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The NGOs vs. the State in Kibera

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The NGO vs. the State in Kibera

“There are basically four ways of making money in Kenya – coffee, tea, tourism and aid – and since the first three are spoken for, the last remains the only option.” (Titeca, 2005: 20 as cited by Hearn, 2007: 1103)

Abstract

Repudiation has for long hunted the settlement of Kibera in Nairobi, Kenya. Although famous for being Africa’s biggest slum, no official numbers have been published over its population, the Kenyan government has resisted to recognize it and aid organizations have been accused of getting profit out of it. Due to the absence of a local government, numerous international and national NGOs have taken over the place. Through a critical review of the work from NGOs and the Kenyan government, I will discuss the following question: Have the NGOs substituted the state in the provision of services in Kibera?

Keywords

Africa, Kenya, Kibera, slum, NGOs, state, development

Introduction

During my first visit to Kibera, in June 2011, I was warned about “no bags, no cameras, no money with you...and don’t get lost. Kibera is not the place to be after 6:00 pm.” These were the advising words from Marlene Gamez, a Mexican secular volunteer of the Guadalupe Missionaries in Kenya. She has been working for the past three years in a development project with the women of Kibera. Marlene invited us to know her work, to look at newly constructed buildings, and to meet her colleagues. It must have been a hard task for her to keep an eye on the ten *mzungus*¹ behind her – visible target – while not losing notion of time and direction, as we had to get out of Kibera before dark. When I say visible target, I do not mean we could easily get robbed or harm, we were obviously outsiders, for some of them, invaders.

My previous knowledge of Kibera was based on YouTube videos, numbers given by the priests of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, and of course the movie, *The*

¹ Mzungu is the southern, central and eastern African term for a person of foreign descent. It is often used to say “white person”.

*Constant Gardner*². Even though this background was certainly not the most accurate one, it was surprisingly not so far away from reality. “How are you? [...] Give me money!” were the phrases chasing us everywhere in Kibera, along with tons of kids brawling to grab our hands. A mixture of hope and desolation, garbage and colourful *kangas*³, the train’s stunning noise and the happy Swahili songs, are some of the paradoxes which characterize the life in Kibera.

After this brief visit, I went to do volunteer work in Masaai⁴ land for two months, but some of the stories told by Marlene woken up my concern. She told us, among other things, that “Kibera is a great business, especially for western NGOs and the Kenyan Government. It’s a theatre. For the government is profitable to sustain Kibera. They keep getting aid funding from western states, NGOs keep getting big amount of money from donors after shocking and dramatic campaigns, and at the end of the day some cents might end up in the slum. Kibera residents, on the other hand, are comfortable with the low rent prices and the opportunity to live in Nairobi.”

This article is my academic research to answer my enquiries about Kibera. This slum has had the reputation of being the first or second biggest slum in the world. Some people say, is a “land without law”. Precisely this declaration will be the core of my research question: Have the NGOs substituted the state in the provision of services in Kibera?

Methodology

Kibera is probably one of the most studied human settlements. For this reason the lack of reliable information available is alarming. This has been a constant challenge for the writing process of my article, which is divided in two main sections.

The first section will address the complicated relationship between Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with the African states, with a preamble on the establishment of these organizations in Kenya. The article written by A. Sat Obiyan (2005) has discussed the question that I am to answer, but in a broader context. It will

² The *Constant Gardener* is a drama film from 2005, directed by Fernando Meirelles. It was filmed on the location of Loiyangalani and the slums of Kibera, in Nairobi, Kenya.

³ Kanga is the Swahili name for a colorful garment worn by women in Eastern Africa

⁴ The Maasai are a semi-nomadic ethnic group located in Kenya and northern Tanzania.

be often recalled during this section. Once the theoretical framework is established, I will use the case of Kibera to illustrate the hot and cold relationship between the state and the NGOs in Kenya, which will finally lead me to answer the main research question.

Theoretical Framework: the role of NGOs in Africa.

There is a considerable amount of literature related to the functions played by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the African continent; from applauses to critiques. Some scholars consider that the global south in general is being “swept” by them (Shepherd, 1996). These tricky entities to study, due to their rapid increase, their impact in international relations, their diverse functions and goals, and their complex way of establishing networks with other actors. (Fisher, 1997). The term Non-Governmental Organization, is also a matter of debate. However, due to limits of time and space, this article will use term NGO based on the concept given by Edwards and Hulmes (1995:15): “intermediary organizations engaged in funding or offering other forms of support to communities and other organizations.” A whole book could be dedicated to classify and examine these organizations, which is not the purpose of this article. Moreover, some basic information will be given previous to examine the case study.

NGOs have grabbed the attention of anthropologists as units of study, tempting them to reconsider contemporary understandings of local and global collective dynamics. Their discourse has affected the mobilization of civil society in many parts of the world. Some particular characteristics must be taken into account to examine their performance. Whether the organization is from local or foreign origin, its relationship with their donors, their ideological background, and of course, their connection with the state in which they operate. Although they have been pointed out for their apolitical participation, this is not always the case. “The description of NGOs as part of a voluntary, non-profit, independent or third sector that is separate from both market and state contributes to the image of these associations as part of a segment of society that is separate from politics” (Fisher, 1997: 446.) This article seeks to break off the obscured relationship between NGOs and the state. Dialogue must be launched between these two actors, in order to intensify outcomes in terms of development.

The NGO's work as service providers has become a matter of concern for policy-makers, when they substitute the main duties of state. In line with this phenomenon, contrasting opinions have surfaced. Some scholars have highlighted their good job, and others have perceived them as obstacles for development.

NGOs history can be traced back to the 1940s, but it wasn't until the 1980s when they became high-profile players in the processes of development. According to the World Bank (as cited by Obiyan, 2005:309) "CSOs can play an important role in helping to amplify the voices of the poorest people in the decisions that affect their lives, improve development effectiveness and sustainability, and hold governments and policymakers publicly accountable." One of the main challenges for NGOs, particularly those focused on development projects, are the high expectations. A great task has been placed in their shoulders. They have not only become an alternative for development, but they have been perceived as a sort of "saviour". Although some associations have surely played an important role in the process of poverty alleviation, I suggest we must be careful with idealizing their work.

Moreover, I do wish to name the strong points of these associations. Obiyan (2005) outlines the main strengths and constrains of NGOs in Africa and Asia. According to him, the major advantages for NGOs are their closeness with the poor, their participatory approach, and their impact and effectiveness. Although this statement still places these organizations in a pedestal, adjustments have been made to overcome their pitfalls along the way. In view of the negative impacts that western top-down approaches had in development projects in Africa, an "Africanization process of NGOs" has taken place. Hearn (2007) states four main factors that have favoured this progression. Most international NGOs today work with local organizations or create them; donors finance a bigger amount of local NGOs rather than international ones; there is a greater attention to civil society and domestic associations due to the global democratization wave; and the African economic crisis period privileged the third sector as most foreign aid is now channelled to African NGOs.

Obiyan (2005), on the other hand, also mentions the main constrains. These are the dependency on donors – economically but also in terms of interests –, the pursuing of ideological and political objectives, institutional deficiencies, their

legitimacy issues and their common failure to sustain projects. Plus, NGOs are definitely not immune to corruption and interests, which can opaque their main goals.

Harder critiques accuse them of being the new compradors in Africa. The comprador theory, analyzed by Hearn (2007:1098), suggests that “the comprador acts as an agent, operating in the interests of international capitalism against the interests of the indigenous popular classes.” Under this idea, the NGOs leaders can be conceived as the new class of managers dealing with big amounts of people and funding.

The colonial legacy should also not be unnoticed. Nyamanga (2006) suggest that much of the African contemporary structure and agency, including states and NGOs, were manufactured during the colonial era, seeking to carry on the colonial structure through the time, even after independence.

Barber and Bowie (2008: 749) hardly criticize the roll and performance of NGOs as well. They blame them of being harmful and an obstacle for aid success. They also observe that having resources and “good intentions” is not enough. Many times these organizations end up recruiting “highly qualified English-speaking nationals to run their programmes.” This obviously, delineates class divisions.

The complicated relationship between NGOs and Kenya.

The relationship between NGOs and the Kenyan state and civil society has not always been at ease. Here is a brief recapitulation of their history in the eastern African country and their complicated intricate liaison.

During the 1960s, NGOs in Kenya remained compliant with modernization theories. The 1970s was an important decade of alteration, as critiques against highly centralized approaches emerge, which led international aid organizations to rethink their work in Kenya. It was during the 1980s, when the role played by NGOs increased, specially “in service provision and started to acquire more clout and dominance in local matters.” (Nyamanga, 2006:191). This phenomenon was fuelled by the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), by the International Monetary Fund (IFM) and the World Bank. Moreover, the 1990s were the most demanding ones. The official funding to the Kenyan government was retired due to

human rights accusations against former President Moi's regime. This converted NGO as barely the only actors through which international aid could be channelized.

The number of NGOs in Kenya has noticeably increased during the last decades, specially the local organizations. In the period between 1978 and 1988 the number of foreign NGOs grew at nearly double the rate of local NGOs. However, in the period of 1988-96 the tide had turned and the number of local NGOs grew at nearly triple the rate of foreign NGOs (Osodo and Matsvai, 1998:8 as cited in Hearn, 2005). Between 1996 and 2003 the period in which the biggest amount of NGOs was registered. In 1996 there were 511 registered and in 2003 the number grew to 2,511 (Hearn, 2007). In addition, what we commonly called community based organizations (CBO) or grassroots organizations (GROs) are known as *harambee* groups in Kenya. In the year 1995, the number of them was calculated to be 20,000 (Therkildsen and Semboja, 1995, as cited in Obiyan, 2005). The amount of money channelized to Kenya is also impressive. According to a study realized in 1989 and 1990, it was "[...] found that NGOs commanded resources of about US \$200 million per annum. This amount corresponded to about 31 percent of government recurrent expenditure on education, health, labour, and social welfare in the same period." (Obiyan, 2005:307)

In the book written by Maurice Nyamanga Amutabi, *The NGO Factor in Africa: the Case of Arrested Development in Kenya*, he makes an interesting analysis of often claimed suspicions of aid organizations' work in the country. Although his work is focus on the work of the Rockefeller Foundation (RF), his results are valuable for this article, as he revised the complicated dynamic between the Kenyan government and the involvement of NGOs in the development field.

He argues that despite their access to the grassroots, the main focus of development NGOs in Kenya remain aligned with mainstream development discourses. Regardless of the participation of locals, many of the projects remain under a top-down approach. Without denying the good intentions of many organizations, it is undeniable that they still dish up western interests. In his words (Nyamanga, 2006:189):

[...] the discourse that fuels humanitarian aid is neither neutral nor mute; it is often philanthropic and hegemonic, and accompanied by the proselytizing agenda of NGOs – whether implicit or explicit, about aiding the helpless or creating entrepreneurs – is part of neoliberal assistance that is not value-free. NGO development, unlike

‘missionary development’, provides a space in which to negotiate and contest realms not evident in strictly religious discourse, such as good, evil and morality that informed missionary factor in Africa.

In addition to the hegemonic discourse, accountability has also been one of the major critiques to NGOs in Kenya. Concerning this issue, it is often seen that these associations do not have interest to be accountable towards the government in which they work. In case they do, they must also face the challenge of balancing their agenda with the government priorities and their donors’ interests. In order to tackle these possible challenges, Barber & Bowie (2005:751,752) propose the following prescriptions: “form an association of NGOs, prioritize consistency and reliability, adopt the salary scales set by the NGO Associations, set up a commission to recommend ways of ‘empowering local civil society organizations’ and ration and educate the visitors.”

This complex link between NGOs and the Kenyan government will now be examined through the lens of Kibera. After giving an introduction to principal problematic in the slum, the roles played by the NGOs and the local government of Nairobi will be revised to answer this article’s main research question.

The case of Kibera.

Background of Kibera.

Before giving detailed information about Kibera, the concept of “slum” must be understood. According to the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-HABITAT) report, *The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements 2003*, there has been a lack of institutional definitions for slum. However they identified important aspects to consider:

[...] Basic services (sanitation, water and, in some cases, electricity) supply are the runner-up in frequency, with nine cities (45 per cent) including these issues in their definition of slums. In the case of Nairobi, basic services and infrastructure are the sole criteria of the definition, which, strikingly enough, appears not to be a priority issue for the actual slum dwellers themselves but more meat needs to be put on these bones. (2003:196)

Bashman (1978: 175) also specifies the difference between a slum and a squatter settlement: “The slum dweller, though he often lives in worse conditions than

the squatter, pays rent and this had legal claim to residence.” These characteristics should be contemplated through the reading of this article.

Informal human settlements have existed in Nairobi since 1900. Initially, they resulted from the segregation policy between Africans and whites. Many of these settlements or slums in the Kenyan capital were demolished, but some of them still linger. Kibera is one of the remaining slums.

Kibera is found in the south of Nairobi. Its geographical extension has been calculated in 550 acres, but its population remains unknown. Numbers of people living there vary between 200,000 to one million people. (Hagen, 2009).

The historical genesis is still a matter of debate, but it is believed to be historically Masai land. According to Kunguru and Mwiraria (1991) Kibera became a military reserve for Nubian soldiers from the Kings African Rifles⁵. The permits to live there were temporary and in 1928 it became under the control of civil authorities. Despite the efforts from the Working Party for the Development of Kibera to develop efficient policies that would control the rapid growth of the settlement, it became a disputed territory. Although this piece of land was suppose to be reserved for the Nubian people, nowadays must residents are non-Nubian.

Kunguru and Mwiraria (1991) outlined three main types of social groups in Kibera. First, the temporary residents, most of them came to Nairobi looking for a job and they keep contact with their rural community. The majority of this people are from different ethnic groups, such as Luos, Luhyas and Kambas. They are expected to move out after a certain period of time. The second group is the permanent one. Most of them are of Nubian origin and have no homes outside Kibera. They are often the landlords, although they can also be tenants. The non-resident people configure the third group. They are landlords or business owners who do not live in Kibera, but maintain connection to it, for property interests. It is relevant to highlight the second group, as they are the ones who are closely related to the community and involved with participative development projects.

Most residents of Kibera move there for economic reasons. Housing is very cheap, compared to other zones in Nairobi. It is not rare to find high-skilled

⁵ King's African Rifles was a British multi-battalion regiment in East Africa during the colonial period.

professionals renting a room in the settlement. However, the basic services of health, water, sanitation, waste, education, and transport are of concern (Kunguru & Mwiraria, 1991). According to the report made by Mbatia and Indusa (2007), *The Kenya Networks of Grassroots Organizations (KENGO) Progress Report on activities with grassroots organizations*, the main challenges faced by the Kibera slum are water and sanitation and the lack of educational opportunities. Furthermore, nearly all houses are made out of mud and hard carton. There are no visible toilets, so latrines are common. Then again, there is no collection system for solid waste, so residents end up disposing their waste in open space (Harding, 2002; Kelderman, 2009).

Another main issue in Kibera is the lack of security. The violent eruption of 2007 in Kenya resulted from the elections in which president Mwaikibaki was declared winner. The uncomfortable demonstrations became hostile encounters between ethnic groups in different regions of the country. Kenya is constituted by more than forty-five ethnic groups, which must all coexist in Kibera (De Smedt, 2009). This factor made the slum, one of the most affected ones. Houses and businesses were shattered, people were killed. Kibera turned into the main point of violent confrontations. (Connelly, 2010). Legacies of this incident still remain, although is a lower scale.

Notwithstanding the precarious living condition in this settlement, Kibera has an interesting taste of charm and it is a very vivid space. In Hagen (2009: 41) words:

Kibera is nonetheless a vibrant community surviving and often thriving with hundreds of small shops, health clinics, schools, churches, mosques, community groups, movie theatres, corn mills, battery charging kiosks, kerosene stations, water vending points, and pay-showers and latrines. Music pours from radios and CD shops, and life proceeds in a rhythm much like any other urban spot in the world.

NGOs “running” Kibera .

As you walk through the slum you will rarely see a state agent, but it isn't weird to sporadically spot a *mzungu* walking through the streets, wearing an association's T-Shirt. These organizations have been given a “special role” in Kibera, because they can operate outside the government's framework. The amount of NGOs is also an unknown number.

Many of them have struggled to get to the grassroots of the community, by contacting *harambee* groups. However, they have not always been successful. Kanyianga (1995: 74) points out:

The NGO community in Kenya maintains close contact with *harambee* groups, which it uses as a main avenue for reaching the grass roots. In some instances *harambee* projects are initiated with financial assistance from NGOs. Thus funds from NGOs and Western donors have induced the proliferation of *harambee* groups.

The supposed advantages of closeness with the poor, participatory approach, impact and effectiveness, suggested by Obiyan, are set into question. The analysis of *harambee* activities in Kenya, self-help projects have been proven to work only in areas with a strong economic base, (Obiyan, 2005) which Kibera is not the case.

Scholars have also become concerned with the dramatic image that aid organizations portray through pictures and publications about Kibera. Starving children, dying mothers, and other shocking images are used to obtain funds. Rothmyer, (2011) considers that most of these organizations are western NGOs and international aid institutions. He criticizes the fact that western media focus the attention on the misery and not on the accomplishments made in the development area.

Based on my brief visits to Kibera, I would not dare to say that all the public images of the slum are made up. However, I do consider that how NGOs revealed the information and the purposes behind this exposure, is a matter of concern. Creating consciousness is not their only goal, obtaining funds is commonly the main reason behind this selling of poverty. In addition to questioning the strategy, I would enquire about the percentage of the collected money that actually goes to the beneficiaries.

Another major concern is the non-statistical numbers of Kibera given by many NGOs. There is an estimation of 6,000 or more, local and international organizations operating there (Rothmyer, 2011). Many of these organizations have named Kibera as the “biggest” slum in Africa, saying that approximately one million people reside there. This severely contrasts with Kenya’s 2009 census, in which 194,269 inhabitants were found to live in Kibera. I am not the one to say which numbers are the correct ones, but I do wish to highlight the disparity of the information. Rasna Warah, a

former worker of the NGO Worldwatch Institute, mentioned in the Kenyan newspaper, *Daily Nation*, the following statement about exaggerated numbers from the slum: “The inflated figures were not challenged, perhaps because they were useful to various actors.... They were particularly useful to NGOs, which used them to ‘shock’ charities and other do-gooders into donating more money to their projects in Kibera.” Important is to notice she used UN-HABITAT information.

Added to these concerns about the NGO presence, the discourse and the approach must also be reviewed. According to De Feyter (2011:34-35) many associations in Kibera have been influenced by a New Policy Agenda (NPA), which is a market-based paradigm since the 1980s. This approach sustains that “markets and private initiative are ... the most efficient mechanisms for achieving economic growth and providing most services to most people”. The effect of this pattern “has enthused international donors to focus on contractual, and often inequitable, patron-client relations instead of on development -as- real-empowerment. In a neoliberal context quick, quantifiable and cost-effective ways of performing development interventions [...]”

Although Nyamanga (2006) suggests that the neoliberal economics logic of the NGOs in Kenya might not be so bad after all, I do consider that it implies a huge risk of accentuating social division, in an already alienated community. The conclusion of Heart (2005) is harsh but to some point undeniable, “[...] many African NGOs have actually become ‘local managers of foreign aid money, not managers of local African development process.’”

The previously mentioned report *The Kenya Networks of Grassroots Organizations (KENGO) Progress Report on activities with grassroots organizations*, is particularly useful for the analysis of the NGO’s impact in Kibera. The main concerns of the development in Kibera were the following:

1. Kibera slum tourism- the exploitative nature of slum tours was decried.
2. Inhabitable dwelling places- lack of planning, and social amenities were highlighted
3. Housing cost and quality- exploitative and absentee landlords were discussed
4. Water and sanitation- lack of running water and toilets emerged as an issue that requires urgent solution

5. NGOs and Donors- lack of transparency and accountability to the community, especially of NGOs operating and sourcing funds for projects in Kibera, was discussed. Although there is a high per capita presence of well-funded NGOs in Kibera, there are no commensurate tangible developments on the ground.

6. Human rights abuse and general injustice- harassment by police and authorities for non-payment of rent were of particular concern. (Mbatia and Indusa 2007:5).

Numbers 1 and 5 should be especially noticed. The informality, noticed in 1991, which characterized the establishment of NGOs in Kibera, has basically remained unchanged. “Lack of transparency” and “accountability” linger the main issues concerning development projects implemented by aid organizations. The initiative of converting Kibera into a slum tourism attraction is also alarming (Odede, 2010). Even though some organizations have supported this initiative as a way raising concern, it is in my opinion a showcase which turns poverty into entertainment.

I am aware that the information given in this section seems to be one-side oriented to the critiques. I must mention that objective – meaning by not coming directly from NGOs – available information was mostly critical. Nonetheless it should not be understood that NGOs are harming Kibera. Although Nyamanga (2006) suggests that NGOs should take more care of their relationship with the local beneficiaries in Kenya, they have accomplished to incentive a bigger amount of civil mobilization. These organizations have managed to motivate more locals to involve themselves in the development process. Despite the colonial legacy and the different levels in which hostile relationships between development actors take place, the general view of the people concerning NGOs is rather positive. Despite their possible pitfalls, most people do not perceive them as imperialists and exploiters, but as people willing to help them. This does not imply either that their relationship is always harmonious. In many occasions, these organizations must face resistance from the local people, particularly when traditional structures are challenged.

As I went through some NGOs WebPages, I found a common perception towards the government. Although there is not a homogenous discourse of the state’s performance, the opinion of many organizations can be resumed in the words of the NGO Advance-Africa:

The Kenyan Government has done nothing for Kibera. There are no title deeds, no sewage, no water, no roads, no government schools and hospitals and no services of any kind. [...]The available schools have been started by NGO's and the hospitals and clinics are either NGO or private.

What about the state?

Before complying or rejecting the opinion of Advance-Africa, I shall now observe the efforts made by the state to help Kibera. The national policy framework of Kenya, concerning slums is very vague and old dated. Not many changes have been made since the legislation from the independence era. Nevertheless, as a result of the international agencies' attention, the Kenyan government has begun to address housing problems more frequently and have reduced the demolition of slums. (Kunguru & Mwiraria, 1991).

During the 1990s, the Nairobi City Commission (NCC) was the principal agency concerned with the local framework related to the management, development and provision of services of informal settlements. Kunguru and Mwiraria (1991:11) noticed that:

As the most visible Government agency in Nairobi, the NCC often has to bear the brunt of accusations and criticisms levelled against the Government for their failure to improve conditions in informal settlements.[...] NCC maintains that they are however, legally restrained from operating in unplanned or unauthorized areas and are therefore often unable to enforce relevant legislation. The argument is that resources should only be invested in planning and developing areas of the city for which future land use has been identified.

In 1992, Machiara also criticized the incoherent declarations held by the Kenyan government, about supporting informal settlements. According to Machiara, policies concerning slum clearance were insensible, because demolition of slum houses continued, which was denigrating and humiliating.

Nevertheless, some modifications have been done by the government during the years. It has finally acknowledged the existence of Kibera and the fact action must be taken. The Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme (KENSUP) resulted from a meeting led during November 2000 between the UN-HABITAT director and the

former president of Kenya, Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi. The programme was established to improve the conditions of slums, starting with Kibera. The project was funded in cooperation between UN-HABITAT, the Government of Kenya and the World Bank Cities Alliance. Through development interventions, the project aims to improve the living conditions of the people living in slums, mainly concerning shelter, employment, health, land issues and employment. The principal activities are the following: institutional arrangement to implement the programme, social and economic mapping, digitalized physical mapping and creating a decanting site. (UN-HABITAT, 2012).

Major results from this project are still to be seen. However, I do consider that the future of Kibera depends strongly in the actions taken by the state. The authorities in Nairobi are still the ones who determine the legal aspects of the settlement.

The state vs. NGOs in the Kibera slum

Bearing in mind all the previous information, the main research question will be address: have the NGOs substituted the state in Kibera in the provision of services?

Khan (1999:5, as cited in Obiyan, 2005, outlined three possible relationships between NGOs and the state: hostile relationship, temporary tolerance from the state, or an opportunity for the state to wash their hands and deliberate the provision of services to the NGOs.

The disillusionment provoked by the role of the state in Kibera has lead to the formation of numerous organizations that seek to tackle the problems which apparently the government is not capable of doing. The NGOs have become a major instrument to provide services in Kibera, due to the poor performance of the Kenyan state. The increase of NGOs has also been influenced by the fact that western governments are less willing to donate large amount of moneys to governments, due to their perception of corruption and bad administration.

The study driven by Nyamanga (2006:194), showed how the incapacity of the Kenyan government to operate and manage resources in a local level, has amplified the presence of NGOs in remote areas. This is perfectly portrayed in the case of Kibera. The state has not only denied its existence for a long period of time, but now

that it has recognized it as a problem, it keeps conceding the task of providing services to aid organizations. For this reason, his conclusion is not surprising: “Thus, the government has a love-hate relationship with NGOs.”

I would not suggest, however, that the NGOs in Kibera are much more accountable. The independence claimed by them has also become a matter of concern. It is understandable that many of them want to remain independent from political positions, especially in a country as Kenya which such a hostile political background, but this also impedes them to improve their relationship with the government.

It should be notice as well, that civil servants perceive the fact that most of Kenya’s development issues are addressed by NGOs, as dangerous. They alleged that these institutions interfere with a “proper development planning in the country” (Nyamanga, 2006:192), because they must follow their own agendas and pursue their own interests. The intense competition between NGOs has also resulted in isolation and overlapping projects. The struggle to obtain funds from well-known donors also distracts the attention from the pursued goals and their relationship with the beneficiaries. This reality is obviously perceived by state agents.

The local government of Nairobi, Nyamanga (2006:194) mentions that they perceived NGOs as a “necessary evil.” On the one side, they can delegate their development tasks to them, but they know that they won’t surrender to their control. Unfortunately, the official agents from Nairobi perceive these organizations as a challenge to their work and policies, leading them to be hostile against them. This perception is not particular of the state. “Even opposition politicians see the growth of NGOs as a direct challenge to their own power bases and have dismissed them as either pawns of western neo-imperialism or insincere opportunists.”

On the other hand, the state has begun to admit that it is not capable of providing all the needs to their citizens and that the development process implies cooperation with different actors. This shift of perception towards NGOs can be beneficial, in the way in which they don’t perceive them as a threat or challenge, but as partners.

Conclusions

After my research I have come to the conclusion that NGOs have replaced the responsibility of the state in the provision of services in Kibera in some extent. Nevertheless, it would be narrow minded to conclude who is doing a better job in the development process, if NGOs or the Kenyan state. Although I do consider that NGOs have taken over the provision of services in the slum, and in some way substituted the state, I cannot conclude that they are doing a better work. NGOs, like the Kenyan government, are not capable of providing everyone with services and to dismiss them all from their poverty.

It should be kept in mind that every NGO operating in Kibera has a different relationship with the government. The relationships between these associations and the state are very heterogeneous, so it is impossible to generalize. NGOs should not be considered as the good ones fighting the bad government. Moreover, although these organizations often fail to the expectations given, they do have an impact in the policy-making processes.

The fact that the development process circumscribes interests should also not be denied, but should be confronted. The relationship between the state and the NGOs is definitely shaped by a struggle of power, either in terms of money or control. Both seek to justify their actions towards the poor.

The NGOs capacity to reach the grassroots levels in Kibera has frightened the local government of Nairobi. Although an important shift has been acquired, with the initiation of the KENSUP project, the attitude remains barely changed. The Kenyan state, as any other government, wants to keep control over the country's development process, but its incapacity to do so in a local level has created a paradoxical relationship between NGOs and the state.

An enduring process of development will be better achieved when there is an appropriated balance between these two actors. Of course, each of them must tackle their own pitfalls and the challenging characteristics of the slum. Ethnic fragmentation of the community and the colonial legacies, are some of these obstacles.

The government must definitely continue to recognize Kibera as a matter of concern, and should promote census studies to have a clearer idea of the challenge's size. They should also promote the involvement of their citizens in the governmental institutions. If their agents are all taken away by NGOs, the quality of the state's services will decrease, becoming vulnerable to corruption. NGOs must have a better communication between themselves to avoid overlapping projects; they must improve their relationship with the grassroots; and must open themselves to dialogue with the local government of Nairobi. Mutual pressure from the state and the NGOs might result in more benefits for the population in Kibera.

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