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The Role of NGOs As Intermediaries: Negotiating the Space Between Donors and Community Members

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THE ROLE OF NGOS AS INTERMEDIARIES:
NEGOTIATING THE SPACE BETWEEN DONORS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

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SIT Study Abroad—South Africa: Community Health and Social Policy, Spring 2017
4 May 2017
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Abstract

South Africa is considered one of the most unequal countries in the world, even after the fall of the apartheid government in 1994. In order to address the disparities present within the country and the inability of the government to meet the needs of the disadvantaged, NGOs emerged as a possible solution and development alternative. This study aims to understand how NGOs currently operating in Durban, South Africa negotiate their role as intermediaries between donors and community members. Focusing on the perspectives of experts who work for justice-oriented NGOs, each participant’s understanding of their organization’s intermediary position is explored: what constitutes this role, how it is shaped, and how it is executed.

Qualitative data was collected for this study through semi-structured interviews in which participants were encouraged to take the conversation in whichever direction they felt most appropriate. Despite this open format, common themes emerged regarding participants’ understanding of their organization’s role as an intermediary. Sustained connections with communities were ever present, as each NGO’s work revolved around community input. Further, even amidst funding challenges, NGOs stayed true to their values and the beneficiaries they serve. In this way, each NGO’s role as an intermediary was significantly influenced by their connection to communities. Additionally, government inadequacy led to the initial foundation of each participant’s NGO and continued to impact the work each organization did and the way this work was carried out. Ultimately, this study showed that participants’ NGOs can and do create transformative development in the communities that they serve.
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Explanation of Frequently Used Acronyms

**NGO**- Non-Governmental Organization\(^1\)

**NPO**- Non-Profit Organization

\(^1\) NGOs are part of the non-profit sector, and thus, by definition, can also be called NPOs.
Introduction

Though some may have believed that the fall of apartheid in South Africa would bring relief from racial disparity and vast inequality, this reality has not yet been realized. In fact, despite the development of pro-poor government policies such as social transfers that now reach sixteen million poor South Africans, income inequality still abounds in the country (Gavin Keeton, 2014, 29). As discussed by the World Bank in their overview of South Africa:

South Africa remains a dual economy with one of the highest inequality rates in the world, perpetuating inequality and exclusion. With an Income Gini that ranges between 0.66 and 0.70, the top decile of the population accounts for more than 58% of the country’s income, while the bottom decile accounts for 0.5%, and the bottom half less than 8%. This makes South Africa one of the most consistently unequal countries in the world (2016, n.p.).

Even twenty-three years into democracy, this vast inequality can be seen and experienced concretely through South Africa’s dual healthcare system and two-tiered education system (Triegaardt, 2006, 1).

In the post-apartheid context, this means that the white minority still enjoys privileges and access to resources that the black majority does not, as socioeconomic divisions are cut sharply across racial lines. Specifically, as reported by Statistics South Africa, nine out of ten poor people in 2011 were black Africans, a proportion that has continuously increased since 2006 (2014, 27). Coupled with the fact that 80.7% of South Africa’s population is Black, (Statistics South Africa, 2016, 7), the sheer disparity between races is evident. Not only does this present a host of social and moral problems that have their roots in an exclusionary and segregated system, but it also renders black Africans incapable of realizing their right to equality as guaranteed to them by the South African government (South African Government, 1996, 1). What’s more, in that poverty and lack of access go hand-in-hand, the poorest of the poor are unable to support themselves. Justice becomes crucial in this landscape to ensure that the
disadvantaged have the same opportunities to succeed as those at the top. So, where can justice be found? Who will represent the needs and rights of the poor?

Advocacy NGOs emerge as possible facilitators of bridging the gap between the policy promises of the South Africa Constitution and the reality of the country. Since their beginning, NGOs have played a key role in development, focusing upon the needs of their beneficiaries. Positioned between donors and community members, these organizations are able to connect directly with the disadvantaged to promote “bottom-up” systems of support that take local realities into account (Banks and Hulme, 2012, 12). In the context of South Africa and so many other countries where the government is unable to address the needs of its people on its own, NGOs are often situated at the center of the fight for rights, justice, and a more equitable society.

In my study, I aimed to understand inequality and justice through the lens of NGOs. How are NGOs attempting to promote and uphold justice for the disadvantaged amidst a changing landscape characterized by growing needs and requirements? How do these organizations deliver upon their commitments to both donors and community members, and what defines these interactions? To better comprehend the unique limitations and advantages NGOs face, I focused on the perspectives of NGOs themselves. Further, instead of evaluating these organizations as successes or failures in their efforts to address public interests and attend to donors, I wanted to shed light on what being an intermediary looks like, what shapes this role, and how each NGO executes it. In aiming to address these issues, my larger research question became: How do NGOs in Durban, South Africa negotiate their role as intermediaries between donors and community members?
Context and Literature Review

NGOs in South Africa

Lauren Stuart, in her analysis on the South African NGO sector, quotes Weisbrod (1986) who proposes, “Nonprofit provision of collective goods will be large in societies with high levels of inequality in individuals’ effective demand for collective goods or high degrees of religious or ethnic heterogeneity” (2013, n.p.). Such is the case in South Africa, where the apartheid government strove to create a society of segregation and mass disparity, the effects of which are still felt today. Initially, the rise of the NGO sector began with reductions in public expenditures and state-provided services in the 1980s and 1990s (Banks, Hulme, and Edwards, 2014, 708). With less money and fewer resources allocated to providing for people, the NGO sector flowered, and organizations were at once positioned at the forefront of development. Before 1994, civil societies largely worked in opposition of apartheid in South Africa, and NGOs often had a democracy-promoting role (708; 711), a crucial focus of social activism at the time.

After the fall of the apartheid government, democratization meant that opportunities to contribute to the new Republic’s society abounded. The primary aim of NGOs thus became “improving the living conditions of people through development in general” in order to combat the inequality of the country (Nzimakwe, 2008, 90). Not only did NGOs grow substantially in number, but they were accompanied by legislation such as the NPO Act of 1997 published by the Department of Social Development which called for “every organ of the state” to coordinate policies to “promote, support and enhance the capacity of nonprofit organizations” (6). In the landscape of a new democratic government and society, collaboration amongst sectors was emphasized and the ability of NGOs to make tangible differences was realized.
Today, the NGO sector within South Africa boasts “roughly 100,000 registered nonprofit organizations” coupled with around “50,000 unregistered ones,” and the sector remains one of growth (2013, n.p.). Governmental documents such as the National Development Plan continue to applaud NGOs for their work, bringing particular attention to how the government “relies mainly on NGO welfare organizations to provide professional social services” (South African Government, 2012, 334). In fact, the South African nonprofit sector plays a vital part in assisting the government in fulfilling its constitutional mandate. Wyngaard argues that the socio-economic rights enshrined in the constitution would be “out of reach for most South Africans if not for the presence of a vibrant and active nonprofit sector” (2013, n.p.). Thus, NGOs within South Africa continue in their attempts to address widening socioeconomic divides, responding to basic needs that are not being met by the government (Nzimakewe, 2008, 91).

The Purpose of NGOs

The Independent Code of Governance for Non-profit Organisations in South Africa, a document made by and for non-profits, discusses the main purpose of NPOs, which include NGOs:

The major purpose of NPOs is therefore to meet a need or advance a purpose in the public interest. They are a means for communities to share resources; demonstrate concerns; promote values; and demonstrate a shared responsibility for those within society who are in need, or have difficulty in caring adequately for themselves (Heyns and Ritchie, 2012, 4).

Throughout this publication, responsibility to beneficiaries remains a crucial consideration, as the source goes on to explain that NPOs as values-based institutions must “stand in a position of trust to their various constituencies—including beneficiaries, donors, and society as a whole” (Heyns and Ritchie, 2012, 1). This understanding is not unique, however, and instead is one that is largely agreed upon within existing literature.
As McGann and Johnstone describe, the NGO community “holds one of the most significant roles internationally in maintaining accountability in the private sector, public sector, and international bureaucracies” (2005, 168-169). In so doing, NGOs act as agents in ensuring that institutions of power are responsible to the people they are supposed to serve. In South Africa, this notion of serving beneficiaries relates to the NGO sector’s assistance in the country’s transition to democracy (Hearn, 2000, 915; Kamat, 2003, 65; McGann and Johnstone, 2005, 162). In this way, NGOs attended to the social, economic, and political ills of apartheid which affected so many.

Beyond the notion that NGOs’ purpose is to advance public interests and address the needs of their beneficiaries, one scholar, Al Kaplan, puts forth another perspective:

The doing of the NGO is an activist, an alternative, doing. The NGO that is worthy of the name will always deliver its message with a quality of thinking that goes further and deeper than the prevailing thinking that is taking place around it. And it will stimulate and kindle the flickering flames of thinking that make up its constituency and context. The NGO can never become bureaucratic (or it slips into another organisation’s way of doing and being). It can never become doctrinaire; its very reason for being is to help the human project evolve beyond the point it has reached (Davidoff, Kaplan, and Smith, 2008, 9).

As such, NGOs are to separate themselves from the bureaucracy and must use their capacity as thinkers to illuminate solutions to community obstacles, propelling their beneficiaries and the world toward positive change.

**Relationship with Government**

To many academics, the purpose of NGOs directly relates to their relationship with government. For example, Nzimakwe, quoting Reddy (1996), comments upon how the NGO sector has emerged as a key player in “responding to basic needs that are not being met either by the government or the market” (2008, 91). Largely, this lack of
response to basic needs presents itself through gaps in government services which fuel both donor and community frustrations. As stated by Banks and Hulme, perceived failures in state-led approaches led people to begin considering NGOs as people-centered development alternatives and assigning them this role (2012, 3). As NGOs continued to be viewed favorably for their methods of working with the poor, official agencies saw them as more effective and efficient than their government counterparts (Banks and Hulme, 2012, 5; Edwards and Hulme, 1998, 962).

However, despite the inherent separation between government and non-governmental organizations, Kamat states that several analysts suggest a partnership between the entities is needed to best serve society (2003, 65). This sentiment was echoed at the NPO Summit on Service Delivery in South Africa: “Since the dawn of democracy, there is a growing need for the sector to continue partnering with the government and other relevant stakeholders to implement development projects/programmes aimed at improving people’s lives” (SANGOCO and SANGNeT, 2014, n.p.). Thus, in order for NGOs to best fulfil their purpose of addressing the needs of their beneficiaries, they must fill gaps in government capacity while also staying committed to collaboration with the government.

Development

Crucial to the growth of the NGO sector is its presumed community-based role in development, as is elucidated by Banks and Hulme when they claim, “In the wake of failed top-down development discourse, NGOs were seen to offer the sole organisational

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2 Though this word has many connotations, some of which are problematic, I use it here for clarity of understanding as it is widely used in existing literature.
forms that could implement the global commitment to ‘bottom-up’ development” (2012, 9). NGOs are then understood as potential agents for development, and to some even considered the “sweet-hearts” of development (Banks, Hulme, and Edwards, 2014, 708), expected to utilize on-the-ground approaches to community organization, service provision, and policy and advocacy work (Nzimakwe, 2008, 92). Central to this “bottom-up” development is “respecting, listening to, learning from, ‘handing over the stick to’, and empowering, one’s lowers, and encouraging and enabling them to do the same” (Chambers, 1994, 4). Although existing literature largely agrees on the advantages of NGOs as agents of development, is this “bottom-up,” community-centered approach actually occurring? And if it is, is it creating the type of development that experts expect?

Generally, academics argue that it is not. In the policy research report Localizing Development: Does Participation Work?, The World Bank fleshes out the reality that although community participation has resulted in some success, this is ultimately limited to service delivery, as this approach has shown no benefit for reducing poverty (Mansuri and Rao, 2012). In this way, though the presumed community-centered development that NGOs execute may work in some cases, it is incomplete. Banks and Hulme, referencing Bebbington (2004) claim that development is an “ongoing process, emphasizing radical, systemic alternatives that seek different ways of organizing the economy, social relationships, and politics” (2012, 8). After explaining this concept, the authors substantiate the claims of the World Bank in arguing that “as a result of internal and external pressures, most NGO efforts remain palliative rather than transformative (Banks and Hulme, 2012, 8).
Though Robert Chambers mentions that this may be due to the increasing size of some NGOs that become more like “hierarchical government organisations,” and thus void their ability to use “bottom-up” development processes (1994, 4), scholars such as Banks, Hulme, and Edwards point to the donors’ narrow emphasis on “results” and “value for money” as taking away from NGOs abilities to meet “long-term goals of social justice and transformation” (2014, 707;708). Thus, regardless of the reason why, NGOs’ lack of delivery of “bottom-up” development is apparent in existing literature.

**Relationship with Beneficiaries**

As has been discussed, existing literature largely supports the idea that the purpose of NGOs is to serve beneficiaries and those in need. Their relationships with their beneficiaries, often community members, then, is defined by this purpose. As Nzimakwe describes, NGO-community relations involve NGOs “identifying community needs and responding to them flexibly,” as NGOs’ primary objectives are to “render assistance to individuals or developing communities in order to promote sustainable development” (2008, 96; 90). Additionally, when “individuals cannot accomplish certain tasks alone,” NGOs become the organizations on which they depend to “change or challenge the existing structures and processes underlying exclusion or disadvantage” (Banks and Hulme, 2012, 22). In fact, Lauren Stuart links the rise in civil society organizations, globally and within South Africa, with citizens’ needs to connect with entities which “can represent them in the face of states of every-increasing size” (2013, n.p.).

However, despite NGOs initially emerging to meet community needs, accountability to beneficiaries is now being set aside (Abouassi, 2012, 1-4; Banks, Hulme, and Edwards, 2014). Principally, existing literature describes this shift from their community-centered purpose as one stemming from donor requirements and funding limitations. This reality is illustrated by
Inyathelo: The South African Institute of Advancement, as the group details the results of a survey of the NGO sector in which 80 percent of organizations reported experiencing “significant funding cuts in the last year,” which forced NGOs to “scale back services to beneficiaries” (Inyathelo: The South African Institute for Advancement, 2014, 7). Thus, discussing the nature of donor-NGO relationships helps clarify the reasons behind weakening community-NGO connections.

**Relationship with Donors**

In describing relationships with donors, academics tend to focus upon how the implementation of donor requirements have affected NGOs. As declared by Bornstein, the spread of donor-promoted priorities, tools, training and reporting standards can “profoundly affect development practice and the shape of civil society and formal NGOs within it” (2003, 394). Existing literature typically explains this “profound affect” as one that directly altered the NGO-beneficiary relationship. From Hudock’s perspective, NGOs’ limited influence due to their increased involvement with official donors negatively affects beneficiaries of development assistance (2000, 1). For example, the process of “increasing professionalization” and accountability was one that several academics discussed as part of this increased involvement with donors (Banks, Hulme, and Edwards, 2014, 710; Banks and Hulme, 2012, 13; Bornstein, 395; Stuart, 2013, n.p.). In this process, which includes monitoring and evaluation, “local ties are often weakened and core values diluted” (Banks, Hulme, and Edwards, 2014, 710) as professionalism can result in NGOs becoming “more like the bodies from which they acquire funding, than the societies they intend to represent” (Stuart, 2013, n.p.). As Banks, Hulme, and Edwards describe:
Given their dependence on donor funds increasingly demanding measurable ‘results’, NGOs must prioritize their functional accountability to donors (in terms of targets and outputs) over their broader goals of empowerment for poor or marginalized groups (2014, 710).

In this way, increasing measures of accountability to donors can lead to blurred lines of accountability to community members. Instead of staying true to their values, NGOs are tempted to “traverse the path they were early advised against, not to simply adopt the development agendas of others” in order to secure funding (Dhanani and Connolly, 2014, 16).

Amidst a landscape of changing funding patterns resulting from the global financial and economic crisis, NGOs have suffered immensely (Huyse and De Bruyn, 2015, 6). For many NGOs in developing countries, sparse funding opportunities have led to them falling victim to the “dependency trap” in which NGOs are often sustaining funding “at the expense of their core mission” (Abouassi, 2012, 16). In this way, community needs are unmet in the face of NGOs trying to keep pace amongst revising donor preferences, including professionalization and funding withdrawals (Abouassi, 2012, 18).

At the same time, however, the efforts of donors to support NGOs was elaborated upon by Nzmakwe, referencing Davids et. al (2005):

Despite their limitations, international donor agencies have been encouraging the growth of NGOs, and have given more funds to them than to governments. These international agencies are of the opinion that the empowering role of NGOs in Africa and other parts of the world and their comparative advantage over bigger development agencies within the public and private sector outweigh their limitations (Nzmakwe, 2008, 96).

Further, Bornstein claims that “some donors and NGOs have made systematic efforts to resolve the potentially contradictory imperatives of enhanced accountability, effectiveness, participation and partnership” (2003, 395). Thus, despite the limitations of the donor-NGO relationship that
existing literature discusses, some efforts persist to improve donor-NGO interactions and preserve the benefit to community members.

Role as an Intermediary

In Banks, Hulme, and Edwards’s article *NGOs, States, and Donors Revisited: Still Too Close for Comfort?* the academics shed light on the importance of NGOs’ as intermediaries:

In a world that is increasingly integrated and connected, the intermediary position that defines most NGOs remains a significant advantage as they continue striving to demonstrate what works for poverty reduction. Their ability to build links, coordinate between sectors, and apply their knowledge of local contexts mean that NGOs could strengthen their roles in social transformation even as delivery functions decline (2014, 713).

In this way, the position of NGOs both outside of the government and between donors and community members allows them unique advantages in acting as agents for transformation and development. Elaborating further upon the various abilities inherent in the intermediary role of NGOs, the authors discuss the power of these organizations in “bridging divides, strengthening and consolidating otherwise fragmented associations, and providing legitimacy to grassroots groups” (713). Towards the end of the article, the authors reflect on the idea that to be successful as intermediaries, NGOs must attend to beneficiaries:

The secret of success for intermediaries is to be and act ‘in service to’ something larger than themselves and their own, self-generated agendas – to move from control to facilitation and from being donors and decision-makers to co-creators and translators. (Banks, Hulme, and Edwards, 2014, 714)

Though other pieces of existing literature may mention the intermediary position of NGOs, none define this position quite as intricately as Banks, Hulme, and Edwards’s article. This understanding of NGOs as intermediaries is central to my study and, further, the roles NGOs play given this position.
Gaps in Existing Literature

Though existing literature elaborates upon experts’ opinions of NGOs’ purpose, role and themes regarding their relationship with donors and community members, NGOs’ personal understandings of these topics are not paramount in research. Further, the role of NGOs as intermediaries is not one that is fully discussed or elaborated upon by many academics. In my study, I address both of these limitations in existing research by creating a platform for employees of current NGOs to discuss their perspectives on how their organizations define and execute their role as intermediaries.
Methodologies

Sampling Plan

My sample consisted of nine English-speaking adult employees of NGOs focused on issues of justice in the Durban area. Two pairs of participants were from the same organization, and thus, my sample represented seven different NGOs. These organizations included those focused upon social, environmental, political, socioeconomic justice, etc. Employees were largely limited to those that self-identified as having an in-depth understanding of their organization, including directors, process facilitators, and other experts. Though I recruited some participants by calling their organizations and setting up appointments, the majority of participants were recommended to me by my advisor Davine Thaw, who gave me personal contact information of experts in different NGOs. Her relationship with these participants created a point of connection that resulted in faster response times that were necessary given the time constraints of my study.

The use of convenience sampling and the nature of my study limited the participants with which I spoke. My study examines existing NGOs that are interacting in the current context, and thus my scope was limited to organizations currently operating. Through majority convenience sampling, I was undoubtedly limited to the specific contacts that my advisor had within the industry. In fact, I found that the majority of the NGOs within my study had been operating for several years and that the participants I spoke with were frequently directors who had been with their organizations since their foundations. Further, while each participant was willing to answer my questions in-depth, my status as an outsider and my lack of previous relationship with participants may have influenced the information they were willing to share, especially regarding
the struggles and limitations of their organizations. In this way, biases may be present in the data I collected.

Another limitation of my research was the necessity for English-speaking respondents to ensure accurate data collection and understanding of consent forms. Given these factors, the NGOs with which I interviewed were not representative of the larger population of justice-oriented NGOs within Durban and as such, my results are not generalizable.

**Data Collection**

I conducted semi-structured interviews with experts from NGOs to allow participants to expand upon my questions freely and openly. Though I employed a one-on-one style of interviewing with the majority of my respondents, I gave participants the option of inviting other experts from the organization to take part in our conversation. In choosing to do so, I hoped to give participants the option, if they had invited another person to the interview, to choose who fielded particular questions. Despite the fact that speaking with multiple people from each organization was not a primary focus of my study, this approach brought a range of perspectives from different employees at the same NGO. In this way, through either style the interview, I was able to gain a better understanding of each participant’s view.

I used a list of prepared questions to guide the interview which covered the background and relationships of each NGO, as well as the outlook each participant had about the future (See Appendix 1). These questions acted as a framework for understanding the NGO, though I largely allowed participants to carry on the conversation in whatever direction they felt most appropriate. Doing so allowed me to ask a variety of personalized probing questions that ultimately led me to understand how each justice-oriented NGO operated as an intermediary and what shaped this role from the perspective of participants.
Interviews took place in the NGOs at which participants work in order to provide them with a sense of familiarity and create a context for the conversation. This space gave participants the opportunity to point to annual reports, poster presentations, and publications they had created and share them with me. Some used these pieces to spark conversation, while others displayed them as an example of their NGO’s work, demonstrating the claims they made.

I recorded interviews using a recording device on my phone when participant permission was given. I used hand-written notes to document salient quotes and ideas in my notebook which proved useful in creating probing questions and when needing clarification during interviews. I then transcribed each audio recording on to my laptop or used notes as my basis of transcription when participants did not consent to audio recording.

In securing secondary sources of data, I used extensive searches on several search engines and through SIT’s library. Further, I utilized NGO-related blogs and news sources to locate up-to-date pieces that reflected the current situation facing South African NGOs.

Data Analysis

After collecting my qualitative data, I arranged it according to interview question. I then thematically analyzed the data, looking specifically at how participants described their organization’s role as well as NGOs’ role in general. After thematically analyzing the data, I conducted a literature search to find articles relevant to the larger themes or general opinions that emerged throughout my interviews, utilizing some of the sources I had already obtained for my literature review. I crystallized my findings with existing research to create a more holistic analysis of my participants’ responses. Rather than judging individual NGOs for their relationships or perspectives, I sought to expose the complexity of the intermediary position NGOs hold.
Ethics

Each participant within my study gave informed consent to be interviewed by signing a consent form (See Appendix 2) after I explained how I would protect their privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. Each meeting took place in a space convenient and familiar to participants, including mostly offices in the NGOs in which they worked. Before recording conversations, I asked for the permission of each participant and assured them that the recording would be safeguarded. I further informed each participant that my project had the potential to be published online and emphasized that they were able to skip questions as well as withdraw their participation in the study on their own accord. I did not include the names of participants or organizations unless participants specifically asked to be identified in the study, and the director of the NGO also agreed for their organization’s name to be used. Even when given permission to use personal identifiers, I chose to leave these out when I felt that identifying a participant could have the potential to damage the reputation or relationships their NGO has.

At the beginning and end of each interview, I created a space for discussion in which participants were able to ask me any questions they had regarding my studies or my interest in NGOs. In this way, in conjunction with using a semi-structured interview style, I aimed to create a conversational tone. In describing my study, I emphasized that my project was focused mostly upon gaining understanding about NGOs within the South African context, highlighting my desire to learn from participants above all else. I offered each participant a copy of the Findings and Analysis and Discussion sections of my study so that they could see my final product and potentially learn from the approaches of other NGOs in the Durban area.

This study adheres to the SIT Study Abroad Human Subjects policies and the SIT Statement on Ethics, and was also approved by the Local Review Board (See Appendix 3).
Findings

In that participants were welcome to answer questions and discuss their organizations in any manner they felt was appropriate, I largely found that answers to questions became blended—they tended to address not only my specific queries but were also constructed to address other details about the work of NGOs and participants’ organizations. In this way, themes arose that reflected both their take on the questions I asked as well as their overall feelings towards the NGO sector and its significance.

Necessity for the NGO Sector

In every interview I conducted, participants were keen to establish the importance of the NGO sector and the work that NGOs do. In discussing their NGOs in particular, all nine participants reflected upon the idea that their organizations existed as a result of the inability of the government to meet the needs of the people. This sentiment was illustrated by Rose Williams when she declared, “I suppose in an ideal world, one would think that the state would look after issues around social and environmental justice and that is not the case. And I think that’s where NGOs really have a very important role to play” (Rose Williams, pers comm., 2017). Largely, the necessity for NGOs was expressed through their ability to add to society by creating common good. Reflected by Desmond D’sa:

So I think it’s critical that each NGO is given the respect and support for the work they do, because without that, the society would be less, and we would have more danger for societies. I would say that I support the NGOs no matter what they do; they have to work, they have to do their work (pers comm., 2017).

Directly linking the work of NGOs to the success of the somewhat newly formed democracy in South Africa, Sharita Samuel further contributed to the idea that NGOs serve as a necessary sector positioned alongside the government:
I think NGOs serve one of the most significant roles in any country and are an integral part of a civil society movement that forms an essential check and balance to any governance environment. I think we form the core, we represent support, we represent a voice, we represent a medium of challenge that is essential to a healthy democracy that is willing to embrace indicators of how it is serving its people (pers comm., 2017).

However, beyond voicing their support of the NGO sector and its worth, each participant elaborated upon the specific roles they felt made NGOs so crucial in upholding justice for those usually dismissed or underserved by the government. Specifically, participants shed light upon how NGOs could use their positions, both between donors and community members and outside of the government, to act as watchdogs, connectors, and entities that can “bridge gaps.”

**Watch Dogs**

In discussing the role of NGOs as watch dogs, participants focused specifically on their organizations’ abilities to expose injustices and fight for people’s rights. This role applied specifically to the government, as Desmond D’sa elaborated, “in the absence of us [NGOs], the government won’t do its work. We’re like the watchdogs, the voice of the voiceless” (pers comm., 2017). For the three participants that chose to speak about this role as paramount to their practice, their watch dog function equated to realizable results for community members. Not only were participants’ NGOs able to “call a spade a spade in terms of ensuring environmental justice and human rights” (Bongani Mtembo, pers comm., 2017), but they used whistle-blowing to enact change within the communities that they served. In the case of the Legal Resources Centre, its role as a watchdog allowed it to “make sure that the promises that are made to ordinary people are translated into laws and from laws, translated into delivery and action” (Sharita Samuel, pers comm., 2017); whereas for the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, this came in the form of a complaint line that helps the organization track the
community’s concerns about pollution from surrounding refineries (Desmond D’sa, pers comm., 2017).

Connectors

Though participants used a variety of words to describe their place between donors and community members, NGOs’ ability to serve as connectors was a central focus of each interview. As reflected upon by Bobby Peek, “But what is the role of NGOs? It’s to play a very open, very transparent role that links resources with people. Links people with people, struggle with struggle, and make sure that there’s always a type of democratic process built on the ground” (pers comm., 2017). For some, this meant “linking” communities to the resources that they already had, whether this was by facilitating discussions in community amenities that were previously under-utilized or connecting concerned citizens to branches of the government that could best assist them (Rama Naidu, pers comm., 2017; Bongani Mtembo, pers comm., 2017).

For others, their intermediary status meant ensuring that all benefits of the NGO’s work were allocated to communities. In regards to donor aid, this could signify “being the conduit between the big funders and the community-based organizations” (Rama Naidu, pers comm., 2017). Such a role was important given that many illustrated the idea, as summarized by Anonymous Participant 1, that “donors want to help but don’t know how to do it; the community wants access to funds but doesn’t know how to get it” (pers comm., 2017). In operating in the space between donors and community members, then, this duty of connection was apparent. Beyond simply acting as a conduit, however, an emphasis was placed upon the way that an NGO executed this role. For Desmond D’sa, this meant “guiding people, empowering them, and telling them how to do things,” while Sharita Samuel commented on the way NGOs should facilitate the
connection between donors and communities, namely “responsibly, transparently, and competently” (pers comm., 2017; pers comm., 2017).

**Bridging the Gap**

Three participants in particular spoke about NGOs “bridging the gap” as a crucial process of their intermediary position. Specifically, Rama Naidu attested to the importance of bridging the gap given government shortfalls:

> It [an NGO] is supposed to be an interface between the government and the people. They [NGOs] are the intermediaries. They [NGOs] should not be just the service providers for government. They should not be just the gap-fillers for government. But they should be able to bridge the gap being the voice of, the concerns of citizens and to articulate those needs. Government has the resources and the policies in place, but they’re often, they’re very disconnected from people (pers comm., 2017).

This understanding of “bridging the gap” was also shared by Rose Williams and Bobby Peek who described their organizations fulfilling this role after they brought recognition to two groups who were previously considered “faceless individuals” by the government (Rose Williams, pers comm., 2017; Bobby Peek, pers comm., 2017). Further, though Anonymous Participant 1 largely agreed that NGOs “bridge gaps,” they questioned the actual ability of NGOs in South Africa to do so as NGOs are “filling this niche but it’s hard. It’s difficult because of the political situation and the government, they were more stable before, and the disparity [in South Africa] is ridiculously out of hand” (Anonymous Participant 1, pers comm., 2017).

**Community-Centered Approaches**

> “Everything we do is to serve people. Which has also resulted in a mass of people understanding that the work [of South Durban Community Environmental Alliance] is critical to support them” (Desmond D’sa, pers comm., 2017). This quote illustrates an idea that all nine participants stressed— employing community-centered approaches in their work. In Bobby
Peek’s case, this meant that communities were deeply-rooted in the purpose of the organization, “I can’t speak about groundWork without speaking about community people or community organizations” (pers comm., 2017).

For six participants, listening directly to the community was crucial in determining their needs and delivering solutions. Specifically, Sharita Samuel reflected:

When more frequent clients are coming in or are consulting us about hardships that they are experiencing, then that is the writing on the wall that we have to respond to. That is the best indicator we have, whether at local government level, provincial government level, national government level. So pretty much, our work is dictated to by what is happening to people that depend on us for legal services and what they are reporting. It is very much client and community based (pers comm., 2017).

Similarly, Anonymous Participant 1 declared, “community priorities are identified through feedback and requests,” and through listening to community members, their organization was “better able to structure help desks, so we could create help desks hours and seminars that actually help people” (pers comm., 2017).

In Bongani Mtembo’s case, the focus of his organization was on the “working relationship” it builds with communities, one in which work shops were held in community spaces and where “different cries or different needs” motivated the organization to say “okay, how does this fit into what we do, how can we include this as part of our projects or part of our problems” (pers comm., 2017). Though not the original focus of her organization, Rose William communicated that through continuous reflection on her NGO, “a rethink of Biowatch’s work and the start of working with communities happened” and continues to be a central focus, as the NGO tries to link its work “back wherever possible to what’s happening in communities” (pers comm., 2017).

Still, others understood this approach as instrumental in ensuring their NGO was truly creating impact: “They [community members] first hand report to us of their appreciation of our
services. So those are our indicators of whether we are actually making a difference” (Sharita Samuel, pers comm., 2017). In the same way, elaborating upon the advantages of the on-the-ground position of communities, Rama Naidu expressed the necessity of this approach:

> Always keeping the spotlight on them, not on us [NGOs]. We are a support and a resource to these organizations, because they’re on the ground. They know the context, they know the situation in their communities, they have relationships in those communities already that we don’t have. So we say why the hell should we start to do all that work, if you’re already there, and you are networked, it makes far more sense to build you, than try to do it myself (pers comm., 2017).

Despite participants articulating that holding communities central to their approach as NGOs was not always an easy process, it remained central to their understanding of their work as organizations and their role as intermediaries.

**Empowerment**

Empowerment emerged as fundamental to this community-centered approach by directly involving communities in the process of upholding justice for themselves. For participants, empowerment, rather than creating one-time fixes, is vital in creating sustainable change. In Baphiwe Nxumalo’s perspective, this process of empowerment was necessary to stand in solidarity with the community:

> We need to stand in solidarity with the poor, stand in solidarity with the oppressed, stand with people in poverty. So that is actually our main mandate as NGOs, that we need to empower communities more than anything else. Because we have programs, we need to go to communities and empower communities and educate communities so that the communities can be able to know their rights and to actually do likewise, stand on their own (pers comm., 2017).

Likewise, Nokulunga Khumalo equated success to people “taking full ownership of their own development,” and being able to confront challenges and “fix those, rather than someone outside telling them [the community] what to do” (pers comm., 2017).
Addressing the power dynamic inherent between the government and disadvantaged communities, Rama Naidu further discussed empowerment as a means for “changing the narrative” and allowing community members to “unleash their power” outside of a realm where “they’ve been told over and over you are powerless, you are useless, you are poor, you have nothing, you are illiterate, you’re uneducated” (pers comm., 2017). To address this, movement building, as utilized by groundWork and Biowatch, becomes useful in creating a supportive structure for community empowerment (Bobby Peek, pers comm., 2017; Rose Williams, pers comm., 2017). As Rose Williams echoed:

And I think there is an intention about it [empowerment] which is in part to ensure that we don’t do anything to the independence of communities so that we can support their independence and their actions and for them to speak for themselves and not for us to always be in the position of speaking for farmers. Wherever possible, it’s best for others to speak for themselves (pers comm., 2017).

Thus, taking power dynamics inherent in the lives of the disadvantaged into account, the promotion of independence and community capacity lies at the heart of empowerment as a community-centered approach.

Using empowerment, NGOs can play the role of builders by strengthening communities to eventually hold their own. In this way, communities are then able to utilize their resources to drive development in the direction of their needs. Then, they can support themselves outside of the scope of the work of NGOs, because, as argued by Nokulunga Khumalo, “there should come a time where the community doesn’t need you [an NGO] anymore, then you would have done your job” (pers comm., 2017).

Collaboration

Collaboration emerged as yet another theme touched on extensively by participants, both in the context of a barrier and a solution to ensuring the meaningful work of NGOs. Several
participants illustrated how collaboration helps to shape their organizations, contributing to their triumphs. For example, in the case of the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, all different communities of color came together to form “one non-racial environmental justice group” to fight for their constitutional right to a healthy environment (Desmond D’sa, pers comm., 2017). Similarly, Baphiwe Nxumalo elucidated that the biggest success of her organization is its ability to create spaces where “all different denominations come together” and people can share their “strengths and weaknesses to do projects that they didn’t think they would [be able to] do” (pers comm., 2017). Further, in response to my question regarding what it will take for NGOs to be successful in the future, Rose Williams responded, “to work together, not to work in isolation” (pers comm., 2017). For Rama Naidu, this collaboration, or connectability, directly related to power:

So we work a lot with the community-based organization, local neighborhood structures, all those kind of things wherever local people get together around a common interest. And we say, we can support you to see that you are connected, and that you do connect and can sustain that connectability. Then, you are able to have more power with those that already have power, because you are generally powerless as an individual. As a community, we have a lot of power (pers comm., 2017).

But how possible is collaboration amongst NGOs? Anonymous Participant 1 posited that their NGO experiences this type of cooperation within the sector, as it has partnerships with “other legal NGOs in the area filling their own separate niches” (pers comm., 2017). Also elucidated by Sharita Samuel in her explanation that her organization, she declares that Legal Resources Centre “works in collaboration with many other NGOs” to better serve the legal needs of the community (pers comm., 2017). Though this may be the case in their organizations, such a sentiment directly contrasts with Bobby Peek’s evaluation of NGOs in South Africa. He referred specifically to a competition over resources:
So there is this difficulty of NGOs, because they’re trying to make sure their money is not impacted upon, do not want to work with other NGOs, they’re very careful. So they’ll work with a community and then another NGO will come in and work with the same community, and the same community will have different positions, and so they’ll also be pulled apart. And so that is a challenge for me, it’s a challenge for NGOs moving forward (Bobby Peek, pers comm., 2017).

Thus, an environment such as this one can have negative effects on the communities that NGOs aim to serve. Rama Naidu further reflected this idea: “It has been really difficult to bring together even NGOs in this arena to see can we work together. Because they’re already suspicious of agendas and what you’re doing” (pers comm., 2017). Though no consensus was reached whether collaboration between NGOs was a reality, participants agreed that collaboration can affect the work of NGOs.

Similarly, when it comes to collaboration between the South African government and the NGO sector, several participants reported having “adversarial” relationships with the government or working in opposition to them (Bobby Peek, pers comm., 2017; Bongani Mtembo, pers comm., 2017; Des D’sa, pers comm., 2017; Rama Naidu, pers comm., 2017; Rose Williams, pers comm., 2017). Thus, a lack of collaboration abounds between these two entities, and despite their innate separation given the definition of NGOs, Rama Naidu expressed that “if government really saw civil society not as a competitor, but as a collaborator in terms of enhancing the power of the nation, then we could use resources a lot more wisely than we do” (pers comm., 2017). In this way, collaboration developed as a key component in executing NGOs’ role as intermediaries effectively.

**Accountability**

As stated previously, a community-centered approach was prevalent in each interview I conducted. When discussing their commitment to community members, around half of
participants spoke directly about the importance of systems of accountability. Largely, this reflected their desire to provide useful services for their beneficiaries and to create mutual understanding regarding the steadfast nature of the NGO-community relationship. This sense of accountability is summarized by Sharita Samuel: “So the span of our work is wide, but the responsibility is to do it well so that there is a realized and accountable relief that somebody can expect and can rely on that, and that gives them the assistance that we promise them” (pers comm., 2017). Further, accountability was often displayed through the particular programs or entities that NGOs had created. For the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, this took the form of a complaint line and community meetings through which people could hold the NGO accountable in addressing their grievances through contacting government (Bongani Mtembo, pers comm., 2017; Desmond D’sa, pers comm., 2017).

Accountability is also built into the relationships NGOs make. For example, Rama Naidu spoke extensively about creating an “equal partnership” with communities where organizations on the ground are encouraged to “fire” the Democracy Development Program if the NGO is not following through on its responsibilities (Rama Naidu, pers comm., 2017). Likewise, Rose Williams’ organization works with farmer representatives in several different communities and has created a relationship in which “there is space for people to say what they like and what they don’t like” and where an external facilitator is often used to create lines of open communication between farmers and the NGO (Rose Williams, pers comm., 2017).

What’s more, participants thought it crucial that other systems of accountability were in place in order for real work to be done and real benefit to be had. Notably, perhaps due to the fact each participant worked for an advocacy and justice-oriented NGO, the issue of government accountability was raised several times. In both Rama Naidu and Bobby Peek’s explanations,
they framed their incapability to hold government accountable as one of the biggest challenges for their organizations (Bobby Peek, pers comm., 2017; Rama Naidu, pers comm., 2017). In the absence of this accountability, detriment to the community followed:

The failure is just being able to hold government to account. The government and industry has clearly gone into a type of pact where they will purposefully, meaningful, and quite, with some organized process, try and weaken laws or try and weaken the system so no one can be held accountable (Bobby Peek, pers comm., 2017).

The failures have really been about the inability to engage government in a meaningful way. To talk about issues of public participation, to talk about accountability to the population that they’re meant to serve. So that lay has been difficult. So for us, it’s been a bit of a minefield to try to negotiate that with municipalities as you do the work. Because they are the ones with the resources. In terms of the law, they’re supposed to have public participation processes about everything, but that’s not happening (Rama Naidu, pers comm., 2017).

Thus, the lack of government accountability is presented as an obstacle for the work of NGOs and one that can be an incredibly damaging to their efforts towards positive change in communities.

A mutual relationship of accountability between NGOs and donors was also discussed. Every participant mentioned the process of reporting and monitoring and evaluation as requirements of donors. Largely, these processes were seen as those that assured the donor that work was being done on the ground and thus helped NGOs retain funding (Anonymous Participant 1, pers comm., 2017; Bongani Mtembo, pers comm., 2017; Desmond D’sa, pers comm., 2017; Nokulunga Khumalo, pers comm., 2017; Rose Williams, pers comm., 2017). One participant went further to describe the obvious obligation their organization had to donors: “I think that you have to meet the needs of donors because you have signed a contract with them and you are contractually obliged. And you are accountable to them and you just have to ensure that; for me it’s pretty straight forward” (Sharita Samuel, pers comm., 2017).
On the other hand, participants also discussed the creation of structures which held donors accountable to NGOs. In Anonymous Participant 1’s case, a willingness of donors to create lines of accountability was sometimes present in the reporting process when donors asked their organization to “create recommendations for donors” and to explain “what works, what doesn’t work, and what is needed to make things work” (pers comm., 2017). Developing this idea further, one participant shed light on her NGO’s willingness to call out funders for the “absolutely unacceptable delay of funding” (A participant, pers comm., 2017). Thus, while accountability measures imposed by donors may be more concrete and recognized, systems exist to hold both donors and NGOs accountable.

**Confronting Power**

A chain of power exists between donors, NGOs, and community members that reflects the distribution of resources each has access to. With donors at the top of this chain, they have power over NGOs who are receiving aid. As the aid flows downwards, NGOs hold power over community members as they possess resources useful in community improvement. In this way, the people, often meant to be the beneficiaries in this system, are those left with the least amount of resources and the least power. Seven of nine participants interviewed mentioned this distribution of influence in their responses to the questions I posed, elucidating their awareness of this dynamic. At the same time, however, not all participants discussed all parts of this system of power, and instead focused on specific power relationships present in their organization.

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3 I have left out the name of the participant who shared this as to not jeopardize any of their organization’s relationships with donors.

4 See above.
Discussing the position of NGOs within the chain of power, Bobby Peek commented upon the inherent “middle-class” nature of these organizations and the resources they receive as a result:

But NGOs by the fact that the people operating in NGOs have a particular set of skills, and are in a sense middle class, makes it easier for money to flow into those organizations. The trick is then, when the money does flow into those organizations, how are those organizations using the money in a way that makes sure that people on the ground get best impact and best effectiveness for the money that NGOs have (pers comm., 2017).

It is then important that NGOs, as the resourceful and skilled organizations that they are, do not use this power to neglect their impact on the ground. Cognizance of this ideal is further illustrated by Rama Naidu, whose organization has worked on “dissolving even their power in those spaces” (pers comm., 2017). In this way, Democracy Development Program uses their position as an intermediary, and the power that they receive through this role, to further influence the way they execute it:

Our dialogues and conversations follow a format which inverts power and brings those voices of the margins into the center. That’s our philosophy of how we work. And that’s kept us going, even inside the organization, how we work with each other and work with others is guided by our principles like that (Rama Naidu, pers comm., 2017).

The two go on to discuss their willingness to challenge the standard power relationships NGOs have with their donors. They both shed light on the relationship of dependency that some NGOs form with donors, and then continued to address how they challenge this (Bobby Peek, pers comm., 2017; Rama Naidu, pers comm., 2017). Instead of “going out with a begging bowl” looking for any type of donor money, Rama Naidu remarks that his organization “inverted the power relationship” by not responding to donor calls, and instead, if they thought a program was worthwhile, “conceptualizing it, developing it, and then asking people if they are interested in funding it” (pers comm.,
In a similar manner, Bobby Peek spoke of his NGO’s confrontation with the donor-NGO power dynamic:

> They got quite pissed off that the NGO that receives money from them, we’re challenging them. And our position was, why can’t we challenge you? Because you’re giving us money doesn’t mean we have to keep quiet. And we challenged them and we’re prepared to challenge governments or the institutions that give us money, and you know we have no problem with that (pers comm., 2017).

The intermediary role of each of these participants’ organizations was thus influenced by confronting the power relationships intrinsic in donor-NGO relationship.

Other organizations also use power dynamics in guiding their work as NGOs. Shifting away from the donor-NGO-community dynamic in particular, several participants focused upon relationships with government. Rama Naidu elaborated upon the reality of power imbalance between NGOs and government as he stated, “There’s little chance of collaboration [with government]. So we find more that we have to work on engaging government in these partnerships when the relationship is basically unequal” (pers comm., 2017). Additionally, as discussed previously, several participants chose to comment on the accountability of government to people, and how the lack thereof negatively affects beneficiaries and influences their organizations’ work (Bobby Peek, pers comm., 2017; Rama Naidu, pers comm., 2017).

Five participants specifically noted that their organizations typically challenge the government to force it to better serve the community, whether through an environmental, social, or legal lens (Anonymous Participant 1, pers comm., 2017; Bongani Mtembo, pers comm., 2017; Desmond D’sa, pers comm., 2017; Rama Naidu, pers comm., 2017; Rose Williams, pers comm., 2017). For Bongani Mtembo and Baphiwe Nxumalo, the power dynamics between the government, NGOs, and communities emerged as a crucial
consideration for the work of their organizations, and for the work of NGOs in general.

Both noted the necessity of “speaking through to power,” as they agreed this was the only way to “actually lobby and advocate the government” (Baphiwe Nxumalo, pers comm., 2017) and “address human rights” (Bongani Mtembo, pers comm., 2017).

In this way, for those participants that discussed relationships of power, whether it was within the donor-NGO-community space or that involving the influence of the government, these dynamics influenced the way they understood as well as executed their role as intermediaries.

**Relationships with Donors**

Responses to my questions regarding each organization’s relationship with donors varied, not only among participants, but also between participants and the various donors they have. For example, when discussing their organization’s relationship with different donors, one participant used separate and distinct adjectives to describe each: “formal,” “informal and based on civil-society,” and “barely a relationship” (A participant, pers comm., 2017), showcasing this discordance. Meanwhile, Sharita Samuel described Legal Resources Centre’s various donor relationships collectively: “It’s healthy, it’s one of respect, it’s one of accountability” (pers comm., 2017).

Further, as has been stated, every participant mentioned the process of reporting, including monitoring and evaluation, when asked about the requirements of their donors. Though there were mixed responses as to whether organizations felt it necessary to meet all donor

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5 I have left out the name of the participant who shared this as to not jeopardize any of their organization’s relationships with donors.

6 See above footnote.
requirements, each interview included the mention of compliance with reporting and planning and monitoring activities. Nokulunga Khumalo expressed a common sentiment towards these processes,

I think also it [reporting, planning, monitoring and evaluation] does make sense, because it makes it easier for the donors to see, what is your objective, what are your activities, and how are those activities going to contribute to that objective. So it makes it easy for them to follow and also track if their contribution, because I think their worry is, we want to know if our contribution is making a difference in the communities that you work with, which makes sense (pers comm., 2017).

For four participants, this process was also useful in allowing their organizations to reflect on their activities and how well they had served their beneficiary communities (Bongani Mtembo, pers comm., 2017; Nokulunga Khumalo, pers comm., 2017; Rama Naidu, pers comm., 2017; Rose Williams, pers comm., 2017). Further, seven participants in total made either positive or no negative responses regarding reporting and its effect on their work (Baphiwe Nxumalo, pers comm., 2017; Bobby Peek, pers comm., 2017; Bongani Mtembo, pers comm., 2017; Desmond D’sa, pers comm., 2017; Nokulunga Khumalo, pers comm., 2017; Rama Naidu, pers comm., 2017; Rose Williams, pers comm., 2017; Sharita Samuel, pers comm., 2017). In this way, participants tended to see the value of reporting activities, and thus fulfilled these requirements of their donors.

NGOs’ role as connectors, as elaborated upon earlier in my findings, also emerged in conversations surrounding NGO-donor relationships. In particular, the differences between donor and community member needs and requirements acted as the landscape in which NGOs were able to link the two entities. All participants agreed that there could be differences between donor and community priorities, while several participants elaborated further that donors’ larger priorities were to help, but that they did not have the capacity or ability to do so, primarily because they are not on the ground (Anonymous Participant 1; Bobby Peek, pers comm., 2017;
Bongani Mtembo, pers comm., 2017; Nokulunga Khumalo, pers comm., 2017; Rama Naidu, pers comm., 2017). This idea is summarized by Anonymous Participant 1’s perspective on the matter:

Donors don’t actually come and visit on the ground, they think they know exactly what’s needed. Donor requirements, community requirements, they’re not completely at odds, but not completely in conjunction. Donors really want to help, but then they don’t know how to do it. And the community wants access but they don’t know how. NGO 1 is the middle man (pers comm., 2017).

Whether this connecting role was characterized by picking funders for specific projects whose requirements matched the needs of the communities (Sharita Samuel, pers comm., 2017), or “building understanding” between donors and communities, such a function was crucial in addressing the difference between community and donor needs. Thus, the relationship between NGOs and donors, however complicated or variable, influences how NGOs execute and define their role as intermediaries.

**Funding**

“And I suppose just on a financial level, I think many civil society organizations have been through very difficult financial times, and us as well, but at the moment, we’re still here” (Rose Williams, pers comm., 2017). In this quote, Rose Williams addressed an issue that was ever-present in my findings: that of funding as a limitation for NGOs. Though all of the participants with whom I spoke worked for organizations that were still functioning, six of them discussed the negative aspects of donor funding in their responses. Two participants described this idea broadly, determining that it was a challenge of countless NGOs, and something that was “completely normal” (Desmond D’sa, pers comm., 2017; Nokulunga Khumalo, pers comm., 2017). But beyond a vague challenge that plagued the everyday work of organizations, its direct
limitations were felt through the inability of organizations to do certain types of work. For Anonymous Participant 1, this was present through the lack of funding for advertising, a key component in spreading awareness to community members about NGO 1’s services, as well as in donors’ insistence on funding specific workshops or help desks as opposed to the overall purpose of their organization (pers comm., 2017). Similarly, Nokulunga expressed the limitations funding problems can present in her organization’s ability to reach communities:

But we cannot reach as many churches as we want to because the resources are limited. Therefore, you might find that we are working within a certain area, or with a certain number of churches in that area, or after a site of 2 years or 3 years of specific funding, it has dropped or someone else is funding, therefore we are going to the to do the work if the resources are no longer the same or maybe we have not found someone else to replace or fill in the gap. And there are things somethings that, even though that we follow our objectives and we continue with the same number of groups, still there are things that we feel, if we could push this group to another level, it would be beneficial, but we cannot (pers comm., 2017).

Further, three participants lamented the financial limitations NGOs in South Africa are facing in regards to the country no longer being considered a developing nation. Both Bobby Peek and Nokulunga mentioned that the changing funding climate for NGOs directly corresponded with South Africa’s classification as a middle-income country (Bobby Peek, pers comm., 2017; Nokulunga Khumalo, pers comm., 2017). At large, donors that withdraw funding because of this reason feel, as Bongani Mtembo puts it, “South African NGOs, they are able to fend for themselves” (pers comm., 2017). Nokulunga’s perception further exemplifies that this is an issue, because beyond losing funds for her organization, she fears that this new classification misrepresents the situation in South Africa, and is detrimental for development: “But [donors withdraw funding] without understanding that when they say South Africa is now developed, that development is still hanging somewhere up there, it doesn’t go to everyone” (pers comm., 2017).
Matching Agendas

In discussing funding limitations, participants shared a potential solution to this challenge. In fact, three expressed their ability to succeed in the realm of funding because their specific agendas matched those of their donors. In Rama Naidu’s case, his organization was started by an anchor funder who had a broad mandate to promote democracy, which ultimately allowed Democracy Development Program to not only carry out the type of work they wanted to, but also pick other funders that were willing to support the programs the NGO had already developed (pers comm., 2017). In this way, the anchor funder, whose mandate matched that of the NGO, acted as a source of stability for the NGO. When asked whether donors ever requested that her organization spend its budget on programs her NGO did not support, Rose Williams remarked:

I really like it when there is sort of a more collegial relationship with donors and that there is a close match between the donor agenda and ours. I can’t think of any time where there’s anything donors ask us to do that we actually don’t agree with…But then maybe we are choosing our donors to match [our NGO’s agenda] (pers comm., 2017).

Echoed by Sharita Samuel, who believed that meeting the needs of beneficiaries requires that what her organization does and how they do it “can’t alter”: “The donors also have objectives and we also have objectives. And when the two twin and work together, that is how the goal is accomplished” (pers comm., 2017). Thus, the role of these NGOs as intermediaries were positively affected and shaped by their donors’ matching agendas.

Staying True to Values

However, amidst a funding landscape that can deeply impact upon NGOs, five participants shared their obligation to stay true to their values. Firstly, Nokulunga Khumalo
demonstrates the general awareness participants had of NGOs’ temptation to stray from their programs and purposes in stating,

“I won’t lie, it does happen sometimes, in other organization[s], because a donor has a fund for this, then they end up applying for it. I’m not talking about Diakonia, but in the NGO sector sometimes even though we say what we want to focus on for this year, it changes [because of funds donors are offering]” (pers comm., 2017).

Beyond this temptation, other participants explained the importance of steadfast commitment to an organization’s values. For Bongani Mtembo, regardless of “funding being one of the challenges for NGOs,” his organization deciding not to take money from corporations reflected South Durban Community Environmental Alliance’s “cause at the end of the day” and allowed the NGO to hold corporations accountable to the community (pers comm., 2017).

Participants also elaborated upon the challenge inherent in choosing not to accept funding in cases where it would threaten the central mission of NGOs, stating “it’s definitely a more difficult road” and “it’s a difficult game to play” (Rama Naidu, pers comm., 2017; Bobby Peek, pers comm., 2017). Reflecting the notion of the responsibility of NGOs to their beneficiaries, Sharita Samuel equated staying true to one’s values with staying true to community members:

I think NGOs throughout the world are at the call of donors. Our work rests on the generosity and we are mindful of that and we are grateful for that. But at the same time, one has to remain true to one’s mandate, to the constituency that you’re representing (pers comm., 2017).

Thus, in NGOs’ roles as intermediaries, staying true to one’s values is a key consideration in shaping their responsibilities and functions.
Analysis and Discussion
Sustained Connections with Communities

All of the participants interviewed agreed that the NGO sector was useful, and that NGOs were crucial in ensuring that community needs are met. This understanding is echoed in existing literature that describes the purpose of NGOs as “meeting a need or advancing a purpose in the public interest” (Heyns and Ritchie, 2012, 4). Further, every participant agreed that community-centered approaches not only shaped, but were central in the work of their organizations as intermediaries, illustrated by Bobby Peek’s claim that “I can’t speak about groundWork [his NGO] without speaking about the community people or community organizations” (pers comm., 2017).

Thus, though “meeting a need” was the goal of each participant’s organization, this desire to work directly with the community went beyond basic definitions of NGOs’ purpose. Participants were keen to establish the way that their NGOs, as Nzimakwe illustrates, “identify community needs and respond to them flexibly” (2008, 90) by taking concerns that communities voiced to them “as the writing on the wall that they have to respond to” (Sharita Samuel, pers comm., 2017) and thinking about how their organizations could incorporate “different cries or different needs” as “part of their projects or part of their problems” (Bongani Mtembo, pers comm., 2017). In this way, through direct interactions with community members via workshops, complaint lines, and the like, participants’ organizations prioritized their connection with their beneficiaries and the needs of the people. Thus, Robert Chamber’s ideal of “respecting, listening to, learning from, ‘handing over the stick to’, and empowering, one’s lowers,” a cornerstone of “bottom-up” development (1994, 4), was reflected in participants’ responses.
Though existing literature sheds light upon a supposed shift from community-centered approaches and a current inability to adequately address beneficiaries’ needs (Abouassi, 2012, 1-4; Banks, Hulme, and Edwards, 2014; Inyathelo: The South African Institute for Advancement, 2014, 7; Stuart, 2013, n.p.), this was not reflected in my study. Due to the fact that I interviewed only employees of NGOs, I can make no claims about whether the actual work NGOs do has shifted, but can only base my analysis off of their perceptions and descriptions of their organizations’ work. Thus, in reflecting on the conversations I had with participants, their connections with community members did not waver in the face of external pressures from donors. In fact, four participants revealed that monitoring and evaluation was positive for their organizations, as they were able to put into words how they had served their beneficiaries, while four others remained neutral on the subject. The claim made by Banks, Hulme, and Edwards that donor requirements like monitoring and evaluation have resulted in the weakening of local ties and the dilution of core values regarding the meeting beneficiary needs (2014, 710), then, is unsubstantiated in my study.

Participants, despite acknowledging the presence and their necessary compliance with organizations, made no comment on the idea that they are forced “to prioritize their functional accountability to donors (in terms of targets and outputs) over their broader goals of empowerment for poor or marginalized groups” (Banks, Hulme, and Edwards, 2014, 710). Principally, my findings differ from much of current ideas regarding the work of NGOs. The results of my study signify that the community remains a chief concern for NGOs, and that NGOs’ role as intermediaries and how they execute this role are shaped by the people that they serve.
Staying True to Values Amidst Funding Challenges

As Groves asserts, “Popular analysis often argues that the donor-NGO relationship is unequal and one-sided – the ‘piper calls the tune’ and, if NGOs want funding, they must succumb to donor demands” (2008, n.p.). My findings, however, revealed a different story. Rather, the donor-NGO relationships varied widely across participants and even between the different donors each participant’s NGO had. Undeniably, stories of funding struggles were present in four participants’ descriptions of their organization’s relationship with donors (Bongani Mtembo, pers comm., 2017; Nokulunga Khumalo, pers comm., 2017; Rose Williams, pers comm., 2017). For Anonymous Participant 1, this meant that their NGO was not able to budget for advertising, limiting the number of people they reached and further, the number of people they were able to serve (pers comm., 2017). Such a reality is suggested by Banks, Hulme, and Edwards, as they discuss the restrictions on NGOs’ work that result from lack of funding (2014, 710).

When participants elucidated funding limitations, however, they did not mention the consequences being that they had to “succumb to donor needs” (Groves, 2008, n.p.) or fall into a “dependency trap” at “the expense of their [organization’s] core mission,” (Abouassi, 2012, 16) as is presented in existing literature. Though Nokulunga Khumalo acknowledged NGOs’ temptation to stray from their programs and purposes, “traversing the path they were early advised against, not to simply adopt the development agendas of others” (Dhanani and Connolly, 2014, 16), she explained that her organization has never adopted this approach in securing funding (pers comm., 2017). In this way, despite the widely held ideal that NGOs will change their values and approaches in order to stay afloat financially, this is not a concept that was present in my findings. Instead, five participants, including all four of those that discussed
funding struggles, shared their obligation to stay true to their values and the beneficiaries they were meant to serve. This idea was illustrated by Sharita Samuel when she declared:

I think NGOs throughout the world are at the call of donors. Our work rests on the generosity and we are mindful of that and we are grateful for that. But at the same time, one has to remain true to one’s mandate, to the constituency that you’re representing (pers comm., 2017).

Struggles with funding, then, did not equate to organizations changing their main goals or purposes in order to survive, as many academics claim. Instead, despite tensions and limitations on their work, they remained connected and committed to their purposes and the needs of beneficiaries. In negotiating the space between donors and community members, the participants in my study spoke about the influence of funding on how they executed their role as intermediaries. In the end, though, this concern did not align NGOs completely with donors or impact them so much that their roles were no longer shaped by community needs.

**Government Inadequacy**

All nine participants discussed that their organizations, and NGOs in general existed as a result of government inability to adequately meet the needs of the people. This idea is supported by Nzimakwe, who claims that NGOs have evolved as key players in “responding to basic needs that are not being met either by the government or the market” (2008, 91). Further, Banks and Hulme establish this perspective, as they expose the rise of NGOs as a response to perceived failures in state-led approaches, leaving people to turn to these organizations as people-centered alternatives (20112, 3). In this way, it makes sense that participants would identify this government inadequacy and the space that was created for NGOs resulting from it, as it is accepted as a condition upon which the NGO sector emerged.
Further, despite government documents such as the National Development Plan boasting the importance of NGOs alongside government and asserting that a model of “partnership” exists between the two sectors (South African Government, 2012, 334), this was not exposed in my findings. Instead, all participants agreed that government inadequacies spanned beyond the NGO sector’s initial emergence and into the present, creating issues of collaboration and limitations for community development. Bobby Peek summarized this idea when discussing the effects of government’s lack of accountability to the people it is supposed to serve:

The failure is just being able to hold government to account. The government and industry has clearly gone into a type of pact where they will purposefully, meaningful, and quite, with some organized process, try and weaken laws or try and weaken the system so no one can be held accountable (pers comm., 2017).

Failures of government, then, limit the efficacy of NGOs’ work as well as their ability to address the needs of beneficiaries.

What’s more, five participants specifically noted that their organizations had an “adversarial” relationship with the government, exposing a lack of collaboration between the two entities (Anonymous Participant 1, pers comm., 2017; Bongani Mtembo, pers comm., 2017; Desmond D’sa, pers comm., 2017; Rama Naidu, pers comm., 2017; Rose Williams, pers comm., 2017). At the same time, however, four participants recognized the fault in this, as is summarized by Rama Naidu: “if government really saw civil society not as a competitor, but as a collaborator in terms of enhancing the power of the nation, then we could use resources a lot more wisely than we do” (pers comm., 2017). Then, the idea that “there is a growing need for the [NGO] sector to continue partnering with government” (SANGOCO and SANGOncT, 2014) to improve people’s lives is reflected in my findings. Wyngaard makes a similar claim regarding collaboration between the two sectors, stating, “it is imperative for the South African government and civil society to join hands” (2013, n.p.). However, much like the participants in
my study, Lauren Stuart points to the “government’s lack of support for NGOs” that abounds in South Africa (2013, n.p.), regardless of the fact that “a partnership between the entities is needed to best serve society” (Kamat, 2003, 65). So, how much more positive change could take place if NGOs did not have to act as “watchdogs” to ensure the government does its work (Desmond D’sa, pers comm., 2017; Sharita Samuel, pers comm., 2017)? What results could be realized if collaboration was a reality?

The role of NGOs as intermediaries is not one that is limited to the organizations’ position between donors and community members, but extends to that of one situated outside of government as well. In that the government and all of its inadequacies have influenced the emergence and continued work of the NGO sector, it is necessary, as is showcased by participants, to account for the role of government in understanding NGOs’ role as intermediaries. Though there are no real answers to the questions above, one can postulate that the execution and definition of an NGO’s role would be much different with a more collaborative and capable government.

**Transformative Development**

Banks and Hulme argue that due to “internal and external pressures, most NGO efforts remain palliative rather than transformative,” and thus do not create actual development (2012, 8; 13). In order to evaluate my study’s findings in regard to this claim, one must first ask: What constitutes development? In their 1997/1998 annual report, The Community Development Resource Association puts forth a working understanding of what I term “actual” development:

Equally it is at times almost miraculous to experience the difference that an appropriate development intervention facilitated in a sensitive and responsive way can make to the genuine empowerment of the recipient. And this, surely, is the essence of a development intervention - the facilitation of growing awareness and consciousness such that people are able to take control of their own lives and
circumstances, and exert responsibility and purpose with respect to their future. This inevitably implies also an activist stance; that is, assistance with confronting the manifestations and dynamics of power, however these may manifest. If a development intervention does not succeed in this, then it can hardly be said to have been developmental (15).

Rather than “done on behalf of third parties,” communities are to be active in this process and to determine the final outcome of development, not to have development done onto them (CDRA, 1997/1998, 5; 17).

This definition unfolds into two parts: empowerment and confronting power. As was discussed in-depth previously, all participants in my study agreed that community-centered approaches are inherent in their work. Beyond simply claiming that they attend to these needs, which one could argue reflects only palliative or superficial development, every participant noted the importance of speaking directly with community members to not only identify but also adequately address their needs. In so doing, participants entertained the idea of “understanding the development process into which she or he is intervening” by meeting people where they are (CDRA, 1997/98, 14).

Beyond focusing on the community’s voice as one to shape and measure the impact of their organizations’ services (Bongani Mtembo, pers comm., 2017; Sharita Samuel, pers comm., 2017), three participants specifically noted empowerment as a tool for development. For Rama Naidu, empowerment works as a means for “changing the narrative” and allowing community members to “unleash their power” amidst a backdrop where “they’ve [community members] been told over and over you are powerless” (pers comm., 2017). Further, Nokulunga Khumalo asserted that success is “people taking full ownership of their development,” being able to confront obstacles and “fix those, rather than someone outside telling them what to do” (pers
comm., 2017). In this way, participants echo the notion that “NGOs are not the fire” but that “they can and should only be stokers of the fire” that ignite communities to partake in their own development (Davidoff, Kaplan, and Smith, 2008, 6). In this way, my findings support the idea that participants’ NGOs address the first part of actual development: “empowerment of the recipient” (CDRA, 1997/98, 15).

In confronting power dynamics, seven participants mentioned the relationships of power present between the donor-NGO-community chain as well as between the government, NGOs, and communities. Both Bongani Mtembo and Baphiwe Nxumalo express the necessity of “speaking through to power,” as this was the only way they saw fit to “actually lobby and advocate the government” (Baphiwe Nxumalo, pers comm., 2017), and “address human rights” (Bongani Mtembo, pers comm., 2017) for the sake of their NGOs’ beneficiaries. Summarizing several participants acknowledgement of NGO power inherent in the NGO-community structure, Rama Naidu posited that the fundamental theory behind his NGO is “inverting power and bringing those voices of the margins into the center” (pers comm., 2017). Thus, the participants in my study take note of providing “assistance with confronting the manifestations and dynamics of power,” (CDRA, 1997/98, 15) the second part of “actual” development.

Using the framework of the CDRA, my findings contrast Banks and Hulme’s claim that NGO efforts “remain palliative rather than transformative” (2012, 8; 13). Therefore, I affirm the transformative nature of the work of NGOs as found within my study. Given the focus of my study on the intermediary position of NGOs, this implies that this role, its definition, and its execution can create real impact.

In conclusion, I turn to an argument by Banks, Hulme, and Edwards:

The secret of success for intermediaries is to be and act ‘in service to’ something larger than themselves and their own, self-generated agendas – to move from
control to facilitation and from being donors and decision-makers to co-creators and translators (2014, 714).

The role of NGOs as intermediaries, then, can render transformative development when community-centered approaches, empowerment, and confrontation of power are used as guiding principles to shape and execute this role. In so doing, NGOs then transform from having “control” over to providing “facilitation” (Banks, Hulme, and Edwards, 2014, 714) for their beneficiaries’ development.
Conclusion

Due to the small sample size and unrepresentative nature of participants’ organizations of the larger NGO population, the findings of my study are not generalizable. However, through the lens of employees’ perspectives on their NGOs, the study offers insight on how NGOs in Durban, South Africa negotiate, define, and execute their role as intermediaries between donors and community members. This study revealed that central to NGOs’ understanding of their role was the community that they served. Though I can make no claims about the actual work of participants’ NGOs or the impact that they have, beyond describing a surface-level connection to beneficiaries, each participant discussed the work of their NGO as one that continuously employed community-centered approaches devoted to directly involving and listening to their beneficiaries. Further, relationships with donors in some cases were defined by changing funding landscapes and reporting requirements. Regardless of the impact this had on each NGO as far as their financial stability, the participants in my study showcased the steadfast determination of their NGOs to stay true to their values and their dedication to the community. Additionally, government inadequacies, both in meeting the needs of community members and in their lack of collaboration with NGOs, shaped not only the way in which NGOs executed their role as intermediaries, but the foundation of many participants’ organizations in the first place.

The role of NGOs as intermediaries, both between donors and community members and outside of the government, then, can be shaped by a number of factors. While it is impossible to conclude that all NGOs make an actual impact, it becomes clear from my study that when community-centered approaches, empowerment, and confrontation of power are used as guiding principles to shape and execute their role as intermediaries, NGOs can create transformative development—a goal that lies at the center of their work and a more equal South Africa.
Recommendation for Further Study

- **Sampling employees working for NGOs involved in the health sector**: Given the time constraints of this study as well as my particular interest in justice-oriented NGOs, I focused my study on this group of organizations. Further research could explore the perceptions of employees of NGOs within the health sector. Further, additional studies could compare findings from two different groups of NGOs with different focuses, such as those that are justice-oriented NGOs versus those in the health sector.

- **Change in the role as an intermediary over time**: Though my interviews included questions about changing priorities and the history of participants’ organizations, a change in their role as intermediaries was not a central focus of my study and, for the most part, was not a topic participants chose to explain in-depth. Exploring this change over time could elucidate what has influenced this role and NGOs’ execution of it.

- **Community member and donor understandings of the role of NGOs as intermediaries**: My project was limited to current employees’ understandings of how their organizations acted as intermediaries. Speaking with community members and donors about NGOs they work with closely could add new perspectives and illustrate how exactly NGOs interact in the space between donors and community members. Given that my study focused upon employees, bias may have been introduced because of the information these experts were willing to share. Though other types of bias may be present in interviewing community members and donors, this study would shed light on the way community members and donors perceive NGOs’ roles as intermediaries.
References


List of Primary Sources


Bobby Peek, groundWork. Pers comm, 26 April 2017, Durban, South Africa.

Bongani Mtembo, South Durban Community Environmental Alliance. Pers comm, 10 April 2017, Durban, South Africa.

Desmond D’sa, South Durban Community Environmental Alliance. Pers comm, 10 April 2017, Durban, South Africa.

Dr. Rama Naidu, Democracy Development Program. Pers comm, 20 April 2017, Durban, South Africa.


Rose Williams, Biowatch South Africa. Pers comm, 26 April 2017, Durban, South Africa.

Sharita Samuel, Legal Resources Centre (Durban). Pers comm, 25 April 2017, Durban, South Africa.
Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Background:
1. How did your non-governmental organization start?
2. What does your organization do?
   - A. What type of programs does your NGO implement?
3. In your opinion, what have been your organization’s successes? Its failures?
   - A. How do you define successes and failures?
4. What do you consider as the purpose of your NGO?
   - A. Are there limitations for your organization to achieve its purpose?
     i. If so, what are they?
5. What do you consider as the purpose of NGOs in general?

Relationships:
6. How would you describe your NGO’s relationship with its donors?
7. How would you describe your NGO’s relationship with the community or communities it serves?
8. How would you describe your NGO’s role in the space between donors and community members?
   - A. What influences this role?
   - B. Do you think your NGO fulfills this role?
   - C. How does your NGO execute this role?
9. What are your donors’ priorities?
   - A. Have these priorities changed over time?
10. What are the community’s priorities? How do you determine these?
    - A. Have these priorities changed over time?
11. What are your organization’s priorities?
    - A. Have these priorities changed over time?
12. Are there any requirements or needs of your donors?
   - A. Do you think it is necessary for your organization to meet these requirements or needs?
13. Are there any requirements or needs of the community or communities your NGO serves?
   - A. Do you think it is necessary for your organization to meet these requirements or needs?
14. Are these requirements or needs similar or different?
   - A. If different, what is the difference between these?
     i. How does your NGO address these differences?

Future:
15. What’s coming next in your field given any upcoming changes in the political, environmental, and social landscape?
16. What actions do you need to take in the future to strengthen sustain or strengthen your interventions?
17. What methods, tools, etc. do you think will make people successful in promoting and upholding justice in the future?

Appendix 2: Consent Form for Adult Respondents in English
CONSENT FORM

1. Brief description of the purpose of this project
The purpose of this project is to address the question: How do NGOs in Durban, South Africa negotiate their role as intermediaries between donors and community members? By conducting semi-structured interviews with participants within the NGO sector, I will collect qualitative data regarding participants' understandings and perspectives of their NGO's role and relationship to its donors and the community it serves.

2. Rights Notice
In an endeavor to uphold the ethical standards of all SIT ISP proposals, this study has been reviewed and approved by a Local Review Board or SIT Institutional Review Board. If at any time, you feel that you are at risk or exposed to unreasonable harm, you may terminate and stop the interview. Please take some time to carefully read the statements provided below.

   a. Privacy - all information you present in this interview may be recorded and safeguarded. If you do not want the information recorded, you need to let the interviewer know.

   b. Anonymity - all names in this study will be kept anonymous unless you choose otherwise.

   c. Confidentiality - all names will remain completely confidential and fully protected by the interviewer. By signing below, you give the interviewer full responsibility to uphold this contract and its contents. The interviewer will also sign a copy of this contract and give it to you.

I understand that I will receive no gift or direct benefit for participating in the study.
I confirm that the learner has given me the address of the nearest School for International Training Study Abroad Office should I wish to go there for information. (404 Cowey Park, Cowey Rd, Durban).
I know that if I have any questions or complaints about this study that I can contact anonymously, if I wish, the Director/s of the SIT South Africa Community Health Program (Zed McGladdery 0846834982 )

Participant's name printed ____________________________

Interviewer's name printed ____________________________

Your signature and date __________________________________________

Interviewer's signature and date ______________________________________

I can read English. If the participant cannot read, the onus is on the project author to ensure that the quality of consent is nonetheless without reproach.
Appendix 3: LRB Clearance Form

SIT Study Abroad
School for International Training

Human Subjects Review
LRB/IRB ACTION FORM

Name of Student: Mara Horn

ISP Title: The Role of NGOs as Intermediaries: Negotiating the Space Between Donors and Community Members
Date Submitted: 6 April 2017

Program: Durban Community Health and Social Policy - Spring 2017

Type of review:
- Exempt
- Expedited
- Full

Institution: World Learning Inc.
IRB organization number: IORG0004408
IRB registration number: IRB00005219
Expires: 9 December 2017

LRB members (print names):
- John McGladdery
- Clive Bruzas (PhD)
- Francis O’Brian (PhD)

LRB REVIEW BOARD ACTION:
- Approved as submitted
- Approved pending changes
- Requires full IRB review in Vermont
- Disapproved

LRB Chair Signature: [Signature]
Date: 6 April 2017

Form below for IRB Vermont use only:

Research requiring full IRB review. ACTION TAKEN:
- approved as submitted
- approved pending submission or revisions
- disapproved

IRB Chairperson’s Signature: [Signature]
Date: 6 April 2017
Appendix 4: Consent to Use of Independent Study Project (ISP)

Access, Use, and Publication of ISP/FSP

Student Name: Mara Horn

Email Address: marahorn@wustl.edu

Title of ISP/FSP: The Role of NGOs as Intermediaries: Negotiating the Space Between Donors and Community Members

Program and Term/Year: Community Health and Social Policy, Spring 2017

Student research (Independent Study Project, Field Study Project) is a product of field work and as such students have an obligation to assess both the positive and negative consequences of their field study. Ethical field work, as stipulated in the SIT Policy on Ethics, results in products that are shared with local and academic communities; therefore copies of ISP/FSPs are returned to the sponsoring institutions and the host communities, at the discretion of the institution(s) and/or community involved.

By signing this form, I certify my understanding that:

1. I retain ALL ownership rights of my ISP/FSP project and that I retain the right to use all, or part, of my project in future works.

2. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad may publish the ISP/FSP in the SIT Digital Collections, housed on World Learning’s public website.

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   - In some cases, partner institutions, organizations, or libraries in the host country house a copy of the ISP/FSP in their own national, regional, or local collections for enrichment and use of host country nationals.

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7. I have sought copyright permission for previously copyrighted content that is included in this ISP/FSP allowing distribution as specified above.
May 1, 2017

Student Signature  Date

[Signature Image]