if she is committed to any kind of 'struggle' she is not revealing what it is for. However, what her perspectives do reveal is how someone who has worked in development at the nexus of the

Ghanaian government, foreign governmental agencies, and the NGO sector can become cynical about how the development landscape in Ghana is altering, especially considering how the MDBS system is supposed to promote the government's influence over the country's development. As she states,

The government does things on an *ad hoc* basis; the government does not sit and think through the options. [They] just think, "oh we're going to get this free money coming in", and [they] are forgetting that we're going to [have to] pay for it. And that is another thing I learned as a development worker, the government is not able to differentiate between grants and loans. The World Bank will give you a loan, and government wants to pay [for things] that we don't need, instead of thinking about the long-term results, such as the loan you are paying for. The World Bank doesn't care how you use it, so you can do whatever you like, because you're going to be paying [the loan] back The government doesn't take this into account Like, you work on the water projects ... and they'll say, 'oh, CIDA, you don't give us money, [but] the World Bank buys us cars'. But with the World Bank it is a loan, with CIDA it is a grant to support the water sector, but, you see, they don't understand these mechanisms. It is sad. (Ama, 09/05/07)

Consequently, Ama's perspectives are influenced by her personal experiences of development with a foreign governmental agency, such as the girl-child education project, and her NGO experiences working in close contact with parliamentarians on development programs and policies. In her view, "if you are planning an intervention ... [at] the implementation stage the thinking must be right ... which is very critical in order to achieve [development]" (Ama, 09/05/07). However, according to Ama, the reality is far different, because "[the government] just accept[s] ... what donors tell them, instead of developing their own agenda so that when donors approach them they can say 'no, that is not what we want, this is what we want [and] this is the direction we want to move in'. But, that is not being done currently, just because they want money, they are cash strapped, [so] anything goes, whatever they give them they take it" (Ama, 09/05/07). Hence, Ama's perspective motivates her to remain within close proximity to the planning stages of development, so that she can assist in her capacity as an NGO worker to shape an agenda that will give the development landscape better direction, and, ultimately give

her a reason to be less “cynical”. Ultimately, Ama’s place in the NGO sector is secure, meaning that she can remain in her service delivery position because she chooses to, unlike others, such as Kwabena, who are forced in relocating to the new CSO advocacy positions due to the lack of funds emanating from the donors’ desire to shift the government’s positionality, as will be discussed below.

Kwabena

Kwabena’s perspectives of the development landscape in Ghana are manifested through narratives that highlight his pragmatic ethos. For example, when talking about different stakeholders’ ideas of what development is, and how it should be put into practice, he presents the divergence of opinions in a straightforward and matter of fact manner:

I think ... that development is in continuous conflict among the different important stakeholders who have completely different views of it, and in order to pursue one path of development it will always mean infringing on another person's perception of development.... [People will] say, “let's balance environmental protection with the economic development, and environmental sustainability” ... [but] another person’s development may never mean those kinds of things So we have this conflict of opinions of what development is, and how best we can achieve that, and that is the battle that we are trapped in That is just my key lesson of development, that it is very difficult to have a consensus and an understanding of the word ‘development’ in a society that is as heterogeneous as Ghana. So we will always be trapped with the arguments, of what is development and what are the basics to development. (Kwabena, 27/03/07)

Hence, Kwabena’s narrative about conflicting stakeholders is presented in a fashion that is unlike Omar's or Christian’s, whose views are couched in an altruistic ethos, and he also lacks the general cynicism of Ama. Instead, Kwabena presents his perspective on the battleground to determine “what is development” in a plain and (relatively) direct manner that highlights the situational dynamics between different important stakeholders.

Noticeably absent in the quote above, or from his discussions in general, are Kwabena's ideas of what development is and how it should transpire. Instead, Kwabena presents an approach to development that can be better described as a pupil of the process. Currently positioned at the centre of the new development "paradigm", in part because his previous position as director of an NGO was nullified when funding trends shifted to the government, Kwabena's attitude is not diminished by his forced relocation within the development landscape. Instead, he exhibits the same motivation in his current position as Executive Secretary for an umbrella organization that pulls together key "stakeholders" in the particular sector as he did for his previous positions both within the NGO and governmental spheres. Hence, Kwabena's positionality is determined by both his own choices and external forces, in conjunction with his motivation to be at the centre of development's *modus operandi* and the forefront of development's new "paradigm".

Now, besides the shift in donor confidence from NGO to government as the better source for channelling funds, NGOs themselves have also come to realize that there's no amount of service delivery the NGOs can make to actually make an impact, it would be more effective rather to ensure that the right policies are made So, issues of budget monitoring, issues of resource tracking, issues of policy advocacy, all have become a new paradigm for NGO work. (Kwabena, 27/03/07)

However, Kwabena also recognizes that the new paradigm is less than perfect and will require further effort to make it more inclusive. Accordingly, because the new advocacy agenda is supposed to incorporate citizens' views and perspectives with an aim to help shape governmental policies and procedures, in Kwabena's opinion further efforts need to be made in order to fulfill the advocacy mandate. "That is still a weakness in our development paradigm. We ... think that participation is good, but ... is only practical at a certain level, but not practical at all levels, which means that people [in the government, donor, and NGO/CSO spheres] still conceive of the

community people [as if] ... they will not be able to understand [government policies] and they cannot contribute anything” (Kwabena, 27/03/07).

Consequently, from Kwabena’s position, he foresees his role in the new agenda to be both an opportunity to continue as a student of development and to be able to apply what he has learned in his previous positions in order to lead and shape the advocacy mandate and make it more inclusive. As he goes on to describe,

My definition of participation will be different from the [government’s definition of] participation, [because] at the government level, participation is the ability of a government to send its policy to inform everybody ... and then ... if they have anything to add you can let [the government] hear, and [then] you have consulted the people. So, it is more or less consultation, and that is [what] it is like, “we want you to be aware so in the future you won't say that we did not inform [you]”. So, “participation” has become ... a hyped word ... that everybody wants to fulfill. But my own sense of participation ... goes beyond that, it actually goes to working with [community members], finding a way to work with as many varied stakeholders as possible to ... define a problem, to diagnose its causes, and establish what actions must be taken to address those problems And then the government takes it from [that] point and sees how it can lead the process of adjusting the problem ... but that rarely happens. (Kwabena, 02/05/07)

What Kwabena is describing, especially in the last sentence, is the basic premise behind why civil society advocacy is promoted in Ghana’s altered development landscape, and why many participants for this study revolted from taking up the position. However, what makes Kwabena different from his colleagues is his willingness to engage and his optimistic outlook that his efforts will not be wasted. As Kwabena describes, there are positive aspects developing from his new position. For example, one of the responsibilities that his organization is charged with is to coordinate a yearly conference and forum for all stakeholders involved in the particular sector in Ghana. Those invited to the forum include multiple foreign government development agencies, foreign NGOs, representatives from national, regional, and local Ghanaian government branches, Ghanaian NGOs and CSOs, as well as community based organizations. As he describes, “all [the] actors converge [as] one to really discuss pertinent issues in the sector and

look at what we can put together or move forward with” (Kwabena, 27/03/07). Under his guidance the conference has expanded and attracted new and increased funding, resulting in donors stepping forward “[both] to support the platform, and have expressed interest in looking at other aspects of our operations that will add to our sector in terms of what everybody is looking at as an active and vibrant [community of stakeholders]” (Kwabena, 27/03/07). Secondly, the forum also produces heated discussions regarding the future of where the sector is headed, and representatives will offer their “opinion on research [results and] projects that are being planned that don’t necessarily ... see ... the view of NGOs”, meaning that the forum provides a “platform” from which stakeholders can voice their concerns, not only about where the government is leading the sector, but also with regard to where the non-government element posits the direction that development should be heading towards (Kwabena, 27/03/07).

Kwabena also attests to how organizations like his have to negotiate potential pitfalls. When asked to characterize the relations between his organization and the stakeholders that he assembles, he states bluntly that there is the potential for his organization to be perceived as a rubber stamp for the more powerful constituents of the development community in Ghana.

I would say it is, for me, for now, [relations are] cordial and objective. The only thing that we are really careful about is not to be trapped into, and managed through, the play of civil society validating donor voices and government voices even when they don't merit such endorsement. So we have been very careful not to get ourselves soiled ... by the type of [relations] ... that we have forged with our partners. (Kwabena, 27/03/07)

As Kwabena describes, in 2005 his organization supported a campaign launched by European NGOs to raise awareness of their governments’ policies that were negatively affecting the livelihoods of Ghanaians, by supplying information and research compiled by Ghanaian NGOs. By supporting the awareness campaign, Kwabena was put in direct conflict with

European governments whose development agencies funded the forums that Kwabena is charged with organizing and facilitating.

We sounded them [out] even though [they have] been our active supporter of the ... conference series over the past three years. We criticized them publicly; we did a campaign in the UK that criticized the[m] ... very, very seriously. [But] they took it in good faith, because ... we are [no longer] suspicious of each other. (Kwabena, 27/03/07)

Hence, the ability of his organization to collect vital information, such as the social accountability research that Christian's organization compiled and published, and distribute it in an open fashion to draw attention to the negative impacts of donors' policies, was balanced by the ability of Kwabena's organization to bring people together to discuss openly both international and national policies that had a direct impact on the livelihoods of Ghanaians. Hence, the same governments that were funding civil society research projects were, in essence, paying for the information that was used to campaign against their own policies. This was an odd turn of events, but one that displays how organizations such as Kwabena's are able to remain independent and not be perceived as "validating donor voices ... when they don't merit such endorsement".

Kwabena's narratives above show that there are potentially both positive and negative aspects to being a part of the new development agenda in Ghana - that of civil society advocacy. From Kwabena's positional perspective, his experiences as both a former government employee with the Ministry of Health and his tenure as a director of an NGO that he founded greatly assists him in his current position, because his job requires him to bridge the multiple spheres of development in Ghana. However, Kwabena holds no illusions that his civil society position combined with his experiential knowledge is going to transform the relations between development parties and comprise a new and better way to approach development. The transition from a service delivery model to an advocacy mandate makes Ghanaian non-

governmental development workers increasingly vulnerable to becoming marginalized within the new relations of power between donors, the Ghanaian government, and Ghanaian NGOs/CSOs. The reason for this is that advocates require both donors and the Ghanaian government to willingly engage in an open forum about how policies will shape the development landscape in Ghana. Hence, Kwabena's position within the development landscape exists solely at the mercy of donors and the government to participate willingly within the advocacy agenda. As he describes, the precedent for donors and the Ghanaian government to provide lip-service to fundamental aspects of advocacy work has already been established.

[Donors pretend that] by taking up actions that they call consulting and ... doing appraisal[s and] needs assessment ... that they [are] ... find[ing] out what [our] development needs are. [But it is just] to package their programs. [T]hat is just to address public concern about imposing conditions.... But at the end of the day there are certain things that are not negotiable There's a certain line beyond which ... they cannot compromise their stands ... on how they demand the money to be used. (Kwabena, 02/05/07)

And, as Kwabena described,

My definition of participation will be different from the [government's definition of] participation, [because] at the government level, participation is the ability of a government to send its policy to inform everybody ... and then ... if they have anything to add you can let [the government] hear, and [then] you have consulted the people. So, it is more or less consultation, and that is [what] it is like. (Kwabena, 02/05/07)

Despite what Kwabena sees as the potential pitfalls of donors and the Ghanaian government being less than perfect partners in the advocacy agenda, he remains pragmatic about his position as a civil society advocate. As he states, "My conviction ... is based on [the belief] that the right principles and the right systems must be in place for ... development [to happen], and that doesn't come easily. That comes from people [who are] willing to point at, to discuss, and to initiate discussions around certain [problems]" (Kwabena, 02/05/07). Hence, Kwabena's perspective is rooted in a desire to challenge, or "point at", the issues that need to be confronted

regarding how Ghana's development policies, programs, and projects should be conducted. The emphasis here is not only on the direction that development will take, but more fundamentally, who will determine the direction and how the decisions will be made. Consequently, Kwabena's perspective leads him to focus on putting the "right systems ... in place for ... development", and the way to do that is to "be as perfect as possible in your practice ... [and my previous] development work is one of the things that is promising to be a teaching avenue or medium in that regard" (Kwabena, 02/05/07).

Putting Ghanaian NGO Workers' Perspectives into Perspective

What emerges from Ghanaian NGO workers' perspectives are disparate and incomplete understandings of how development is proceeding in Ghana; 'disparate' because, in Kwabena's words, the Ghanaian development community represents a "heterogeneous" society, a place where a multitude of actors both populate and attempt to shape the development landscape. NGO workers' understandings of development are 'incomplete' because the participants for this study are undergoing a dramatic change as their positionality in the development sphere shifts in reaction to development's altering landscape. Hence, the participants for this study represent a contrast to the individuals that Thomas Yarrow details (2008), because their positional identities do not create a composite identity of "activist", or a singular identity at all for that matter. Instead, the participants of this study exhibit characteristics that differentiate them from one another based on factors such as their levels of commitment, sacrifice, and ideology, but also, and more fundamentally, their perspectives on the development landscape in Ghana.

The outcome of the process of identity formation and differentiation is a continuum of positional identity perspectives. Hence, Omar holds the first position on the continuum because

he identifies himself as a “community activist”, the positional identity that is farthest away from the trend of civil society advocacy. This means that Omar is actively distancing himself from the new donor-funded advocacy position and is moving towards independent coalition groups. His reasoning behind the fundamental opposition to the changes stemming from the introduction of the MDBS program is that it provides the government with increased authority in the social welfare sphere, while at the same time decreases the power of non-governmental workers to critique national development policies. In contrast, Kwabena represents the opposite end of the continuum, because he has affirmed his identity as a civil society advocate. This means that Kwabena has now become what the donors have determined NGO service providers should be in the MDBS era. Both non-governmental workers’ positionality emerges when their identities and perspectives on the development landscape are examined and revealed to be considerably different. Thus, unlike Yarrow’s participants, who cohere around the concept of an activist identity, Omar and Kwabena are actually moving in opposite directions from one another, despite the fact that they are performing similar tasks.

The key factor in determining where one is positioned on the continuum is their intentionality, “the ways in which action is cognitively and emotionally pointed *towards* some purpose” (Ortner 2006: 134, emphasis in original), because identities are the outcome of intentionality and perspective working together in concert. How Omar’s, Christian’s, Ama’s, and Kwabena’s *perspectives* motivate and “point” them determines, in part, their place within the development landscape and on the continuum. Hence, it is the “‘angle’ from which [they] view the world” that assists them to produce their “‘take’ on activity, [and] the understanding one comes to have of activity” (Holland et al. 1998: 296). Hence, their individual “angle”, or position, determines their perspective and “take” on development as an “activity”, and how the

“activity” of development work is changing. The outcome of this process is a constant though sometimes erratic movement that, as was described above, is incomplete, because positional identity perspectives constantly beget further new positional identities, and thus perspectives, and onward the process flows.

The second part of this process involves the role that the altering development landscape plays regarding how and when a Ghanaian NGO worker changes his or her positionality. If intentionality produces a change in an NGO worker’s position resulting from a “cognitive and emotional” response, the response is a reply to how the other constituent parts of the development landscape are influencing its change. This gives credence to Hilhorst’s conceptualization of how an “actor orientation recognizes that people operate within the limitations of structural constraints, but emphasizes that such constraints operate through people”, and hence, there exists a “mutuality of actor and structure” (Hilhorst 2003: 5). In this scenario, the structural changes to development “activity”, or practice, originate from international donor agencies funding trends, whereby an advocacy mandate is promoted at the expense of service provision and NGO workers, such as Kwabena, take up the new agenda and, in the process, reinforce the structural changes.

This process inevitably elicits a response from the field of development workers. Hence, Omar and Christian, and in a different way Ama, react to the changes to development embodied by Kwabena by re-examining and, for Omar and Christian, altering their positions on the development landscape, *ergo*, the continuum of positional identities. The process of examining one’s own perspectives also provides a window of opportunity to see how NGO workers’ positional identity perspectives are formed. For example, Omar talks about his “bleak” outlook of the changes to the landscape that is stifling “*his*” development and perspectives. Christian

states that development is being “bastardized” by NGO workers who don’t consider the practice a “calling” and just chase after compacts from the foreign donors. Ama explains her “cynical” ‘take’ on how the Ghanaian government simplistically views development as infrastructural inputs rather than qualitative outputs. Consequently, what is revealed in these narratives is that Omar’s, Christian’s, and Ama’s “perspectives are ... at least [indicative of an] an incipient ... identity” (Holland et al. 1998: 296), as well as a reaction to Kwabena’s positional identity. Consequently, Kwabena represents the interface between the “mutuality of actor and structure”, because he embodies the development “constraints” that act through people, even if his positional identity is borne out of a pragmatic perspective that “points” him towards advocacy out of the necessity of earning an income.

Conclusion

The positional identity perspectives of Ghanaian NGO workers may be disparate and incomplete, but their collective voices provide a glimpse into broader questions about development in Ghana. For instance, Omar, Christian, and Ama react to the changes resulting from the introduction of the Multi Donor Budget Support (MDBS), and the consequent promotion of the civil society advocacy agenda, by repositioning themselves on the continuum and refusing to engage in the new approaches to development being promoted. While the above discussions reveal individual reasons as to why they refuse to partake in advocacy, questions remain as to what their collective positioning means, because if the practice of advocacy is replacing service provision in the NGO sphere, and the advocacy mandate requires engaging the Ghanaian government at the policy level, what does it say about NGO workers’ views about the government’s ability to manage Ghana’s development successfully when NGO workers such as

Omar and Christian simply refuse to engage with the government? Secondly, what does it say about a group of individuals such as Omar and Christian who refuse to work with foreign donor agencies, by either searching for alternative means to conduct ‘their’ development or by removing themselves from the NGO sphere all together? Lastly, with consideration of the ongoing changes to the development landscape, what are Ghanaian NGO workers’ perspectives regarding the future of how development will proceed in Ghana? Answers to these questions can only be found when NGO workers’ perspectives are analyzed as a collective response, and within a broader historical framework.

The conclusion of this study will include a brief attempt to examine how Ghanaian NGO workers’ views of the changing development landscape can be interposed into broader discussions regarding how the new trends in development funding and practice are altering the development landscape, both from historical and theoretical perspectives. The previous chapter critiqued Yarrow (2008) because he did not attempt to engage NGO workers’ perspectives in a larger discussion of development in Ghana, specifically, or development along a theoretical plain in general. The conclusion to this thesis will attempt to do just that by examining the questions raised above. Much like how MDBS is having a distinct and widespread effect on the development landscape in Ghana, Ghanaian NGO workers' collective response to these changes also tell a distinct story. Hence, the reversal of the state’s retrenchment and subsequent rise in development adds a new chapter to Ghana’s development history, a chapter that will be explored employing the collective response of NGO workers' perspectives in the conclusion of this study.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Prologue:

The one that cuts the path doesn't know if it is crooked. (Ghanaian Proverb)

The above proverb was spoken numerous times during interviews with participants and at the workshops and conferences I attended while conducting research for this study. The proverb is a warning or foreshadowing, and its meaning is simple; if one attempts to accomplish a goal without the assistance of colleagues, friends, or community members, one is bound to fail. The implication of Ghanaian NGO workers is that if the role that the non-governmental sector plays in Ghana's development is reduced, the government will be acting alone, and consequently is bound to fail. As Omar explains;

For me, the role of civil society is like a precursor, it prompts the state or our communities as to what is afoot, what are the dangers, how can we come along, and how can we resolve these issues. So, basically ... if you don't have ... civil society you'll be cutting your own path, and nobody directs you as to [how]. Supposing you are constructing a straight line and you are the only fellow, without any material or level, you just go on your own cutting, and you think that it is straight, and you get to the end and you realize, that you will see, that the whole thing is crooked. (Omar, 17/04/07)

Such assertions frequently arose during conversations about the state of development in Ghana. His comment was meant to illustrate the growing sentiment of those who equate the continuing implementation of the Multi Donor Budget Support (MDBS) program to a marginalization of non-governmental development workers' positions and those within the greater civil society sphere, positions on the development landscape. Hence, Omar, and many of his colleagues, feel their contributions are essential to Ghana's future development, because their experience, knowledge and ethos can and should be applied in collaboration with the Ghanaian government to cooperatively "cut the path" towards Ghana's future development.

Few people in the non-governmental organization (NGO) development community believe that relations with the government will achieve this harmonious level. Quoting the proverb also serves to signal NGO workers feelings about how the government will direct Ghana's development in the future. As Said⁴ states, "I can hear already a few murmurs coming out on the failings of [the government's] social policy, the inability to tackle poverty in the north [of Ghana], and increasing urban poverty as people dissipate from rural areas to the south. So, we are already seeing the impacts of that kind of lopsided allocation of developmental resources" (Said, 14/04/07). Said's perceptions, about the government's growing inadequacy to direct and achieve Ghana's development goals, has confirmed his, and his colleagues, opinions regarding the negative impact the MDBS program will have on Ghana's future development. For, in the wake of the MDBS program introduction in 2003, and the ancillary position posited for NGOs on Ghana's development landscape, NGO workers feel that the "lopsided allocation of funds" by international donors has meant that donors have essentially put all their eggs into the wrong basket. Hence, NGO worker's "murmurs" about government policies coming up short are not surprising, because their role, as the "precursor[s]" that "prompt the state ... as to what is afoot" and how to "resolve ... issues", has been restricted in Ghana's new MDBS program development era. Therefore, the proverb was spoken amongst those in the non-governmental sphere to signal a growing concern that "murmurs" of discontent will turn into concerted voices as MDBS reduces the role of the non-governmental sector in Ghana's future development.

⁴ Said's positional identity and perspectives are akin to Kwabena's, and therefore he would be placed alongside Kwabena on the continuum. Said, like the rest of the participants for this study, has spent over ten years working in the non-governmental development sector in Ghana conducting service provision. Recently, he has moved into advocacy and policy analysis work and private consulting with international donor agencies.

Introduction

The purpose of this concluding chapter is twofold. First, it will serve as a general overview of the previous sections, highlighting the main points raised therein, and attempt to draw out and distil key points. However, the point here is not to simply recap the content of the study. The second purpose of this chapter is to interpose the key points and place them before the collective critical eye of the Ghanaian NGO workers interviewed for this study. Therefore, this chapter will endeavour to take the step that Yarrow (2008) failed to attempt, that of assembling NGO workers' perspectives and engaging them in wider discussions, so that their narratives can be employed as a reference point for dialogues surrounding development.

To broach the subject of the collective perspective of NGO workers, in contrast to the individual positional identity perspectives analyzed in the previous two chapters, an understanding of what aligns them and leads to a collective perspective must be examined. Despite the fact that the participants for this study hold different positional identities from which their perspectives are brought forth, on what grounds do they find commonality? The answer is embodied in the above proverb, because while opinions regarding Ghana's "path" of development varied, all participants agree that the changes to the non-governmental sector, resulting from the introduction of MDBS, are detrimental to Ghana's future development. This view stems from the fact that NGOs workers' service provision roles are being exchanged for a civil society advocacy agenda as the state takes over development's deliverables, which constitutes, in the study participants' eyes, a demotion in Ghana's development. There exists an element of 'disgruntled NGO worker' here, however, their attitudes stem from the fact that they feel the state is not adequately prepared to take over the job that NGO workers have been conducting for more than two decades. Therefore, Ghanaian NGO workers' collective positional

perspective is defined by the new set of relationships among international donor agencies, the state, and the non-governmental sector, and where they view themselves in Ghana's "path" of the newly configured development landscape.

After establishing the grounds for the collective positional perspectives of Ghanaian NGO workers, this chapter delineates primary elements of both the literature review and history chapters within the context of exploring Ghanaian NGO workers' collective positional perspectives. The key discussions and arguments raised shape our understanding of how development in Ghana has proceeded and how it can be interpreted, and are important components to understanding the changing development landscape in Ghana. In particular, I will investigate Ghanaian NGO workers' collective perspectives about Ghana's "path" of development with respect to the contrast between what Grillo terms the "myth of development" (1997: 20) and James Ferguson's concept of the transnational topography of power (2006:89). Hence, these competing interpretive power grids will provide insight into participants' perspectives on the altering development landscape in Ghana.

Understanding Ghanaian NGO workers' perspectives of the interpretative power grids requires placing their views within the context of development in Ghana. It is the history of development that anchors their perspectives and, most importantly, the concept of the social compact has shaped both the development landscape and the views of my participants. Ghana's recent history can be divided into the periods when the social compact guided the country's national development strategy, from approximately 1957 to 1983, and when the country adopted by neoliberal economic and political strategies aimed at recovery from poor economic gains. While the social compact left Ghana in a financial turmoil, the ethos it imbued remained after neoliberal economic policies were implemented. Hence, the ethos of the social compact has

surpassed its economic expiration date, but NGO workers' perspectives remain influenced by its tenets.

What emerges from this chapter is a localized perspective that incorporates a collective actor-oriented view of how Ghana's development landscape has changed, and how the antecedents to the present influence NGO workers' perspectives on the future. Consequently, "the one that cuts the path doesn't know if it is crooked" will serve as the portal to understanding why Ghanaian NGO workers view the future of development from behind the foreboding proverb, and what they feel should be done to rectify the situation and improve Ghana's future path of development.

Positional Perspective as Collective

Shifting from Ghanaian NGO workers' individual positional identity perspectives to their collective positional perspective involves reconfiguring the analytic form in which participants' views are examined and brought forth. In previous chapters, their views were distinctly separated by their individual positional identities in relation to one another, and by the perspective that was afforded from their discrete positions. In order to ascertain a collective perspective, an understanding of what draws the participants together and what their collective positionality is must be established.

Yarrow assembles his participants' historical collective narratives as NGO workers under the heading of an "activist" identity (2008: 334). To frame their perspectives, he employed the discursive devices of "sacrifice", "ideology", and "commitment", which, when assembled together, provide the construct of what distinguishes a NGO worker/activist from an NGO worker. Hence, Yarrow's participants describe themselves as NGO workers with an activist

ethos, and their collective position rests on what they view as essential to elevating themselves above the remaining non-governmental practitioners of development. The participants in my study are, in part, juxtaposed with Yarrow's, because they find commonality not in the interchange-ability of an identity with a position, but rather with a position that provides a collective outlook on the future of development in Ghana. Consequently, the proverb, "The one that cuts the path ..." serves to encapsulate the perspectives of participants and symbolically order dissimilar individuals. As Holland et al. state, "perspectives are tied to a sense of entitlement or disentitlement to particular spaces, relationships, activities, and forms of expression" (1998: 44). Concomitant with the notion of perspective is that of positionality, whereby people "look at the world from the positions in which they are persistently cast" (1998: 44). This means that participants in this study have a collective perspective based on their shared perception of the position in which they are being "cast" or placed. NGO workers appear as pawns, whose position and activities can be determined as serving an agenda or mandate that is not of their own making, but, more fundamentally, they are serving in a capacity that they are primarily opposed to, that of civil society advocate.

While it must be acknowledged that NGO workers were never free to set Ghana's development agenda, the contrast that participants make between service provision and advocacy symbolizes the change to the relationship that they had with donors, which was forged in the wake of state retrenchment. Formerly, NGOs in Ghana exemplified what David Korten termed the "second generation of NGOs" (1987: 148), because they were receiving foreign donor funds to implement projects at the local level that provided services, such as "preventative health", "farming practices", and "community development projects" (1987: 148). The projects that they implemented often paralleled the activities of the government, "but [were] defended on the

grounds that the government services are inadequate” (1987: 148). Hence, NGOs and donors held a mutually beneficial relationship, based on the former’s eagerness to participate in development, and a constructive association centred on the common goal of implementing programs and projects that delivered much-needed services to Ghanaians. As Said notes, “[there was a] time [when] an NGO could be given \$100,000, or \$200,000, to mobilize communities to deliver and improve their water supply system, [but now] you would be very, very, lucky to get \$50,000 to undertake evidence based research, to build solidarity with citizen groups, and challenge government policy” (Said, 14/04/07). The alliance between NGO workers and donors was codified by a constructive relationship; NGOs gained access to the developmental space, while donors and NGO workers were jointly involved in service delivery activities.

The relationship forged between the Ghanaian NGOs and international donor agencies in the late 1980s and early 1990s was seemingly mutually beneficial, and through the 1990s and into the new millennium the NGO sector expanded greatly. However, with the introduction of the MDBS program in Ghana, funds for NGO-led development programs and projects began to dry up as donors pushed NGOs to adopt, what Korten would call, a “third generation” NGO position; “involvement with a variety of public and private organizations that control resources and policies that bear on local development ... [including] local and national governments, [and] other independent sector institutions.... NGOs that have historically worked independently will need to develop skills in working collaboratively as members of larger coalitions of both public and private organizations” (1987: 149). What Korten terms a third generation NGO, Ghanaian NGO workers term civil society organization (CSO) advocates, or NGO-*cum*-CSOs, because the distinctiveness between their position on the development landscape in Ghana as service providers is being expunged as they are pushed to take up a more customary civil society-type

mandate, as supporters of state programs while acting as advocates, watchdogs, and the ‘voice of the people’. Consequently, the affinity between donors and NGOs has been ruptured, because donors now look to the Ghanaian government to implement Ghana’s development initiatives rather than NGOs, and the position that NGO workers now find themselves in is that of development proponent, rather than provider. The outcome of this process is regarded by study participants as the demotion of NGO workers, and is a collective perspective based on how they view their loss of entitlement and their allotted activity in Ghana’s future development. The proverb serves to indicate how Ghanaian NGO workers identify their collective position as being the ones whose role is reduced in helping to cut the path, and the moral is that the “path” will be “cut ... crooked” due to their “disentitlement to particular spaces ... [and] activities” (Holland et al. 1998, 44).

In comparison with the analytic from previous chapters, whereby individual positions beget an identity, and consequently a positional identity perspective, this framework encounters difficulty in this chapter because positional identities were dependent on Ortner’s (2006) concept of intentionality. Ortner’s intentionality involves “highly conscious plots and plans and schemes; somewhat more nebulous aims, goals, and ideals; and finally desires, wants, and needs that may range from being deeply buried to quite consciously felt. Intentionality is meant to include the ways in which action is cognitively pointed *towards* some purpose” (Ortner 2006, 134 author’s emphasis). Intentionality “pointed” individual NGO workers to move and manoeuvre within and outside the development landscape, such as Omar who began working with coalition groups, while Christian went on leave to study in the United Kingdom (UK), and Kwabena took up a position as a civil society advocate. It afforded individual NGO workers the ability to reposition themselves in the wake of the introduction of the MDBS program, resulting

in a scuttling the NGO worker sector. However, as a collective, there is no point on the horizon for NGO workers to cognitively move towards, and they are bound by the perceived constraints that prevent them from purposefully participating in the action of assisting to “cut the path”.

Ultimately, NGO workers feel that their collective positionality is reduced to that of proponents, rather than active members in forging Ghana’s “path”. This means that their collective perspective, while most certainly endowed on an individual basis with the more “nebulous aims, goals, and ideals”, along with the accompanying “desires, wants, and needs” (Ortner 2006, 134), is reduced to that of a bystander’s view. They recite the proverb because it reflects their view about how development is unfolding in the MDBS era, symbolizing their perspective from a new limited position within Ghana’s development landscape. This mode of thought, whereby positionality and perspective are oriented to what is happening to the NGO community by external sources, is in stark contrast to Yarrow’s participants, whose collective perspective is oriented to how their identities as activists have formed in relation to historical and political developments. The difference here is in the fact that Yarrow’s participants conflate development in Ghana with their own development, resulting in a positional perspective that is based on how they view themselves (Yarrow 2008: 354), rather than on how donors and the Ghanaian government view them. The participants for this study stand in opposition to this, for the culmination of Ghana’s historical and politico-ideological trajectory has brought NGO workers into conflict with Ghana’s “path” to development, which has resulted in the breakdown of the NGO sector, while simultaneously promulgating a collective positional perspective.

While their positionality within Ghana’s new MDBS-led development landscape appears to be firmly set, the view that this position affords is more complex than simply asserting that Ghana’s current “path” is askew, because their perspectives are rooted in processes older than

the MDBS program, and their analysis is more complicated than the simplistic proverbial warning of the developmental disenfranchised. Hence, exploring the temporal and analytic dimensions of Ghanaian NGO workers' positional perspectives requires revisiting the historical and interpretive components of this study. Therefore, the final part of this chapter brings forth primary elements from the history and literature sections, whereby Ghanaian NGO workers' collective positional perspectives are explored and analyzed in more depth, because, while the proverb may serve to establish a position to a view, it provides only a window into their perspectives on broader issues.

NGO Workers' Collective Positional Perspectives

Collective Positional Perspectives: History of Development in Ghana

Ghanaian NGO workers' collective positional perspectives about the current and future development landscape in Ghana are signified in the proverb "the one that cuts the path doesn't know if it is crooked". To understand the meaning of this proverb, the participants' perspectives are interposed into historical and theoretical fields so that the assemblage of incomplete and contradictory narratives that are embodied in the proverb can be unpacked. As discussed, NGO workers identified the Multi Donor Budget Support (MDBS) program as the locus for the changes underway to the configuration of development in development. They feel the new form and mode of implementing development is at odds with how they imagine the Ghanaian state; as a supporter of social-welfarism via a strong centralist state with an activist development ethos. Hence, their perspective on how the government *should* operate gives an indication as to what their political views entail; that the state should return to its paternalistic past and promote a type of development that is rooted in a social compact between the state and the citizenry.

NGO workers hold a negative view about Ghana's development path because of their perception of the state's alignment with the neoliberal policy framework promoted by donors. First, they feel the current configuration between the government and donors precludes the return to the tenets and ethos of social compact, because the combination of the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS), as Ghana's development framework, and the MDBS program, as the primary source of funding, means that the donors can withhold financial support if the state does not conform to their policy prescriptions. Secondly, they view the government's arrangement with the donors as a decision brought on by the lure of money and power, rather than a genuine alignment of political, economic, and social thought. Consequently, NGO workers view the inception of the GPRS and MDBS as detrimental to Ghana's development path because the process of implementing these programs has shaken the bonds between the non-governmental development sector and the donors, elevated the government's position, while significantly altering NGO workers' positionality. As Said states,

What used to be a cushy relationship between donors and NGOs is now getting sour, because the NGOs are saying to the donors, "you know guys you are really, really wicked, [because] in the era when we were all struggling ... we were good friends and you believed in us, you used us to downsize the government and in the process we benefited, because we received grants to do services the state was performing. Now all of a sudden the democratization has come, government is established, it is representative, [and] you now trust government more than you trust us, so you've taken all of the money and given it to government so that they can control us." So, many NGOs are now becoming more and more antagonistic in their relationship with donors. (Said, 14/04/07)

Said views the transition to donors backing the Ghanaian state as a form of betrayal, calling them "wicked" for placing NGOs in a position vulnerable to government "control". However, he notes that this flip-flop is indicative of a situation in which, "with the coming into force of the ... GPRS [and MDBS, development] is no longer about a particular sector or ... project, it is about meeting goals that are globally defined, but are nationally implemented. In that sense, there has

been a complete about turn for NGOs” (Said, 14/04/07). Hence, in Said’s view, NGOs are not perceived to be crucial actors in forging the path of Ghana’s development.

Akua⁵ supports Said’s perspective while addressing the historical dimensions of Ghana’s recent change in development strategies. In her view, the state has adopted an external development agenda, resulting in the inability of Ghanaians to determine their own path of development. As she explains,

As long as that external orientation is there, then it allows other people to define what development is in our country, and in a large extent it is by looking at the things like development plans, such as Nkrumah’s five-seven year development plan, that is where you see ... Ghanaians in the driver’s seat, so it at least goes where they want [it] to be, and making choices about their approach to getting there. But, sustaining that position in the driving seat, as far defining the direction has been sort of checkered On the whole, the net effect of the overwhelming influence of what is called globalization has been that ... it is agenda’s that are intrinsically seen [as] being better than whatever agenda you could germinate internally [that are leading development policies in Ghana]. And for that reason you get into this ridiculous situation where whoever is trying to offer you support is also bringing in systems which are, given this intrinsic value of being, representing progress, so you can have a situation where it creates quite a bit of confusion. (Akua, 04/05/07)

Hence, the inability for the Ghanaian government to remain in the “driver’s seat” means that Ghana’s development agenda has been largely externally driven and “oriented”. The GPRS and MDDBS program do not equate to a concrete plan that is ‘owned’ by Ghanaians, and therefore the implementation of a globally-oriented and externally-defined development strategy means that the state has conceded to a foreign body mapping Ghana’s path of development. The implication

⁵ Akua’s positional identity perspective is akin to Ama’s, as she remains firm on holding her position in the non-governmental development sector as a service provider. However, unlike other participants of this study, her main source of income does not come from development work, but instead from academic work at a post-secondary institution. Her involvement in non-governmental development encompasses directing a small education-focused NGO that she founded. Her NGO was funded in part by donor agencies, and provided services such as constructing and delivering educational materials to children and young adults about health related issues. Due to a lack of funding the NGO now relies on volunteers to fulfill its mandate, and its scope has been reduced to delivering only after-school programs.

here is that the Ghanaian government has aligned itself with the donors' neoliberal development ethos and in the process betrayed Ghana's historical and autochthonous development strategy.

Ama shares Said's and Akua's perspective that the GPRS does not represent a "vision" for the future, because, according to her, the GPRS and MDBS are an illusory strategy for development as they lack concrete steps to producing tangible results. The GPRS and MDBS will not amount to a significant impact in Ghana's historical development, because the nature of their design does not conform to democratically-determined long-term planning, meaning that they do not embody the populist goals that the social compact signified. As Ama states,

I think it would be good if a democratic country could develop ten to fifteen year plans, because it provides guidance, and we don't have that right now. We had the Ghana Vision2020, we have the GPRS, but is it enough to give us a vision, and how are we working towards it? What are the steps we are taking to achieve those goals? That is something we really don't have in place, so we do these *ad hoc* things that don't make much impact or bring about results. (Ama, 9/04/07)

Hence, the GPRS, in combination with MDBS, represent a non-democratic form of establishing development plans while providing an inadequate vision for Ghanaians to work towards, because the *ad hoc* nature in which development strategies have been constructed means that there is little impact or results that stem from their formation. As Omar further elaborates, "[if NGOs are] only brought in at the implementation stage, you have very little you can actually do. What you'll be able to do ... is make sure that the resources are not wasted, but you will not be able to change the plan, [because] the plan is set, [so] you [are only] able to monitor, to lecture, [and] to make sure that resources are judiciously used" (Omar, 17/04/07). Therefore, Akua, Ama, and Omar feel that the GPRS and MDBS provide little incentive for NGO worker support, because they lack vision, democratically-defined goals and planning, and the autonomy of the state to take the "driver's seat" in determining Ghana's development strategy, all of which then preclude the meaningful participation of those in the non-governmental development sector.

At the crux of the issue is the historical flux in development planning, which has swung from the socialist policies of the first 25 years of independence to the converse neoliberal policies of the latter 25 years. For NGO workers, the GPRS and MDBS program are emblematic of the Ghanaian state abandoning an opportunity to return to its egalitarian past, whereby the social compact fuses the state and citizenry, and determine the course of action that development will take. Instead, the government is implementing a policy framework that is “externally-oriented” and represents a foreign idea of “progress”, while attempting to compel NGO workers into serving as “monitors” of the implementation process. Consequently, the perceived value of NGO workers is now in their voice as civil society actors rather than service providers. Finally, while it may seem that NGO workers’ ire is pointed at the GPRS, it is MDBS that is at the heart of their foreboding, because it is altering the relations between the development partners. Hence, GPRS *combined* with MDBS set in motion the transfer of responsibilities from NGOs to the government, resulting in the government being placed forefront to cut Ghana’s path of development.

As NGO workers are reduced to observing the planning and implementation of Ghana’s future their collective opinions reveal that the process of cutting Ghana’s path of development is not proceeding as it should. Ultimately, NGO workers are not against the state taking on more responsibilities in Ghana’s development sphere, however, they feel that, if the government is going to lead Ghana’s political, economic, and social development efforts, the framework should be representative of a democratic country rather than government acquiescing to a foreign plan in exchange for increased power via the financial windfall. A domestic development plan that is democratically formed is the key factor that led NGO workers to claim that the government is ‘cutting the path’ alone and therefore it will be crooked.

Collective Positional Perspectives: Anthropological Literature about Development

What emerges from the above narratives is a collective positional perspective formed around the historical precedent of the GPRS and MDBS program, and the dramatically altering the development landscape in Ghana. Consequently, NGO workers' prominence and positionality are changing as donors are 'de-NGO-ing' development in Ghana. NGO workers are opposed to this process, calling donors "wicked" for their seeming betrayal of the sector, but what appears to make them feel most disenfranchised about development processes is the fact that the state's increase in power is directly linked to a fundamentally non-Ghanaian development plan, because they feel that the GPRS is not analogous to the development ethos of the social compact. Accordingly, their views provide an interesting perspective to insert into anthropological discussions regarding the development landscape in Ghana. What is easily surmised is that Ghanaian NGO workers perceive the present-day changes to development in Ghana with a pessimistic outlook, due to the alignment between the donors and the Ghanaian government, and the subsequent "path" that Ghana's development is following. Consequently, the relations between the three parties, and the role that the GPRS and MDBS has played in determining the structural form between them, is employed below to explore how anthropological perspectives can capture the current configuration of power. What emerge are NGO workers' collective views of development in Ghana in the GPRS/MDBS era, and a perspective that supports a composite of anthropological theories.

Understanding how anthropologists present their arguments regarding power configurations in global development requires distinguishing the periods in which they emerged. For example, Grillo's concept of the "myth of development" (Grillo 1997: 20) amasses the views

of many anthropologists, including James Ferguson (1990), Arturo Escobar (1995), Wolfgang Sachs (1992), and Mark Hobart (1993), all of whom conducted research and published their findings in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This period was dominated by the influence of postmodernist interpretations of the structural adjustment era in the developing world, whereby institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) promoted a neoliberal economic recovery agenda after earlier policies, such as Import-Substitution Industrialization (ISI), failed to produce developed states (Ake 2001: 75). This resulted in developing country governments adopting the Global North's policy prescriptions in exchange for financial assistance. When this shift in international relations is combined with anthropologists' adoption of Foucault's analyses that critically examine the power relations between hemispheres, countries, and institutions, the anthropological criticism levelled against the IMF, WB, and Global Northern donor agencies appears to be inevitable.

However, this history-meets-theory narrative obscures the nature of how relations between these parties change over time. For example, if Ghanaian NGO workers were asked in 1988 about the configuration of power in Ghana between themselves, the state, and donor agencies, they would likely agree with anthropologists analyses that the Global North had an unprecedented influence over Ghanaian affairs, and also that the time for radical economic recovery strategy was upon them. However, Ghanaian NGO workers would have likely resisted the label of "victims of development" (Grillo 1997: 21), because the multiple Ghanaian governments that attempted to leverage the social compact in return for political power certainly had a part in creating Ghana's economic predicament in the early 1980s. Therefore, a localized interpretation by Ghanaian NGO workers during the late 1980s and into the 1990s, when SAPs, neoliberalism, and state retrenchment became constituent elements of Ghana's development

paradigm, would likely reveal that the “myth of development” held elements of truth, but also that postmodernist interpretations were “ill-informed about the history of government” (1997: 21).

This localized interpretation can also be applied to present-day MDBS development in Ghana. However, the difference now is that anthropologists have developed new techniques to investigate the power processes that influence how the “path” of development is “cut”. At the opposite end of the spectrum to the “myth of development” is James Ferguson’s recent concept of the transnational topographies of power. Ferguson claims that calling into question the “vertical topography of power” between the national and local levels reveals the “transnational character of both [the] ‘state’ and ‘civil society’ ... [will] open new ways of thinking about social movements and states” (2006: 90). Ferguson emphasizes that non-governmental development organizations, such as local and international NGOs (INGOs), have been performing the duties of the state in this neoliberal era, constituting a form of governance that is local, national, and transnational all at once. Hence, the transnational topography of power sheds light on “the new organizations that have sprung up in recent years”, such as (I)NGOs, who are not necessarily “challengers pressing up against the state from below, [but are] horizontal contemporaries of the organs of the state ... operating on the same level and in the same global space” (Ferguson 2006: 103). While this new interpretive grid certainly constitutes a break from the “myth of development”, and incorporates a more nuanced view of global flows of power, it is difficult to capture Ghana in the MDBS era within Ferguson’s updated analytic. The reason for this is that the GPRS in combination with the MDBS has reversed the state’s retrenchment of the 1980s from the social welfare sphere, resulting in the Ghanaian government’s increased capacity to implement a nationally-defined development strategy.

As discussed earlier, NGOs in Ghana have historically attempted to remain apolitical institutions (Hutchful 2002: 185), preferring to remain bifurcated from governmental apparatuses and political entanglements while performing the social welfare duties of the state. This situation was easily maintained since their funding came from international donor agencies. Hence, the extent of their transnational character was limited to the international donor agencies that funded their programs and projects. For example, both Christian and Said worked on long-term programs in the 1990s that were funded by a single Global Northern donor agency, resulting in a “cushy relationship” whereby donors and NGOs “were good friends”, and donors “believed in NGOs ... to do [the] services the state was [previously] performing” (Said, 14/04/07). However, when relations began to change after the introduction of the GPRS and MDBS, both Christian and Said tried their hand at civil society advocacy work, but the lack of funding in this sector meant that they were forced to seek out alternative positions. Hence, Ferguson’s analytic of the transnational topography of power only moderately captures the experience of Ghanaian NGO workers during the period preceding the GPRS and MDBS. While they were certainly “operating on the same level and in the same global space” (Ferguson 2006: 103) as the state, their primary motivating factor in development, to uphold the tenets of the social compact as a surrogate to the state, was cut short when the state re-entered the social welfare sphere.

Today, the Ghanaian government is backed by the GPRS and MDBS, meaning that the dynamic between the donors, the state, and the NGO sector has changed, and an increasingly hegemonic structure is organizing the parties populating the development landscape in Ghana. The consequence of this renewed verticality is a new form of structured relations that supports Grillo’s myth of development over Ferguson’s transnational topography of power, because the

newly vertically integrated relationships between the donors, Ghanaian government, and NGO sector highlights the fact that the donors are able to wield their power over Ghana's development landscape and lessen the transnational quotient of the CSO sphere by forcing NGOs' mandate and partnerships with INGOs to change. What emerges from the collective positional perspective of Ghanaian NGO workers then is a new conceptualization of the topography of power that could be called a transnational topography of *unequal* power.

From the point of view of Ghanaian NGO workers, the alignment between the donors and the Ghanaian government, in combination with the reduction in funds to the NGO sector, means their ability to provide services that are symbolically linked to the social compact is largely defeated in the MDBS era. Donors have pushed NGOs from their comfortable "second generation" position as service providers into the "third generation" as advocates and policy advisors, and, according to Korten, they should be moving to this position on their own volition (1987: 149). As Rutherford notes, the ascension of civil society is viewed by some academics within teleological terms, which "assumes the emergence of civil society, whether it appears autonomously or has to be nurtured as a deliberate project of social reform" (Rutherford 2004: 127). Hence, where Rutherford notes a nature versus nurture debate regarding the role of CSOs in Africa, donors hold the position that, if NGOs don't want to alter their practices from service provision to advocacy and policy engagement, they will alter the position for them. This forced repositioning is ultimately what NGO workers take issue with, because it means they have to work below the Ghanaian government and are at a distinct disadvantage to influence the policies that come down from atop the vertically integrated development landscape. The outcome of this process of change in practice and relations is three-fold for NGO workers: their position within the development landscape has been demoted to a supportive role to the state; their future within

the civil society sphere is less secure owing to the reduction in funds now that their service provision role has been stripped; and their ability to incorporate elements from the social compact into Ghana's development agenda is dramatically lessened.

The power that donors in the MDBS era wield demonstrates not only their ability to modify the civil society sphere by changing the position and practices of NGO workers, by altering them from the second to third generation, but also reveals how influential these institutions are over the state. Hence, the hegemonic power that academics, writing in the 1980s and early 1990s, claimed the Global North held in the developing world, as encompassed in Grillo's myth of development, is revealed through the perspectives of NGO workers to be more fact than fiction. Hence, when Akua speaks of the "external orientation ... [that] allows other people to define what development is in our country" (Akua, 04/05/07), she is highlighting the fact that the Ghanaian state remains highly susceptible to "external" forces in defining the development agenda in Ghana. Secondly, the hegemonic dimension of relation between the state and the donors, IMF, and WB, is also highlighted by Akua when she describes how difficult it has been for the Ghanaian government to remain in the "driver's seat" (Akua, 04/05/07). When foreign institutions are able to influence Ghana's development strategy it is difficult to claim that the government is completely in charge. This lack of complete control reveals how closely aligned the state and donors are, while disclosing how the Ghanaian government is in part complicit in its own unequal power relations with donors, for which they receive an increased budgetary allotment to exert more influence over the social welfare sphere in Ghana. Ultimately, the new power configuration between the donors, the Ghanaian state, and the NGO sector, means that the form of vertical integration that was in place during the SAP era of the 1980s has returned. However, while the state has adopted a social compact-like position on

Ghana's development landscape, it has not been able to, or has not had to will to attempt to, return to a form of governance that is akin to the social compact era's paternalistic and activist state ethos, resulting in the "sour" (Said, 14/04/07) relations between the civil society sphere sector and the donors, and importantly, also between CSOs and the Ghanaian government.

The result is that NGO workers view the configuration of relations in the MDBS era as an increase in the hegemonic power of donors, because they are exacting a high degree of influence over the Ghanaian government and non-government sectors, which at every step has reduced the transnational dimension of NGOs' influence over the development topography in Ghana. Therefore, while not entirely supporting Grillo's myth of development, their views support the primary aspects of his theory, because the transnational topography of unequal power highlights the donors' influence over the developing world that anthropologists such as Arturo Escobar (1995), James Ferguson (1990), Mark Hobart (1993), and Wolfgang Sachs (1992) critique. Consequently, their collective positional perspective is that donor organizations have created the new vertically integrated and structured relations between development partners, while reducing the influence of Ghanaian and international NGOs. Hence, their perspective is very much the view from the bottom, because as Omar noted above, NGOs are brought in only after the planning stages of development have been completed, meaning that the 'wisdom' incorporated into the GPRS is impenetrable by Ghanaian or international NGO knowledge, and therefore NGO workers are not able to play a part in shaping the policies that come down from the donors/Ghanaian government. This point highlights the reduced dimension of Ferguson's transnational topography of power, because NGOs are now two steps removed from the planning stages that donors have established at the top.

What emerges here is a scenario whereby Ghanaian NGO workers are not necessarily the “victims” (Grillo 1997: 21) of development, but, as individuals and as a collective, feel that they are the injured party in the reconfiguration of Ghana’s development landscape. As Said described, the difference between the relationship of NGOs and donors in the SAP era to today is that donors are no longer willing to place their “trust” in NGOs to perform the services vital to Ghanaians in the social welfare sphere (Said, 14/04/07). This signifies that at the core of the newly configured development landscape is the power of the donors to shape the set of relations between themselves, the Ghanaian government, and the non-governmental sector. Consequently, when analyzed from the perspective of participants, the transnational topography of power that previously existed is no longer representative of what is going on ‘on the ground’ in Ghana, because the donors have re-established the Ghanaian state as above the level of NGOs. The result of this new form of vertical integration is that there exists an unequal opportunity for NGOs to help cut Ghana’s path of development.

Conclusion

A collective positional perspective reveals Ghanaian NGO workers’ pessimism about Ghana’s future of development. Individually each participant of this study has chosen a different tactic to manoeuvre within Ghana’s development landscape, as defined by GPRS and the MDBS program, but few have made choices that would symbolically represent satisfaction with recent changes to development in Ghana. This is the reason that Omar is moving away from the NGO sector and towards coalition groups; Christian has left the country on sabbatical; Ama has firmly dug in her heels at her present position; and, Kwabena out of the necessity to support himself and his family, has adapted to the new civil society advocacy sector. These individual processes of

repositioning symbolize a long-term commitment to Ghana's development, and the ethos of the social compact which inspires them to remain within an unstable sector. Hence, the reconfiguration of the development landscape has only served to produce a sense of coherence amongst NGO workers that is based on the belief that Ghana's future development is being cut along a crooked path.

In comparison with Yarrow's study (2008), whereby his participants viewed their own personal history in the NGO sector as symbolically represented in Ghana's historical development, the participants for the present study do not believe that Ghana's historical trajectory is representative of their sacrifice, commitment, or ideology. In fact, when put into the context of development in the GPRS and MDBS era, these narrative devices reveal that the current configuration of Ghana's vertical integration is antithetical to what they have striven to produce. This difference in perspectives means that the participants for this study are highly critical of the changes to the development landscape, and consequently their narratives shed light on anthropological discussions that attempt to capture how international processes align development parties in developing countries. What emerges from their narratives is a view that development is becoming increasingly hegemonic, and that the topography of power is transforming the relations between the donors, the Ghanaian government, and the NGOs to unequal terms. Hence, NGO workers' collective positional perspective stands in stark contrast to Yarrow's participants, because, when assembled together, their narratives reveal that, despite the former close proximity between the donors, Ghanaian government, and NGO workers, ideologically the participants in this study feel there is widening gulf between themselves and Ghana's development apparatus.

How the current vertical integration of power amongst development parties can be turned so that Ghana's historical legacy of the social compact can once again provide equality through an activist development state is not discussed in this study, because few NGO workers felt they could provide an adequate response. However, Christian offered a clue to this query when he stated,

After 1966 [(when President Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown in a coup)] Ghana lost its place in the league of nations ... spell[ing] doom and dark days for Ghana in the sense it has been a turbulent history of military takeovers and democratic experimentations, and [Ghana] never found its feet. So, Ghana kept vacillating ... and I do not see any foreseeable future, except if there is a leader that is committed to take the harsh and painful decisions that will build an independent economy, an economy that does not rely upon [international financial institutions] (IFIs), an economy that is self sustaining, and that is a difficult path to go, [but] that is the only way to go, ... because if you have a country whose budgetary support is funded from [the] outside how do you hope to generate employment? How do you hope to create wealth? And the truth is that you have to cut your umbilical cord from the IFIs, because they are not charity institutions, they are there to make money.... So, how do you extricate yourself from this vicious cycle?... I don't see that happening in the foreseeable future, because most of the governments to come to power just want the easy way, and the easy way is expensive. (Christian, 16/05/07)

In Christian's view the only way for Ghana to emerge from the hegemonic power of donor institutions is if a figure rises up and decides to take the more difficult path, the path that frees Ghana from the influence of international donor agencies. What he is describing is a return to the tenets of the social compact, led by an unknown person who will lead Ghanaians down the correct path of development and when deciding what direction the path will be cut, will incorporate the views of all members of society, including NGO workers. For now this leader is a mythical figure, a figure that is evoked and called forth by the proverb, but whose identity is unknown.

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