Towards Inclusive Partnerships:

The Political Role of Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and the Official Development Aid System (ODA) in Nairobi, Kenya.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The official development aid (ODA) system increasingly includes CBOs as partners in development arrangements because they are widely considered critical for sustainable and successful global development responses, especially in the field of advocacy (e.g. Morariu & Brennan, 2009; Narayanan, Sarangan, & Bharadwaj, 2015) and social transformation (Crawford, 2003; de Wit & Berner, 2009). In particular, activist CBOs (see analytical framework for definition) in the global south play a key role in what we term **'the advocacy aid chain',** yet they are rarely studied as actors in their own right. Mostly, they are considered as part of broader development arrangements such as strategic partnerships (e.g. Skovdal, Magutshwa-Zitha, Campbell, Nyamukapa, & Gregson, 2017; van Stapele, Nencel, & Sabelis, 2019; Warner, M., & Sullivan, 2017). Within our study, it became clear that the **'advocacy aid chain'** is a distinct but constituting component of the ODA system, to be defined as follows: **the relationships within the ODA system, including donors, NGOs and CBOs (and other organisations, including government bodies), that work together to improve the political agency of vulnerable people and groups in an effort to transform their lived realities of criminalization, marginalization and dispossession**. Insufficient (academic) attention is paid to the power relationships constructed within this chain, e.g. between CBOs, I/NGOs (hereafter referred to as NGOs) and inter/national donors, and very little is known about the ways in which such power relationships are grasped by activist CBOs on the ground and influence political work.

What's more, despite the political origin and character of most CBOs (Schou, 2009), research on CBOs involvement in activism is far from extensive while this is a growing field in planned development (Barrett, Van Wessel, & Hilhorst, 2016; Batliwala, 2002; Doyle & Patel, 2008; Kamstra, 2017). To fill these (academic) gaps, and help answer vital policy questions in relation to future funding of activist CBOs, and beyond, this research investigated how the different positions of two activist CBOs in the Official Development Aid (ODA) system constrains and/or enables their political roles and potentials to contribute to economic and social justice and inclusive development.

The research specifically looked at:
1) how access to funding influences the issues CBOs prioritize and the ways they address them;
2) the ways in which CBOs participate and contribute to policy making with government institutions;
3) how involvement in different networks and alliances strengthen and/or weaken CBOs political roles;
4) how CBOs daily practices of dealing with urgencies, decision-making, capacity building, outreach work, donor demands, etc. increase and/or impede their political roles and;

5) what CBOs members' experiences reveal about their relationship with and effectiveness of the CBO in empowering their members to manage and navigate injustices.

This research focused on two specific cases: **a gay sex worker-led CBO and a social justice CBO** (focusing predominantly on police violence), both operating from urban settlements in Nairobi. The former is well established in the ODA system, whilst the latter has only recently accessed it but has a long history of community organizing outside this system. The two different positions within the ODA system and organizational histories allowed for a **comparative analysis on their positioning and ensuing political processes, relationships and strategies**. Allowing us to observe from the ground the different practices, interventions and projects that are developed and implemented from their different positions. We employed **various qualitative methods** to investigate the every-day dynamics and practices of the two CBOs, their interactions with the communities they aim to serve and represent, with other community-based organisations, and with other (more powerful) actors in the ODA system—specifically from the perspective of the advocacy aid chain. Our methods included a **3-month literature review and 15 months of empirical research**. The empirical part involved a wide variety of qualitative methods, which were employed by five academic- and 20 community researchers. The research activities in this period ranged from the **more obvious (i.e. participant observations, ethnographic fieldwork, interviews with stakeholders, network mapping and document analysis) to the more unique, namely community-led research and reflexive logbooks**. Altogether, the research was structured as an **intensive collaboration between academics, community researchers, CBOs and their members**, with constant learning loops between all involved to ensure that the research was conducted incrementally and collaboratively. As a result, the research outcomes provide knowledges that support policy makers working in the ODA system, and especially in the advocacy aid chain, to rethink funding practices and improve the positions of (activist) CBOs. Simultaneously, the findings aim to strengthen the capacities of participating CBOs to improve their positions within the strategic partnerships in which they participate.

Our research focus, 'the Aid Chain', guided us to specifically **interrogate how power is distributed within the advocacy aid chain in terms of accountability processes, relationship models and role division between various actors** (Kamstra, 2017: 40). We looked at how the organization and the practices within the advocacy aid chain shaped everyday dynamics within the two organization and their relationships with community, and also how this enabled or constrained them in forging collaborations with other CBOs, NGOs and government bodies. All this helped us in **exploring the extent to which the organizational realities of the two CBOs, as shaped by the advocacy aid chain, reflect a social transformative and/or managerial approach to development within this chain.** Other regimes of power (e.g. political and economic structures) also delineate the political role of activist CBOs, which we explore further in forthcoming academic articles. In this report we reflect on the way the advocacy aid chain strengthens and/or obstructs the political role of activist CBOs in Nairobi, and beyond, to contribute to inclusive and

sustainable development. Seeing that our research also looked at how activist CBOs contribute to changing and maintaining power relationships and how this pertains to their success or failure, the study also closely relates to the theme 'Political roles of CSOs in LLMIC'. In reference to the third theme, 'Political Space under Pressure', the activist CBOs at focus in this study both experience the suffocating effects of a shrinking political space for CSOs. Both cases concern community-led organisations by members who are multiply marginalized (i.e. poor, criminalized and stigmatized). Hence, our research also brings to the fore how their particular efforts to widen political space for their communities (e.g. by representing the voices of the most vulnerable in society) are influenced by the narratives and practices of the advocacy aid chain (Kamstra, 2017: 41-42).

WE ARE THE DONKEYS

"What we experience as CBOs, huh, is colonisation, it is colonisation. We are the donkeys for NGOs, especially national NGOs, or local chapters of INGOs. No! Coming to think of it, we are colonised by all NGOs, also INGOs, even though they might be far away. You know why? We are not involved in decision-making, only in doing the work. We are the community, but they decide what we need, and they give us some money, too little money, and a lot of work to do. The money is never enough and we have to stretch our budgets, make it work, while the eyes of the community are upon us. Meanwhile, what do they do? Nothing, but they get a lot of money, how? You know, this is not the first time, this always happen. Why do they use CBOs as donkeys? They are afraid to come to ghetto and do the actual work, without us they can't do anything." [Interview with the director of the social justice CBO, 26 July 2019].

The above excerpt was uttered by the director of the social justice CBO when one of the authors walked back with him from a meeting with a consortium partner, a local chapter of an INGO, which had not done any work while using up large chunks of the budget. The director had repeatedly asked for accountability from the organisation in question, but without much avail. This had not been the first time he framed the relationship between his CBO and partner NGOs as a form of colonisation. In fact, this framing reflects the mainstay of the way both CBOs and numerous other community-led organisations that we encountered in our research understood such relationships. The NGOs that were often viewed as colonisers included national NGOs that were mostly staffed by people with tertiary education and middle class backgrounds. Local chapters of INGOs had the same make-up of staff. Most important distinction CBOs made between NGOs and their own organisations pertained to the fact that NGOs were not community-led. The activist CBOs in this research were not concerned with the formal registration per se but defined NGOs as all activist and development organisations that were not community-led. In doing so, they recognised the challenges of community-led organisations, including 'internal' power dynamics such as elite capture and difficulties in establishing who belonged to a particular 'community'. Yet, the defining distinction to them remained the measure of community embeddedness and legitimacy and thus the potential for direct forms of accountability.

"NGOs are like politicians, haha, they come to us from outside, but they need us to do their work." [Interview with a community researcher, of the social justice CBO, 9 August 2018]

The gay sex worker led CBO also frequently feels it is doing the 'donkey work' work of INGOs, mainly because INGOs require them to do a lot of (administrative) work without reasonable financial compensation. For example, INGO 1 requires the organization to reach a, from the CBOs perspective, unrealistic, high number of male sex workers: "[The INGO] has a target of 4226 by the end of the year which is actually unachievable because they pay for 160 people per month which sums up to 2000 maximal" [Interview project manager gay sex worker-led CBO, July 13 2018]. Most of the CBOs time is spend on this particular project and despite insufficient funds, the INGO strongly pushes them to increased- and improved results. The program manager said that such interactions make him feel as if the INGO fails to appreciate the HIV/AIDS prevention efforts the organization undertakes, and that their work is never 'good enough'.

The activist CBOs at focus in our research are part of what they experience as **a global anti-colonial political struggle** by people who have been subalternised, or 'othered'(Said, 1978, 1985), through 'global coloniality' (Escobar, 2011). The envisioned decolonization by activist CBOs holds global coloniality as a constituent part of the modernist politics of development (Kothari, 2005), dehumanization (Fanon, 2008), dispossession (Roy, 2017), and exploitation (e.g. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015: 23). At the heart of their form of community organizing and advocacy is the idea of remaking the world such that the enslaved, colonized, and exploited peoples (i.e. the subalternised) can **regain their voice, knowledge and power**.

"Many NGOs exploit us for reports and more funds, but they do not listen to us when we say 'you can't do it in this way', or 'we need to do this'. Most do not see us as equals, they just think 'they are from ghetto' so we are stupid and criminal, and we do not know what we need. You know, we are not even people to them." [Interview with the project manager of the social justice CBO, 14 July 2019].

"The [Community-led Research and Action—CLRA see below] research, it taught us what we know, and how much we know, and it also showed us what we can do. We can do research, we can write reports and we can make decisions. We have voices that we can share and make heard. We can initiate our own development projects for change, and teach NGOs on what we really need and how we want to work together, or not work together at all. This is what we do, also in our justice work, we suffer from police violence, so it is our story to tell. But we can only tell it in our way, our language. They need to learn to listen." [Interview with a community researcher from the social justice CBO, 14 July 2019].

In this report, we focus on the divergence between the language of social transformation and the political role of CSOs in policy frameworks (such as the D&D framework) and the dehumanizing practices within the advocacy aid chain, with specific attention to the role of I/NGOs, which undermine the political role of CBOs. **Outcomes of this study show that**

from the perspectives of activist CBOs, the ODA system, with or without intention, continues 'colonial' regimes which positions them and their members as 'subalterns' (Spivak, 1994). Our research reveals the extent to which CBOs perceive the effects and affects of the dominant narratives and practices within the ODA system as part of the global coloniality that continues to shape global development (Kothari, 2005). We argue that at present, **the advocacy aid chain cannot fully contribute to political change in favour of the humanization of subalternised people because current practices continue to dehumanize them**. Hence, we assert that if the advocacy aid chain wants to remain relevant in its support of activist CBOs, but also of CSOs in general, radical change is needed. The **dehumanization** activist CBOs experience as a **result of how power is distributed within the advocacy aid chain** calls for a fundamental reconfiguration to avoid reproduction of the very structures that bring forth the social and economic dispossession at focus in advocacy.

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

Partners or sub-grantee?
Our empirical findings first and foremost problematize the prevalent ways in which the D&D framework frames both **CBOs and NGOs, and other organisations, under the same moniker, namely by referring to both as Civil Society Organisations** (Kamstra, 2017: 1). This dominant conflation of NGOs and CBOs under the moniker CSO **hides the political and other types of power differences between these two types of organisations.** Our research shows that partnerships between NGOs and CBOs are oftentimes experienced as oppressive and exploitative by the latter and are often theorized by them in the language of coloniality. They feel dehumanized, exploited and dispossessed by NGOs and are often perplexed by the ways in which NGOs speak and act on behalf of them.

A representative of one of the activist networks in our study said: "Most of the donors they are white, and they don't understand what it means to be a key population and most of the donors who are white their engagement has been very poor." [Interview partner gay sex worker-led CBO, 17 July 2018]. This lack of engagement is reflected in interviews with other activists as well. Too often, 'white' donors develop programs without involvement of CBO representatives to only involve the CBO in implementation phase. What is more, our research shows how these donors take credit for programmatic outcomes achieved by these populations. As one of the activists said: "The North will fund you but when there is an international meeting you will get a white person talking about MSMs in the program they funded. But hahaha ey, how can he talk about it?" [Interview partner gay sex worker led organization, 17 July 2018].

Based on our findings, we conclude, accordingly, that the current design of and practices within the aid chain affords too much power to organisations that are not community-led, such as most NGOs.

"We get funds to support local activism and develop safety and security mechanisms for grassroots activists, but we need to report on our activities and funds to donors and they have particular ideas on what activism is and what we can do to help activists at risk. So, for example, a safe house is too dangerous, but we cannot get funding for more creative options so we make it work somehow. Our funding [mainly from the Dutch government] also does not allow us to invest in long-term core support for the [CBOs]. Most funds that we can allocate are activity-based. […] Yes we do get more core support, for operational costs, but we cannot give this to our partners on the ground [CBOs]." Interview with partner NGO 2 from the social justice CBO, 4 February 2019].

Our findings furthermore show that the ways in which donors and NGOs intervene with activist CBOs potentially harms the CBOs positions the ground. During an interview, a leader of a network the gay sex worker-led organization is part of expressed her frustration with donors who do this: "White people want to make enough noise out there about the poor people down on that continent, but we are like shut up because what you are saying is causing harm here.. You [white] people should keep quiet. We will actually tell you what to say and we will tell you who and how." [Interview with partner from the gay sex worker-led CBO, 27 July 2018]. Her comment on 'white' as opposed to 'poor' people reinforces the understanding of donor-CBO relationships as colonial. Another leader of a CBO that partners with the gay sex worker-led organization made a similar comment: "There are a lot of power dynamics in aidland and when it comes to north-south relationships, that has even broken our [sex worker] movements because there are people somewhere in the United States that think a certain network is not relevant in existence and they just make decisions for communities." [Interview with partner from the gay sex worker-led CBO, 17 July 2018].

Both quotes show how INGOs tend to act without listening to CBOs on the ground, which is dangerous since there is limited understanding of how such interventions sabotage- and threaten the work CBOs already do. Previous experiences with 'white' NGOs make some of the activists reluctant to further engage with them: "We don't want white faces cause immediately the agenda will be western" [interview partner gay sex worker-led CBO, 27 July 2018].

One of the major problems is that **CBOs in general access (international) funding through intermediary NGOs**. Existing (hidden) assumptions about CBOs drive donors (including the MFA) to foreground NGOs in funding practices. Donors aim to encourage inclusive partnerships between NGOs and CBOs for instance by making 'community participation' an important criteria for funding collective strategic action (e.g. Cornish, Campbell, Shukla, & Banerji, 2012; Dill, 2009; Kelly & Birdsall, 2010; Schou, 2009). Despite ambitions for participation, in practice however, we observed that in most cases CBOs

merely take up positions as 'sub-grantee'. Interviews with donors, NGO practitioners and CBO staff and observations of different partnerships and everyday encounters during this study revealed the (hidden) assumptions underlying the weak position of CBOs within the advocacy aid chain. **CBOs are generally perceived by donors and NGOs alike as small and informal organisations that lack financial and managerial capacities and abilities to scale up**. These assumptions also feature in the D&D framework (Kamstra, 2017: 29) and reflect previous academic research (e.g. Aveling, 2010; Kelly & Birdsall, 2010). Our research shows that none of these assumptions are in fact based on the actual realities of most activist CBOs, for instance when we scrutinize the purported informality.

Both activist CBOs in our research (and over 50 others with which we have worked over the past two decades) are formally registered organisations with robust structures in place to manage relatively largescale (i.e. national) programs and finances. Moreover, the activist **CBOs in our research are indeed informally engaged in community building practices through which they develop solidarity, maintain legitimacy and are recognized as political actors** (for instance as representatives to formal authorities). Nonetheless, both CBOs could not always adhere to particular criteria of NGOs to prove their eligibility, such as conducting formal annual audits. Audits are often expensive, and most CBOs do not have money to spare to finance such an endeavour because all funds they receive (often through intermediary NGOs) are strictly allocated for specific activities.[1] What's more, as sub-grantees, CBOs need to exhaustively prove to NGOs that they can take on certain responsibilities within a predesigned project (for instance by developing detailed action and budget plans), while NGOs rarely present CBOs with any evidence of their capabilities or plans. Unsurprisingly, **the lack of mutual accountability extends to financial reporting.** As already mentioned above, the social justice CBO in our research had to painstakingly account for each shilling they spent, whereas their 'partner' NGOs did not reciprocate this (despite frequent requests). Even when CBOs were part of larger consortia and acted as designated co-applicants, NGOs did not heed such requests. This shows how NGOs do not think they need to be answerable to CBOs in any way. This is further facilitated by the contemporary design of the advocacy aid chain. NGOs take up powerful positions in agenda setting and program design and implementation, and manage the flow of funds with emphasis on upward (financial) accountability to donors but without mutual accountability with CBOs or any other checks to abrogate what are commonly perceived by CBOs as colonial power dynamics between them and NGOs. This not only harms the political role of CBOs, but may even threaten their very existence because it may alienate the latter from their base.

Our research, furthermore shows how **NGOs assumptions about CBOs blinds them to see CBOs potential**. The relatively small size and putative informality of activist CBOs are

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[1] Financial audits even seem rather inadequate to prevent financial mismanagement, which is evidenced by the pervasiveness of all kinds of malpractices (including corruption) our team has observed in different types of organisations during our fieldwork, while all these organisations have solid looking audit reports on public display.

not necessarily a problem, since both can function as a point of departure for contextualized interventions that make use of the flexibility and agility of CBOs. Also, activist CBOs have the ability to quickly scale up activities through their vast CBO networks without losing the power of contextualization. Rather than collaborating with CBOs to incorporate these CBO qualities into programs and implementation, NGOs seemed to consider this burdensome for their own formalized and top-down ways of working. One staff member from a partner NGO from the social justice CBO explicated:

"We do not know how to scale down, put our work on the ground, it is true. We do not know how to trust CBOs, recognise their work, their skills, their connections on the ground. We do not have time for this, we do not have space for this. I mean, we have rules, for safety, insurance, for accounting, and all that hinders us to work with CBOs as partners. We are held accountable by our [international] boards and donors, our bosses, while CBOs are held accountable by us and their community. They are sandwiched, I see that. We look in opposite directions, you see? We hinder them in doing their work, I know this." Interview with partner NGO 1 from the social justice CBO, 5 July 2019].

Both CBOs in this study are part of large (self-initiated) networks of other activist CBOs in the country. Through these networks, the CBOs already consistently scale up and widen the reach of political activities. Interestingly, in most cases, partner NGOs and donors of activist CBOs were not even aware of these or failed to grasp their potential in full. Consequently, very limited initiatives to work with and through the networks were initiated.

The relationship between NGOs and CBOs is characterized by geographical, social, class distances, which reinforce the dehumanization of CBOs by NGOs. To illustrate, NGO representatives rarely visited the offices of CBOs located in low-income neighbourhoods. When they did, they tried to spend as little time as possible and not drink or eat anything. On some occasions, food was brought to NGO staff visiting CBOs by an Uber from the upside of town, an hour away by car. Both CBOs described this as offensive and colonial behaviours that made them feel, as one CBO leader put it, "as if we are not human. They don't see us as human."

Lived experiences and entrenched community connections
Alongside adequate organizational structures, large (autonomous) networks and competent staff, **the activist CBOs in our research also have an abundance of additional qualities and expertise that NGOs do not have**, **such as expertise based on lived experiences and entrenched community connections.** This makes activist CBOs best placed to set the terms upon which social transformation should be achieved, given that their lives are directly implicated. This brings us back to the main bone of contention between CBOs and NGOs and which augments the experience of colonisation by the former. Most NGOs in the advocacy aid chain are not run by people whose lives are directly at stake in the contexts of envisioned change. As a result, **the activist CBOs in our study questioned the political**

role of NGOs and harboured great suspicion towards the latter following the colonial tendencies with which most NGOs treated them, i.e. speaking and acting for them, without, as a CBO member stated, "having to put their lives at risk."

"You saw them [several leaders from partner NGOs], they came to the demonstration only after they saw there was no danger, hahaha no teargas, no bullets. When they saw that police allowed us to walk on. They are fake, now they come and take the mic and speak about justice in front of a camera, but what about tonight? They go back to where they came from, safety, and we continue to live in war." [Interview with a project manager at the social justice CBO, 7 July 2019]

The lived experiences deeply connect the two activist CBOs to their wider communities; as family members, friends, neighbours and co-workers. **The foundation of shared lived experiences and the embeddedness of activist CBOs within the communities fosters direct forms of accountability**. Our research revealed time and again how the two CBOs were made to answer to members from the respective communities through spontaneous meetings, visits and constant consultation. Through this, staff relentlessly reflected on the relevance of their work to the wider community and adapted their work when in doubt and where possible—given the funding constraints and NGO demands. Additionally, their shared positions and daily relationships and experiences provided constant feedback loops and checks on the power of the two organisations. CBOs embeddedness within communities, their **ability to respond to constituency needs as well as downward accountability measures are considered crucial elements in order for CBOs to perform their political roles** (see also Kamstra 2017, 39).

"You see it also, right, every morning people wait for us, or they call even at night. We are never away from our community. Our community is our family, our mothers and grandmothers, the people we grew up with, our friends. When there is a fire, we fight it together, when there is no water we have to fetch it together. When police come, we hide together. Hahaha like that. We suffer together, and we help each other. This is how our community lives and how we work as a CBO. We go to funeral meetings, donate money for hospital bills, because we depend on each other. They look to us with more expectations because they think we have money since we have an office. That is a challenge. We experience a lot of pressure to help our community, to give back." [Interview with the director of the social justice CBO, 10 July 2018]

Interestingly, over the years of being firmly embedded within the ODA system, the leadership of the gay sex worker-led CBO had gradually shifted their main focus from community to NGO demands. Taking into consideration that the CBO has had at times approximately 20 partners, a shift to becoming a multi-level organizational structure was needed to assure their organizational survival (Cornish et al., 2012; Markowitz & Tice, 2003; Skovdal et al., 2017). However, while being able to obtain and sustain the organization and keep growing is a demonstration of their success as a CBO, there is a flipside. We observed

that while adhering to the managerial demands of NGOs, the CBOs leaderships' conceptualization of community involvement had become somewhat removed from the daily experiences of their members, which caused moments of tensions within the organization and at times affected their modes of accountability to and legitimacy among the wider community. The CBO which is less strongly placed within the ODA system, was far more attuned to calls from the community and invested considerable time to listen to and address community requests.

Gaps between paper and practice

"They [several partner NGOs] always want us to go to their big functions, and they will give us t-shirts and transport money because they think we are for sale. They think they can just lure us with a bit of money and t-shirts but they do not engage us as equals, as partners in the struggle. We are just bodies to fill their space, without us they will not have a crowd at their functions so they need us to mobilise for them. We are worth so much more than just mobilising tools for big NGOs." Interview with a leader of a partner CBO to the social justice CBO, 5 January 2019]

The potential of activist CBOs knowledges, networks and community embeddedness are stifled within the current advocacy aid chain as a result of the particular nature of their 'partnerships' with NGOs. The activist CBOs felt that most NGOs merely use them as channels for the mobilization of bodies (to attend trainings or take up services by NGOs) and carry out some of the more practical and 'on the ground' interventions where NGOs do not have legitimacy or they preferred not to have direct contact. **We therefore conclude that despite transformative ambitions on paper** (e.g. Kamstra 2017: 1,7), **the positions of (unchecked) power occupied by NGOs with regard to CBOs within the advocacy aid chain impede the achievements of such ambitions in practice.**

Exceptions to the rule?
From the 40 plus NGOs we interviewed and observed during their interactions with CBOs, only one INGO and one national NGO made considerable efforts to treat CBOs as equal partners and decision makers. Yet even these two NGOs were not able to fully commit to this ambition circumscribed as they were by time constraints (regarding project funds but also time to invest in working collaboratively). The CBOs described these two organisations as approaching a more humanizing relationship but still had major concerns about the lack of time to work together in a truly collaborative manner which had implications for how their autonomy, professionality and vast networks and reach were recognized in the process of working together.

"[NGO 3] is a partner, we trust them. We tested them, hahaha, we ordered tea and had them drink from plastic cups, like we do in ghetto, and they drank with us, like it was a normal thing. We developed trust. They come to us, by public transport, and they are not arrogant. They also share more about their work and budgets, they are more open. Not all the way, as

we need to be, since we still do most of the work for much less money. But we feel they are on our side." [Interview with project manager of the social justice CBO, 21 July 2019]

The gay sex worker-led organization refers to INGO 2 as an exception. INGO 2 funds advocacy and core costs, and the CBO is also involved in program design and decision-making. 'This donor allows us to really make a change', the program manager said. And while this donor accounts for approximately 70 percent of their funding, the CBO does not experience any administrative burden. The CBO reports to this INGO twice a year, while other donors require strict financial reports every month.

On the whole, both CBOs studied have virtually no existing professional relationships with financially more powerful organisations (i.e. donors or NGOs) in which they are treated as actor their own right. They were constantly subjected to what they termed colonial power imbalances and dehumanizing practices; their lived experiences were used to window-dress reports and conference meetings; their bodies were mobilized to fill training halls and their knowledges were hijacked through the clever recruitment or co-optation of articulate CBO staff by NGOs. On many occasions, we witnessed that CBO staff and members were forced to change their way of work to fit unnecessary NGO demands, and at other moments we saw that they were expected to work without being (fully) compensated. These are just a few examples of many during our fieldwork.

The few contradictions to the norm of oppressive, colonial and dehumanizing NGO-CBO 'partnerships', mentioned above, did allow the CBOs to set their own agendas (to some extent) and receive some form of core support. **Core support is crucial**. The dominant modality of money flows between NGOs and CBOs limit any form of operational expenditures and each month CBOs struggle to pay office rent (even in their low-income neighbourhoods) and pay out salary and stipends to staff (not to mention transport, water, phone, printing and Internet costs). The small amount of core funding one of the two CBOs receives allows it to rent a safe office with water, Internet and other requirements. The energy and time made available through this and the availability of Internet and electricity help the gay sex worker-led CBO to do their own research, expand their knowledge and networks and steadily invest in the growth of their activities.

Chaos of urgencies
Despite a lack of core funding the social justice CBO pays rent for a small office and invests considerable amounts of their own money (earned through salary, per diems by NGOs and doing other types of contract work), time and other resources to help fellow community members who face a wide range of emergencies (such as fire, police violence and hospital bills). Their contribution to alleviate such hardship builds on existing solidarity ties that bound residents and family members in low-income contexts together, and through this the CBO nurtures their credibility, relevance and legitimacy within the community they aim to represent. However, facing a constant shortage of resources, such as time and money, this **CBO is under considerable pressures to balance all these demands from the**

community and engage in advocacy, access funds, manage programs, and expand their networks and activities.

Although the gay sex worker-led organization is embedded in the aid chain, and receives donor funding, employees of this CBO also still invest their own money, time and resources to help fellow community members who face emergencies as well (such as assisting sex workers who experience (police) violence and contributing to hospital and funeral bills). Interestingly, however, our study revealed that despite its attempt to address the community urgencies (none of the CBOs succeeded in heeding all calls for help), its credibility, relevance and legitimacy within the community was still under pressure. This derived from the fact that the leaders were increasingly perceived less part of 'the community'. This is partly because of its shifted accountability, from the community to NGOs and donors, whereas the social justice CBO still relies more heavily on recognition from the community than on NGOs and donors—which keeps its centre of gravity, in terms of accountability, firmly located in its relationships with fellow community members. However, this should not be read as supporting concerns over the alleged causality of increasing funds and diminishing community legitimacy of CBOs, but instead point in a direction to discuss the problem of accountability within the ODA system. In other words, it is not the (sizes of) funds that are the problem but the way these funds are organised and accounted for that may engender diminishing community legitimacy of CBOs. This calls for close scrutiny of accountability mechanisms and their (unintended) effects and how new ways of organizing accountability may potentially take into account (or even depart from) community experiences and perceptions.

In our study, we labelled the everyday oscillation between all these needs and demands, as well as organizational problems as the '**chaos of urgencies**'. The chaos of urgencies in which CBOs operate is often invisible to NGOs and donors who are at a distance from the lived experiences of community members. For example, not a day went by without a call from community members who were arrested or raped or were in dire need of help for a myriad of other reasons. These 'urgencies' are often life or death matters and require flexible un-earmarked funds, for example, to pay bills and bonds or for transport, safe housing or hospital costs. **For CBOs, it is hard to access such flexible funding, and this obstructs their emergency responsiveness.** On top of the chaos of urgencies that mark the lives of CBO members and the wider community, **CBOs staff also live lives mired by the same uncertainties (such as police violence)**. The individual and collective energy drained by the chaos of urgencies is under recognized by the wider advocacy aid chain, which is evinced by the lack of flexibility NGOs display to any type of delay or shift in meeting attendance, reporting or project activities.

Networks of CBOs and other activists
There is a general assumption that CBOs lack capacities and networks (i.e. the knowledges, skills, resources and means) to communicate their advocacy messages to broader audiences (Kamstra 2017, 29). However, **both CBOs in our study engage in various ways of doing**

advocacy (e.g. demonstrations, involvement in media, lobbying, participating in dialogue with government officials, and "making noise" - letting their counter- voice be heard and also less obvious everyday forms of activism and advocacy); efforts that are further strengthened through their involvement in inter/national activist networks. Working in such equal partnerships, networks and alliances, allows CBOs to perform their political role in several ways. Through alliances with other activist CBOs nation- and worldwide allows them to engage in efforts aimed at changing structural power relations. Supported by such relationships, CBOs, for example, initiate advocacy agendas, represent their communities in (international) policy spaces, and engage in dialogue and networking with influential stakeholders. Being part of these networks and alliances increases CBOs access to, and legitimacy within, such (policy) spaces. The two activist CBOs are also fully engaged in their own advocacy strategies on the ground with lower level state representatives, such as police. Both CBOs engage in dialogues with police to create mutual awareness, build collaborations and improve accountability. Since **CBOs rarely receive funding for these more informal ways of doing advocacy with local stakeholders, the organisations and their members invest their own time and financial resources**. Despite the lack of funds, the latter set of activities are mostly perceived as the core activities of the activist CBOs because they often yield more direct results in the short-run and are crucial for building community legitimacy.

The power of strategic ally-ship
The activist CBOs maintained that the NGOs in the advocacy aid chain that are not led by community members should work to support CBOs work and as such towards their own (the NGOs) redundancy. This ideal role of NGOs is captured by the activist CBOs in our research in terms of **'ally-ship'** and solidarities within which the agency to decide on whose terms lies squarely with the CBOs. A great example of ally-ship is UNAIDS. At government level, the Kenyan Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior work with the two CBOs through national networks of CBOs that engage with strategic partnerships with NGOs and state organisations (these are the key population network and the social justice network). In these networks, both CBOs play leading roles on a national stage to lobby for changes in health care and/or police-citizens engagement. **Through support by powerful allies such as UNAIDS, the sex worker-led CBO has been able to increase its influence in strategic partnerships the state and NGOs to try and have their interests and lived experiences inform policies and interventions.** However, following the above sketched challenges with NGOs, and the proximity between state and NGOs discussed in our literature review, this CBO is rarely heard by the other strategic partners. Only through the intervention of UNAIDS, and other global allies, have some of its contributions ended up in guidelines and frameworks. To illustrate, at time of our research, the sex worker- and LGBTQ community strongly resisted national implementation of 'biometrics'.[2] The networks collaboratively opposed implementation of this surveillance

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[2] Biometrics is measurement and analysis of biological data using physiological characteristics (i.e. fingerprints and iris scans) for authentication purposes.

technique, especially because the criminalised status of sex workers and people who identify as gay raised major privacy- and safety concerns. Despite close proximity to the Kenyan government, UNAIDS publicly spoke against biometrics which made the CBOs feel supported in their case.

The social justice CBO receives similar political support from Amnesty International and two other international human rights bodies, but with even less tangible outcomes because the interests of the supporting organisations always prevail. Still, this political support, even if with minimal financial backing, allows some space for these activist CBOs to engage with the state and advocate for change without meeting direct forms of violence (such as imprisonment or death).

"When our comrade was murdered, we went to the police station. But they did not listen, but when [three partner NGOs, including Amnesty] arrived they helped us, and even the [top commanders] listened. They can push the big people to listen to us, but they have to keep pushing because if they stop they [big people] will also stop listening to us." Interview with a fellow activist from the social justice CBO, 13 February 2019].

The relationships between the CBOs in our study and 'strategic allies' such as UNAIDS and Amnesty International are less defined by 'coloniality' and its 'dehumanising' effects. One of the reasons for perceived increased equality is that financial support is mostly absent from these relationships. This again elucidates that the current direction of accountability of funding structures, i.e. from NGOs to donor and not community based accountability for NGOs (and if possible also for donors), fosters oppressive power dynamics. What's more, this also encourages monitoring and evaluation that looks at process rather than impact. Moreover, both organizations adhere to more democratic accountability structures. Amnesty is hold directly accountable by their members who in the main follow keenly what Amnesty does through reports and social media. UNAIDS is checked by different international lobby groups of marginalised and criminalised groups (sex workers, queers, etc.). This type of scrutiny may perhaps keep these two organisations on their toes even if they are also fully imbedded in the stifling structures of the advocacy aid chain. Both CBO described their relationships with these two organisations as less shaped by what they termed coloniality, but still they shared with many incidents during which they too felt oppressed, ignored or exploited by these two organisation.

The two CBOs briefly compared
The flexibility, creativity and commitment to engage in unfunded activities that strengthen relationships with community as a whole and with local stakeholders in particular is much higher among the CBO that is less embedded in the ODA system. The social justice CBO actively avoids being too disciplined by what it terms 'coloniality' of partner NGOs and displays more 'grassroots' (i.e. locally embedded and existing) technologies and techniques to build solidarity within the community and (tentatively) develop democratic collaborations between the community and state officials and other

(local) authorities (including NGOs). This leads us to the conclusion that being firmly embedded in the ODA system denotes greater distance from the community. **However, our research also shows, that being firmly part of the system allows the gay sex worker-led CBO to be recognized by the state (to some extent) and work towards particular structural changes.** The keyword here is 'particular', because the changes that this CBO could push for were always tied to government policy ambitions that were already in place and which chimed in with international agreements (e.g. the inclusion of the CBO in government-led HIV/AIDS prevention work). Despite the shift in focus of accountability, i.e. from community to NGO and/or donor and the ensuing tensions between the CBO and the community, **these particular structural changes directly benefit the community on a profound level (for instance with regard to improved health care)**. However, this CBO has very little space to push for change that does not fit the government agenda, as poignantly illustrated by the failure of the court case to repeal the penal code which criminalises sexual acts between two men. What's more, the few achievements on a structural level are gravely overshadowed by the reproduction of particular power dynamics of the ODA system within the CBO as a result of the latter's adaptation to this system, illustrated by growing gap between current lived experiences by the CBO leadership and its members, which of course stands at odds with the decolonial efforts of their activism. **Notwithstanding the social transformative approach by (some) donors and NGOs, the flow of decision-making, money and accountability is distributed top-down by the advocacy aid chain and as such perpetuates what is experienced by CBOs as coloniality, which gradually and to some measure also captures CBOs that are more embedded in the aid chain.**

Concluding remarks

Within the D&D framework, the importance of CBOs as a political actor is acknowledged. While our research validates this assumption, it also shows that the political role of CBOs is not sufficiently developed and also wrongly conceptualized within the document. In the first place, CBOs and NGOs are predominantly grouped together as Civil Society, making little distinction between the two. Our research has shown the importance of making a distinction not only because they do not share the same agenda but also because the asymmetrical power relationships between the two, conceptualised by these organisations in terms of coloniality, often undermine the political role of activist CBOs. Interestingly, while the most embedded CBO may on one hand achieve certain (strictly delineated) successes on a structural level this seems to be at the expense of the community connection and thus of its community legitimacy. In contrast, the CBO that is less embedded lacks sufficient funds to sufficiently address community needs and has to invest considerable effort to try (and not necessarily succeed) to contribute to structural change, but it enjoys much more credibility among community members. The idea of 'the' political role of CBOs thus needs further complication given that legitimate representation and community mandate may suffer when a community-led organisation becomes successfully embroiled in broader efforts towards structural change. There may be a point at which the latter type of CBO ceases to be 'community-led', which then raises new questions about its political role. In brief, the extent to which outcomes are directly experienced, even if piecemeal, and the proximity of lived

experiences of CBO staff and the wider community it claims to represent seems to factor in experiences of the political role of CBO from a community perspective.

Moreover, our research has also illustrated the need for CBOs to be treated as autonomous development and political actors, especially in the context of the advocacy aid chain. The political role of NGOs, i.e. those run by people whose lives are not at stake, is fundamentally different from the political roles of activist CBOs and other organisations that are entangled with the lived experiences at focus of action and envisioned change. Activist CBOs in our study emphasized the need to work with NGOs, and other organisations that operate at a distance from their realities, from notions of ally-ship and (financial, political, etc.) solidarity in which CBOs can establish directions and pace. In order for NGOs to work with CBOs it is, thus, important to be supportive of CBOs without determining the course of action.

The D&D framework also recognizes the importance of advocacy in the struggle for social transformation. Once again, our research validates this assumption but finds that what falls under the label of advocacy needs to be further developed in order to revise donor strategies in funding. Firstly, we have identified a distinction between the advocacy aid chain and the ODA system. Even though the advocacy aid chain is a component of the latter it often has different ambitions because of the strategic objectives to expand the political agency of excluded groups and enhance their contribution to sustainable and inclusive development and fight against poverty and injustice. Secondly, what is considered advocacy must be expanded to include actions and activities on different societal level: lobbying, participating in dialogue with government officials, "making noise", as one of the CBO puts it, sensitization of the community, public opinion and entities like the police but on ground level. Funding for these different types of advocacy are needed if CBOs are to make a real difference. This has several consequences for funding. Funding needs to be flexible – not all advocacy activities can be planned beforehand, so emergency funds are needed to respond in the moment. The definition of advocacy should not only include traditional modalities such as lobbying, but also less obvious activities such as political education of criminalised community members and barefoot health service provision through which hard-to-reach groups can be reached. Finally, activists CBOs are working in networks with other CBOs with similar objectives, constituents or issues. Working in collaboration amplifies the voices and noises of isolated CBOs and makes it louder. Therefore, more funding is needed to fund network initiatives which can be short-term outcomes that will eventually lead to accomplishing long-term goals.

Our project studied the ODA system from the CBO perspective. Our use of ethnography and community-led research enabled us to capture the daily dynamics and provide rich descriptions of the daily chaos of urgencies as well as the power intricacies between CBOs, NGOs and donors, grasped by CBOs in the language of coloniality and dehumanization. This would not have been possible if we would have relied on less participatory methods. However, to avoid the possibility of bias, we also conducted more than 40 interviews with NGOs to understand the other side of the power relation. This not only validated the data

we collected from the CBOs perspectives, but also gave us insight into the possibilities and limitations national NGOs experience in their relations with international donors and INGO's, helping us to comprehend why certain strategies are applied locally that have adverse effects for the autonomy and growth of the CBOs they work with.

One of the limitations that must be noted is that this study is done in an urban context. There is no denial that similarities exist between the relationship of activist CBOs in the ODA system in more rural areas. However, this needs to be further researched and not just assumed. Moreover, the way advocacy is practiced is context-bounded. This means that the possibility exists that within rural areas, or in advocacy activities that are used to fight towards a single cause (i.e. the closure of a factory, or the cleaning of polluted waters), that what is considered advocacy might be different than what we concluded here. This too, must be taken into consideration in funding strategies. Another aspect of this research may raise questions about limitation, namely the fact that the CBOs that feature in our study are activist CBOs that are led by and aim to represent highly criminalized and marginalized groups. However, in the context of growing dispossession in ever-expanding cities in the global 'South', these CBOs represent the lived experiences of the majority of citizens in these cities, To illustrate, two-third of Nairobi's population live in unplanned, highly surveillanced and underserviced urban settings with near to 100% formal unemployment rates, and cramped on only 5 % of the urban land. This rather dystopic reality of Nairobi is not unique for cities in the global 'South' where most people live in dire poverty and in squatter conditions and are generally criminalized by the state while making-do by engaging in a wide range of legal, illegal and criminal activities. Many CBOs in such urban contexts thus represent highly marginalised and criminalised populations and engage in some kind of political work, therefore the findings of this study have wider applicability than the groups that featured in our study.

More research is also needed regarding the different directions of accountability NGOs-CBOs, CBOs and their communities and national NGOs and I/NGOs. Similar research to ours should be carried out with CBOs in other sectors, or with those who struggle for funding but manage to continually survive. This will give more insight into the political role of CBOs and the issues they have to deal with and how contexts make a different. Finally, more research needs to be done in I/NGOs and donors to understand the ways decisions are made about funding strategies, including their reasons to include a particular group or issue and exclude another. A systematic inventory could be done to map out the different ways advocacy activities are funded in the ODA system.

Community Led Research and Action
Our research group, CBOs within the official development aid system in Kenya, was keen to understand the everyday dynamics and practices of CBOs and the communities they are embedded in. As such we employed various qualitative methods that also pulled in the synergies of our partner CBOs and their members in the research process. With Community

Led Research and Action (CLRA) we were able to build rich descriptive contexts of the two communities that our partner CBOs work with. CLRA enabled us to deeply understand how CBOs connect to the everyday experiences, 'chaos of urgencies,' of their members. In doing so we responded to policy questions examining the relationship between local contexts and the CBO's political roles.

CLRA seeks to centre and amplify the voice of the subaltern (Spivak, 1994). CLRA is a collaborative registry of voices articulating the lived experiences in the margins, which provides deep and personal accounts of social realities relevant to policy design interventions. Through CLRA we incorporated community members as community researchers (CRs) in the project – 20 CRs, 10 from each CBO – for a period of eight months. We developed CLRA as both a method and tool to encourage individuals without a formal academic background to critically interrogate the nature of their reality. This is in line with the Freirean tradition of 'problem-posing' (Freire, 1970). The unique contribution of CLRA is that it offers a horizontal and dialogic approach in collaborative and community driven learning processes. Furthermore, CLRA allowed for a deep-analysis of data that enabled community members to make links, see relations and draw conclusions on their own. Through CLRA our project also sought to empower the two communities in knowledge generation for social change.

During the first five months of the CLRA process each team of CRs formulated its own research questions on a weekly basis. The questions addressed different aspects of community life. The CRs collected auto-ethnographic data by keeping personal journals where they recorded their reflections of their everyday activities or experiences. They also collected ethnographic data by recording observations in their communities and conducting interviews in response to their weekly research questions. They thereafter shared and discussed their findings with each other at a weekly analysis session. From these analysis sessions the two teams highlighted themes emerging from their data. From these themes they would then propose new weekly research questions for further investigation. This was an iterative process, which cumulatively built a corpus of data describing different aspects of community life through the eyes of community members.

The two teams then embarked in a secondary cycle of data analyses in the three months that followed. During this time, every CRs intimately interacted with their collected data. Using a data analysis matrix each CR chunked their data into codes. From these data chunks and codes, the CRs further formulated propositions attempting to illustrate social phenomena in their community. These propositions were written out on sticky notes, which were posted on a wall and rearranged to create a 'mind map' describing the different relationships and dynamics at play. Then in pairs the CRs were assigned the new emergent themes, on which they were to write about. For the writing phase, essentially every CR was working with data sets – consisting of the collective data from the whole group of CR, giving another collaborative dimension to the writing up process. During this time, the CRs read their written reports to each other in an exercise we called 'community peer review.' During these

reading exercises, the CRs gave each other critical and constructive feedback in a process that both validated their findings and built on their writing. At the end of this last three months, the two teams produced 17-community research outputs, which have been put together in a volume for dissemination for a broad audience.

A few challenges also occurred:

1. Some participants moved city because of other opportunities midway through the project, thus too late to replace them.
2. One of the more established CBOs had very little time to guide the entire process because they were too consumed with adhering to the managerial demands of other projects.
3. Not all participants were literate enough to translate their knowledge and research intro writing, but this was easily solved by audio reporting and team work.

NB. More challenges will be discussed in our upcoming article on the same.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
- Despite ambitions to promote equal partnerships within the current advocacy aid chain, NGOs are still more powerful, both in relation to donors as well as CBOs. Increased autonomy and flexibility for CBOs, as well as mutual accountability, would allow CBOs to perform their political role more effectively. This means, in a practical sense, that NGOs need to be held accountable by CBOs on financial matters, expertise, ethical principles such as inclusivity and equality, and quality of work/ expertise.
- Agenda setting and (strategic implementation can only be realized when CBO's are given full responsibility of the entire development process of new interventions, programs or project., because only they can fully assess successes, harms and detect unexpected effects. Support from NGOs and donors will aid in reaching the goals set by the CBOs, but CBOs should take the lead to determine what type of development is relevant for their community.
- It is imperative to restructure the aid chain such that it works towards a new type of partnership, in which NGOs work towards the autonomy of CBOs and NGOs work in service of this autonomy and towards their own redundancy in the process.
- To support new types of partnership, more efforts are needed to reflect on how the advocacy aid chain (and ideally the entire ODA system) can serve the activist CBOs, rather than the activist CBO having to adapt to the ODA.
- An instrument is required to monitor mutual accountability within NGO-CBO partnerships to check the unrelenting powers of NGOs and which are only sporadically monitored by international bodies such as UNAIDS. Community-based accountability would help towards this end. This entails among many other aspects, taking into account the NGO-CBO relationship from the perspectives of CBOs in donor review of NGOs and use of funds.

- Donors and NGOs can support CBOs in terms of capacity building; however, the CBO should take the lead in deciding what capacities need building and how, and, again, at all times should the supporting NGOs work towards their own redundancy.

- Donors should be more aware of the importance to support long-term change and structural interventions, rather than short-term results. Since advocacy is often unstructured, adhoc and thus difficult to plan in advance, a fundamental allowance for flexible and long-term budgeting should inform direct support of CBOs from donors within the advocacy aid chain. Donors should work more directly with CBOs, see more below.

- Funding should allow for core funding decent salaries, health insurance etc., in order for people to be able to sustain themselves while risking their lives at the frontline of activism. Short term funding is also possible, but within a long-term framework core support. Flexible emergency funds need to be included in funding strategies which enable CBOs to respond to unanticipated emergencies or events.

- Priority in donor strategies should be given to collaboration between groups and networks in order for them to work towards a unified advocacy agenda without the mediation of NGOs.

- The definition of advocacy should be broadened to include actions on different levels – from the political to sensitization on the level of daily lives, and thus more based on definitions by CBOs rather than externally-led organisation such as NGOs and donors.

- Donors should increase the possibility to fund CBOS directly and in different stages of organizational development. For this, donors should become far more aware of the organizational growth from a CBO perspective, and use different criteria, such as relevance to and credibility among community members, ability to address community emergencies and organize and mobilize the community in activities, among other things.

- To iterate, funding CBOs is not the problem. The problem is funding CBOs through NGOs that are held accountable by donors without any community-based standards involved and hence are not incentivised to collaborate with CBOs in equal partnerships and towards the latter's autonomy.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

1. The principle unit(s) of analysis
In this research project, the principle unit of analysis is comprised by activist Community Based Organisations (CBOs). Data has been collected with the activist CBOs and their members and from the respective communities they aim to serve, as well as from the stakeholders (e.g. development partners such as NGOs, donors and government) they are involved with.

2. Significant conceptual categories

- Activist CBOs: An activist CBO is a non-profit organization that is primarily engaged in social justice activities that is founded by members who identify with a specific community (identity) and which represents the wider community (or identity group) or a specific part of a larger community, and as such it targets meeting a specific need in that community on structural level;

- The Official Development Aid (ODA) system: The ODA system refers to the contemporary system of development relationships designed to promote (economic) development and welfare of (low and middle income) countries;

- The advocacy aid chain: indicates the relationships within the ODA system, including donors, NGOs and CBOs (and other organisations, including government bodies), that work together to improve the political agency of vulnerable people and groups as part of efforts that aim to transform their lived realities of criminalization, marginalization and dispossession.

- NGOs in the advocacy aid chain: in the context of our research mostly concerned national NGOs or local factions of INGOs. In case the term 'NGOs' above also included representatives of INGOs, this has been clearly stated.

- Social justice activities: are aimed at promoting fair and just relationships of (social, economic, political, etc.) power between individuals, different social groups and society at large;

- Political role of CBOs: refers to the ways in which CBOs engage in efforts aimed at changing structural power relationships (such as legal frameworks) in order to promote inclusive development, citizen participation and equality before the law, and it points at their ability to channel the voices of marginalized and stigmatized groups to contribute to improving their living conditions and working lives;

- Inclusive development: refers to a situation in which individuals and groups are accepted without discrimination, stigmatization and exclusion. It also means having equal opportunities to participate in all aspects of society, including the political and economic domains.

- Chaos of urgencies: The perpetual occurrence of emergencies that affect members of CBOs and which need immediate attention by the CBO to prevent worse from happening. These emergencies constantly disrupt planned activities and take up considerable time from CBO staff.

3. Assumed causal relations

The research is founded on two assumed causal relations: 1) receiving development aid contributes to supporting the CBO and therefore to transformations in power relationships and promoting inclusive development; 2) a connection exists between the CBO's position in relation to the ODA system and its potentialities to achieve its objectives.

With regard to the first causal relation, our study has revealed that although development aid financially contributes to supporting the different levels of the CBO, the contemporary

design of the aid chain hampers actual transformations in power relationships and promotion of inclusive development. Therefore, in order to generate structural change, first it is imperative to drastically restructure the advocacy aid chain such that it works towards a new type of partnership, which reduces the prominence of NGOs and in which NGOs operate as CBO allies and work towards the autonomy of CBOs.

With regard to the second, our findings confirm a causal relation between CBOs position in relation to the ODA and its potentialities to achieve its objectives. Both positions lead to unique outcomes. The CBO that is less embedded in the ODA system is less disciplined by the colonial regimes of the advocacy aid chain and displays more 'grassroots' (i.e. locally embedded and existing) technologies and techniques to build solidarity within the community and (tentatively) develop democratic collaborations between the community and state officials and other (local) authorities (including NGOs). The CBO firmly embedded in the ODA system is slightly more distanced from the community, but at the same time because of their position within the ODA system also able to work towards structural changes that directly benefit the community on a profound level.

4. Significant contextual variables
This research focused on two activist CBOs in Nairobi, Kenya, that both serve multiple marginalized communities (e.g. poor, criminalized, stigmatized). Subsequently, these CBOs operate in extremely poor and volatile environments and with members of communities that constantly face economic, health and security risks. As a result, a lot of time is invested by these CBOs in keeping their members from (serious or further) harm by, for instance, engaging members in work (to keep them from criminal activities and support them in building meaningful livelihoods) or by rescuing members from police cells or prison or by taking them to (friendly) hospitals. At the same time, both CBOs have to navigate complicated relationships with local authorities to continue their operation and service to community members. [See concept: 'chaos of urgencies']

5. Dehumanization conceptualised in terms of coloniality
Throughout our fieldwork and collaborative research with CBOs, we frequently encountered the way in which the activist CBOs, their members and the wider communities grasped their relationships to NGOs in the language of coloniality, often referring to NGOs as 'colonizers' and to themselves as 'the colonized.' This guided us to explore further the different meanings, actions and positions this produced. The way both CBOs, and many others we worked over two decades, use the term coloniality points at the experience of being subalternised while not positioning themselves as subalterns. The ensuing tension and resistance is what they conceptualise with the terms coloniality and decoloniality. The mainstay of their conceptualisation, as they explained to us on numerous occasions, revolves around the fact that NGOs are not, in their terms, community-led, with which they mean led by people whose lives are at stake of the envisioned change the organisations aims to bring about. In anthropological tradition, we take the conceptualisation of people whose lived experiences are the focus of research and action as the starting point of analysis and

seek to explore how this resonates with broader debates and action by equally marginalised and criminalised groups.

Describing NGOs as 'colonizers' is first and foremost aimed at the disproportionate positions of power NGOs have gained within the advocacy aid chain, and overall within the ODA system, at the detriment of the political role of activist CBOs. The "privatizing imperatives of neo-liberalism" and the increased attention to NGOs in development theory and practice which has been captured in the term 'NGOization of development' (Choudry & Kapoor, 2013; Gardner & Lewis, 2015). What's more, the post-1990s re-conceptualization of development in terms of participation (Mohan, 2007) further bestowed NGOs with a prominence that in practice keep CBOs at the bottom of the development hierarchy because they rely on NGOs to access funds (Ekirapa, Mgomella, & Kyobutungi, 2012). Subsequently, strategic partnerships between NGOs and activist CBOs are imbued with racism and classism and more often than not lack any meaningful participation, seeing that CBOs are mostly engaged as mere tokens (Jones, Kimari, & Ramakrishnan, 2017). This resonates with a popular discourse on coloniality in Kenya and the political sentiment of not yet having achieved independence. The language and positions of both CBOs invoke a long history of resistance against this type of coloniality which they see reproduced in the ODA system.

Specifically, both activist CBOs in our research use coloniality discourse to describe their situated experiences of exploitation and dehumanization by NGOs. They point out that as long as the ODA system, with or without intention, continues regimes which stifles their political agency rather than enhance it, the commitment to support the political roles of CBOs remains theory. At present, the ODA system still relies heavily on NGOs as intermediaries of funds for activist CBOs, without sufficient checks in place on their actual engagement with the latter. In general, these NGOs are run by technical experts and not by people whose lived experiences are at the heart of envisioned change. In response, activist CBOs tend to reify the 'grassroots' by profiling themselves as 'on the ground' and developing new ways to grow their space for advocacy outside and sometimes even against the ODA system (Jones et al., 2017). This shows that if the advocacy aid chain wants to remain relevant in its support of 'voice raising' (Kamstra 2017: 12-13), radical change is needed to foreground 'noise-making'.

Our research shows that activist CBOs creatively imagine justice, practice solidarity and create change despite lacking resources or only with minimal resources that come attached with crippling conditions that primarily serve (intermediary) NGOs. A difference can be detected between the less and more embedded CBO, where the former displays more flexibility, creativity and commitment in this endeavour while the latter attains a few structural achievements, though piecemeal and delineated while losing its connection to the community it aims to represent. Paradoxically, this type of participation in existing structures is a political project, but the technologies of community organizing within the advocacy aid chain work through, not against, the subalternisation of marginalized people (Cruikshank, 1999: 73). To illustrate, the project of 'voice raising' (Kamstra 2017, 12-13) first and foremost emphasizes the political significance of speaking positions within existing structures in enabling some measure of self-determination. However, this begs the questions who grants these positions, how and why? Furthermore, 'voice raising' by activist CBOs remains a futile

exercise if it is not accompanied with listening positions by the powerful. In other words, a more fundamental question the activist constantly asked themselves in different phrasing was: can (or will) the powerful listen? (Maggio, 2007; Spivak, 2010). And what does listening mean if not followed by action? These questions raised by the activist CBOs are part of the 'politics of voice' (Bracke, 2016; Couldry, 2008, 2009; Ludden, 2002). In such politics, to be silenced or to go unheard is to be denied a measure of participation and power that all citizens or human beings are entitled to. Both strategies silence the subalternised and as such perpetuate their dehumanization by ignoring the positional relationships of power within which the advocacy aid chain is firmly embedded. Noise making disrupts existing structures and can thus be grasped as a political act of refusal to participate in their dehumanization.

The 'pernicious ignorance' (Dotson, 2011: 238) displayed by NGOs in the advocacy chain is profoundly harmful. The (unintended) implication of aid chain in the dehumanization of activist CBOs and their members, especially through detrimental engagements by (intermediary) NGOs, is not only inauspicious to activist CBOs but also to every other actor in the advocacy aid chain, including NGOs, for it undermines the entire combined effort by impeding the political role of CBOs beforehand. Without fundamentally reconfiguring the advocacy aid chain, the relationships that can be considered to constitute this chain will continue to reproduce the very structures that bring forth the social and economic dispossession (of property and personhood—(Roy, 2017) at focus in advocacy. Accordingly, it cannot contribute to political change in favour of the humanization of the activist CBOs in any meaningful way, not in the ODA system and not vis á vis the state.

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