

Deconstructing Neo-colonialism and liberalism: Kenya and the NGOs — A discourse analysis

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Neo-colonialism theories bring back to life memories of colonial imperialism especially to the locals in countries such as Kenya where, 43 years after the proclamation of self-governance, most rural communities appear to be still awaiting the 'true' independence. The locals may have seen the political 'peace' and sovereign recognition of their state, but many are yet to realise the education and development systems that will set them free from being constructed by both their own government and non-government aid agencies as impoverished subjects. Perceived from the Kenyan experience, Spivak's questions on 'representability' become not only relevant but, more importantly, identify a need for studies that will attempt to give voice or deconstruct the notions of the *wamaskini* (impoverished subjects) or in Spivak's words 'the subaltern'. The question made by Spivak (1985 cited in Gandhi, 1998, p.1) was, Can the subaltern speak? Indeed this was and still is a contested question. And even though such studies as this current one attempt in some way to let the selected impoverished subjects in Kenya speak in relation to the NGO-aided projects, the best it can offer is to add to the debates.

[Key words: Neo-colonialism, Kenya, NGOs, NGO Co-ordination Act]

INTRODUCTION

The descriptions of Nkrumah (1965 as cited in Smith, 1996) of neo-colonialism may still be applicable to the situation in Kenya. Nkrumah had said,

the essence of neo-colonialism is that the state which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic *system and thus its political policy* is directed from outside. (Smith, 1996, p.121, emphasis in the original)

In summing up this neo-colonial ambivalence, Smith (1996) reiterated that "neo-colonialism operate[s] according to a number of distinct processes: through the terms of trade; the need for aid; the repatriation of profits; and technological dependency" (p.123). Of particular interest in this paper are the aid debates and, more importantly, the relation of the Kenyan government with the 'community development' aiding agencies, in this case the NGOs. This has been presented in an attempt to address two of the questions namely, how has the 'state power' enacted in the NGO Co-ordination Act of 1990 (*Kenya Gazette Supplementary Acts*, 1991) affected the NGOs operations in Kenya? What are the competing discourses resulting from stakeholders affected by the 'Act'? It should be noted also that most of the discourses presented here are extracted largely from data collected from six (6) of the 39 informants interviewed in Kenya for this particular study. A brief history of neo-colonial Kenya follows as background to the conceptualising and deconstruction of the neo-colonialism debate that houses the discourses of education, poverty and development in Kenya.

NEO-COLONIAL KENYA

In 1963, almost two decades after the end of World War II, Kenya attained its independence from the British imperialists. Like other colonies ‘discovered’ by the imperialists, Kenya was ‘founded’ by Sir William Mackinnon in 1888 ‘in a London office’ (Dilley, 1966). In 1895, Kenya became one of the British White Colonies, as were Australia and Canada. The main interest for the White Settler imperialist was to exploit Kenya’s ‘underdeveloped resources’, mostly the fertile land (PPS, 1995). Until 1920, it was named British East Africa since Uganda, Tanganyika and Zanzibar (the two later became united to form Tanzania) were part of the colony. Before ‘discovering’ Kenya, the British colonials were more concerned with the ‘Anglo-Indian’ activities in the coastal regions of East Africa. The Indians, the Portuguese, and the Arabs who had arrived and ‘colonised’ the East African coast earlier had attracted the British. Their main objectives initially were the ending of the slave trade and the building of the Uganda–Kenya Railway (1896–1901). But the subsequent arrival of the Germans “making treaties with the natives, and indicating an intention of permanence” (Dilley, 1966, pp.4–15) at the coast around 1880 aroused British interest in East Africa (Leys, 1975). Following an agreement between the Germans and the British in 1886, the British imperialists began to access the interior regions of Kenya. What was ‘discovered’ in the interiors became the scene for the major colonialist exploits in Kenya until 1963.

Colonialism in Kenya has a long history. To continue with such a snippet of it would not only be unjust but will also divert the focus of this paper. That is, to trace the history of economic and political development in neo-colonialist Kenya with specific reference to the operation of the NGOs in Kenya. However, it should be noted that the geographical features and the location of Kenya have made it an attractive destination for many countries with interests in the imperially constructed Sub-Sahara African region. About four decades ago, Dilley (1966) explained why there were many white settlers rushing to Kenya after it became a British colony. Dilley said the “colony lies between parallels four north and four south of the equator. It is divided into three zones — Lowlands, Highlands, and Lake ... or coastal section” (p.6) which made Kenya conducive for the Europeans to inhabit because as Dilley (1966) wrote, the colonial imperialists ‘assumed’ they would “live without injury to health” (p.6).

The geographical features in Kenya also influenced the colonial settlers’ attraction to the colony and their subsequent ‘selfish-ownership’. Dilley (1966) and more recently Kenyaweb (2000), reveal Kenya as a plateau with a huge gash — the Great Rift Valley that cuts north and south of the country — the hot-water springs and volcano, and the snow-capped Mount Kenya. These features, along with economic opportunities arising from control of the agricultural highlands, led the imperialists to resist for more than 60 years attempts by the locals to reclaim their land. Andy, a community leader and farmer for many years, claimed during the interview that the land usage and governance in Kenya was put under the British protectorate in early 1900. Andy said, “they [settlers] took our land. They made us [locals] to be squatters in our own land and controlled us using the *Kipande* [personal identity card] ... it was horrible.” Andy is not his real name. Pseudonyms are used throughout this paper to protect the identity of the participants.

The ideas contained in the above texts can be interpreted in terms of Foucault’s notions of ‘governmentality’ and ‘managerialism’ (Burbules and Torres, 2000; see also, Foucault, 1991). Imperialists like Lord Delmare, and others who still own thousands of acres of land across the Kenyan highlands 43 years after independence, wanted to control the fertile highlands themselves.

Another reason that made Kenya a destination for the colonial imperialists was its location, Dilley pointed out:

Kenya reveals three outstanding features. It is cut east and west by the equator and by the Kenya and Uganda Railway, and north and south by the highlands. These features constitute factors of fundamental importance in the history and the progress that is Kenya. The combination of the three has produced a European population living permanently in the tropics in the midst of a larger native population (p.7).

Within the current neo-colonial Kenya, Dilley's description of 'authorities' propagating selfish-individualism and capitalism appears still to be true, and even more intensified. According to Mwangi (2000), one administrative district in Kenya "has over 140,000 landless people against 500,000 hectares owned by 35 whites. Over 40,000 residents are squatters on these farms." Mwangi's report observes a situation in which individual Kenyans own large properties and continues to enslave fellow citizens in the post-independence era.

Criticising similar phenomena, that is, neo-colonialism, imperialism, capitalism and colonial desires, Loomba (1998) and McConaghy (1998) offer similar sentiments. Loomba points out, "colonialism can be defined as the conquest and control of other people's land and goods ... [and] has been a recurrent and widespread feature of human history" (p.2). Further, Loomba argues that "modern colonialism was established alongside capitalism ... [And] did more than extract tribute, goods and wealth from the countries that it conquered — it restructured the economies of the latter, drawing them into a complex relationship with their own" (p.3). This new colonialism, that as I have noted is relevant to Kenyan situations, involves colonial desires which McConaghy (1998) argues, "connect the moral, the economic, the political, the scientific and sexual interest of the colonisers" (p.6). From these more recent claims it can be argued that the history of neo-colonial imperialism in Kenya may indeed be an ongoing phenomenon. The only difference could be that it is now both an 'insider' and 'outsider' practice.

On the one hand there are remnants of the White Settler colonial imperialists who still own large farms and firms while larger populations of the locals remain squatters on the same properties. And on the other hand there are the 'haves' tribe (to use Ngugi's words) who are mostly those in 'power' or who have the resources and have continued to amass wealth either through 'legal' means created by themselves or by way of 'bureaucracies' (using legitimate power dominance to amass (corrupt) or embezzle public properties) or 'kleptocracies'. Mwangi (2000) in his special report pointed out that the environment in Kenya "is at risk as grabbing goes on unabated". Mwangi argues that a fresh water catchment area serving more than 30,000 locals had been allocated to an Italian investor to put up a casino. Mwangi concludes, "[c]ivil servants have joined the fray, either as grabbers or facilitators of the illegal acquisition of land." At the heart of these latter 'liberated' local imperialists, lies the Kenyan impoverished masses living under the 'dense web' of double imperialism (the emerging own 'blood/colour' imperialists and the reincarnated likes of Lord Delmare). These masses are still waiting for *uhuru* (independence). Colonialism is still real in Kenya and to a large extent remains the key generator of poverty in Kenya and other regions. In what appear to be mouthpieces of the 'unvoiced' impoverished subjects (*wamaskini*) or subalterns in Kenya are the NGOs and their neo-imperialism theories of 'advocacy', 'empowerment' and improving the living standard of the poor. This current study has attempted to trace the operations of these NGOs from 1990. This period was considered important since this was the time the Kenya government formed an NGO Co-ordinating Board (hereafter referred to as NGOCB) to 'regulate the growing number of its NGO bodies' (Zack, NGOCB representative and one of the informants in this current study) (see also *Kenya Gazette Supplementary Acts*, 1991).

Before attempting to situate the emerging debates about the partnership between the Kenyan government and the operation of the co-ordinating board of the NGOs (the offshoots of neo-colonialism), I will outline the 1972 decolonising narratives of Ngugi wa Thiong'o. The main objective in doing this is to attempt to apply to this current study some of these narratives to the emerging discourses of education, poverty and development in the neo-colonial Kenya and, indeed, in the new century.

More than three decades ago, Ngugi (1972) pointed out that Kenya's inherited economy and other institutions have simply 'blackanised' the personnel, but that the inherited colonial past has not been broken (p.xvi). Ngugi went further to argue:

There has been no basic land reform; the settler owning 600 acres of land is replaced by a single African owning the same 600 acres. There has been no change in the structure and nature of ownership of various companies, banks and industries ... the companies remain foreign-owned ... no socialisation of the middle commercial sector ... not much structural reform in the education system; the former white schools remain as special high standard schools, attended by those who can afford the exorbitant fees (p.xvi).

In what appears a reinforcement of Spivak's question of 1985: Can the subaltern speak? Ngugi had posed the question:

Do we think that Western capitalism and classes that run it have suddenly changed their motives and interest in Africa? Aid, loans, Oxfam, and other freedom from hunger campaigns — where has this disinterested philanthropy, not manifest when Europe was in actual political control of Africa, suddenly emerged from (p.xvi)?

As I stated at the beginning of this paper, one simple answer to these contested questions is to label them as rhetoric. The other possible way is to rethink the challenges posed in the questions and address them by using more recent critical research tools such as post-colonial and critical discourse analysis (see for example, Fairclough, 1989; Luke, 1999; Taylor, 1997). This current study attempts to apply analysis to post-colonial discourses like new corporatism, neo-liberalism, partnership among others. This is done by analysing the data collected from a case study of an international NGO selected stakeholders in Kenya. Analysis of these discourses as Gandhi (1998) argues assists in the decolonising process, which is indeed the main objective in this paper (p.4). It is part of the process of overcoming post-colonial amnesia that is "symptomatic of the urge for historical self-invention or the need to make a new start — to erase painful memories of colonial subordination" (Gandhi, 1998. p.4).

The data presented in this paper were collected from six informants/participants. All were stakeholders in the NGO case chosen for this present study. As stated earlier, the participants were selected government agents, donor agents, NGO officers, and beneficiaries of the case projects. In summary, the key objective was to focus on the operation of Buddy (pseudonym for the NGO) in Kenya, its modes of implementing education and community development projects and the perceived importance of education and training to the cultural backgrounds of the recipients, and to probe for alternatives for better participation in, and sustainability of, selected Buddy-based projects.

The next sections discuss competing dominant discourses of political non-alignment, *TKK* (bribery), grassroots advocacy, radicalism (autonomy), accountability and transparency, and territorialism claimed by most informants from without the Government arena, and the discourses of new corporatism, partnership, governmentality and managerialism held by the informants who were mostly government representatives. The first part presents perceived opinions of the

informants outside of the NGO Board (Kenyan Government's NGOs regulatory body). The second part highlights the Board representative's response as a way of comparing and contrasting the opinions in order to draw possible conclusions. The names are not the real names of the informants. They have been used for anonymity purposes. [Note. Itx0 represents the interviewer].

The discourse of political non-alignment, TKK, community grassroots advocacy, radicalism (autonomy), accountability and transparency, and territorialism

The following are some of the interview extracts between me and four informants interviewed individually. Although the four were interviewed as Buddy's stakeholders, Nick and Edna were also involved with other NGO activities in other regions. Details of their responsibilities have been mentioned in the analysis that follows the extracts.

Itx0: *How has the introduction of the NGO Co-ordination Act impacted on your operations?*

Mick: ...over the recent past there has been complaints that it is politically driven. Hence, we had minimal contact with the NGO Board. Except for the annual reports we send, (shakes the head) we do not hear much from them [board] ...

Nick: You see, Board should be holding regular meetings with us [NGOs] but like other government offices, the board becomes active only when it comes to receiving reports at the end of the financial year. And of course (with laughter) when they know they will benefit financially as individuals from the programs being run by either [specific] NGOs or they have gotten money from somewhere [donor agents] and are forced to hold seminars.

Itx0: *What sort of 'regular meetings' are you suggesting?*

Edna: There are a lot of challenges we encounter during the implementations of some of our projects. Sometimes these challenges may be issues requiring attention outside of our objectives or advocacy that might be seen as political by the government officers in that region. Regular forums help to correct such issues ... but as it happen to one of our partner NGOs recently, the board, on receiving the claims, went on to police and investigate secretly.... Yes, not all NGOs [in Kenya] are sincere in their activities and the Government [NGOCB] has a right to deregister them. But it should not be partial like in 1990s when the NGOs opposed to KANU were....

(Probed whether the collaboration with the Government is necessary, the officer responded):

Surely yeah, we are operating because of the recognition we get from the Government.... What I am saying is, even though the Government plays a leading role in our community work, we all need to be transparent and accountable with each other to avoid uncalled suspicions.

Responding to same questions in a different forum, Amon, another informant, was consistent with the contribution to the above interviewees' allegations. Of importance, however, was the last submission in regard to the question. Appearing irritated, Amon said:

This [subscription to the Board] is all politics and I hate it, personally I have no problem with NGO Board, but I think the Government feels insecure when an NGO reports or advocates for issues contrary to its political wishes. Hence, [the Government seems to] use the Board as a tool to gain dictated political allegiance and since all NGOs subscribe to the Board, they should be sympathetic to the Government.... Not all regions we operate are

‘KANU Zones’ [regions where the then ruling political party claims the mandate of the local people]. Our organisation operates irrespective of tribes, religions or political parties.... The outlined objectives of the board are reasonable but it [may] have ceased to be effective due to ongoing corruptions and pressure from the ruling party. It is unfortunate, that even at multi-party era, the political democracy we often hear [in Kenya, seems] not to have been achieved.

If we look deeper into the responses of the informants above and in relation to their positions or roles, we come to understand why they responded the way they did. Mick is one of the officers of Buddy with three years experience in local community micro-credit business, and reports to a senior officer. This explains why Mick’s contact with NGO Board is ‘minimal’. During the interview, Mick’s body language like shaking his head, the choice of words such as ‘politically driven’ and ‘minimal contact’, reveal the attitude of political non-alignment. This is the act of removing oneself from the mainstream party or public politics to concentrate on ‘closed-door politics’ that goes on in most organisations. Amon, who is a senior Buddy officer with more than 12 years experience of monitoring and planning the activities of the NGO, reiterated a similar discourse of political non-alignment as Mick. This could be attributed to the fact that they are both officers affiliated to a religious-oriented NGO that claims in its mission statement not to subscribe to any political party or movement.

Both Mick and Amon seem to agree that the NGOCB is ‘politically driven’. It is unclear from Mick’s text who is behind the political influence of the Board. However, the ‘advocacy’ claimed by Amon may be an answer. Amon mentioned that sometimes the NGOs ‘advocacy’ puts pressure on the government, making it feel insecure and leading to government threats to use its ‘state power’ through the Board to ‘discipline’ the NGOs. In what looked like avoidance of conflict with the government, Mick, unlike Amon, opted to keep a distance from the Board. Although Amon claimed to ‘hate politics’, his grassroots advocacy that sometimes conflicts with the wishes of the government contradicts his assertions. His contradictions were further revealed when he talked of the failure of multi-party politics to bring ‘democracy’ in Kenya.

Also found in these responses is a discourse of endemic corruption claimed by both Amon and Nick. The corruption is endemic in the sense that Amon refers to it as ‘ongoing’, that is continual. Nick used phrases that may be summarised in terms of bribery discourse: government officers being activated through tipping which is also a sign of endemic corruption. Nick, who despite participating in this study as a member of the advisory board in one of the Buddy’s capacity building educational projects, was working as a consultant in another NGO after retiring as a government education officer. His allusion to corruption when referring to the government’s NGOCB operations, therefore, could be a reflection on the situation in government offices during his tenure. His claims on bribery, that in Kenyan discourse is better known as *Toa Kitu Kidogo* (*TKK*: give something small), was also identified as common in Kenyan government offices through the reviewed newspaper reports by Mugonyi (2000), Mutahi (2000), and Mwangi (2000). They claimed that a number of government officers are demanding *TKK* for almost every service needing their attention. Sadly, the *Kenya Bribery Index 2007* report by Transparency International Kenya (2007), indicates that demanding of *TKK* in a number of public institutions in Kenya remains endemic despite the current Kenyan government winning the elections in 2002 on a “zero-tolerance to corruption” (Kibaki, 2002) campaign (see also *Daily Nation* Editorial, 2007).

Continuing with an analysis of the informants’ texts above, the discourse of grassroots advocacy that was mentioned earlier in the analysis is also prevalent in Edna’s text extract. Compared to Amon, Edna shows that she is more political and radically involved in the affairs of the NGOCB. Edna, a community leader, is actively participating in ‘community grassroots advocacy’

programs. Her discourses of community grassroots advocacy and radicalism appeared to be inclined to one of a busy advocate. She claimed to encounter many challenges in the implementation of projects. The 'sweet business (market) language' of neo-liberals that she uses is also noticeable. She argues that the NGO involvement in politics is not really the intention but the nature of advocacy forces it on them. She acknowledges the fact that "issues requiring attention outside of [their] objectives or advocacy" may arouse the government's attentions but thinks regular forums help to streamline the co-operation. She also introduces some other discourses of accountability and transparency that are common in neo-liberalism where the focus is in the project or the 'market'. According to her, if the two processes are followed, problems of partialities and threats of deregistrations will be minimised. Edna argues that as partners in 'community work', the government should "avoid uncalled suspicions".

The partialities and suspicions of the Board in the 1990s that Edna refers to are also implied in Amon's text. They could be the outcome of two major incidents involving NGOs noted in the literature. These were the advocacy during the shift from single to multi-party politics by the Kenyan government in the early 1990s (Bennett, 1995; Porter *et al.*, 1991). The other was the deregistration of five NGOs in 1998 by the government that led to particular NGOs claiming that the government acted with partiality (You can appeal, NGOs now told, 1998).

When one combines the texts from the informants who contributed and held similar allegations it is clear that the informants were all affected in one way or the other by the outcomes of the 1990 Act, despite engaging somewhat different discourses when discussing it. This appears to be because of the extent to which the NGOCB has in some ways failed to deliver services beyond being an NGOs' watchdog, issuing certificates and collaborating with the ruling party in a way that has resulted sometimes in a breach of its own Act.

Discourse of new corporatism, partnership, governmentality and managerialism

Despite the allegations made against the NGO Co-ordination Board by some of the informants in this current study and backed by the evidence cited from the available literature, the data collected from the Board's representative (Zack) and a Government officer linked to the Board (Tim) seemed to negate them. As mentioned earlier, the government representatives maintain that harmony has been sustained with all the 5,000+ currently registered NGOs in Kenya (Beja, 2007) over the past years through dialogue and transparency. The discussion with the officers follows [Itx0 is my identity].

Itx0: *Did the introduction of the NGO Board Act affect the operation of NGOs in Kenya in any way?*

Zack: Definitely yeah...

Itx0: *Could you please explain some more?*

Zack: NGOs are more accountable and transparent now than before, we are able to dialogue, monitor and keep track of their development contributions through the annual returns we receive from them [NGOs].

Itx0: *Did the NGOs welcome the move?*

Tim: You see, the enactment period of the Act [1990] was indeed a challenge ... [Some] NGOs at first saw the Board as an enemy. (Probing why it was the case, the response was) ... you know at first the NGOs were seen [by political leaders] to be the enemies to the Government and we happen to be a government body. So we [the Board] were seen to be against the NGOs' activities. This was a misconception! Because many donors used to see

the Government to be not transparent and therefore they were looking at it [the registration policy] to be kind of against the NGOs' legislation, which actually was not the case.

Itx0: *Was the issue addressed?*

Zack: The Government thought that it was necessary to bring together [NGOs and Board members] to iron out issues like transparency, governance, and accountability. And that is why in the process, these accountability and transparency is now, you know, many NGOs are nowadays giving their annual returns. They are giving what they have [assets] and they are saying what they are doing [projects] ... there was always what we call suspicion.

Itx0: *When did the actual registration of NGOs by the Board begin?*

Zack: ... the time of registration was after 1992 when multi-partism [*sic*] ... came in. So, it was suspected that it [the Board] was against the NGOs. [Since particular] NGOs were seen to be partisan to other [political] parties, not the KANU Government. That was the reason [for enmity] but that environment has already been cleared through workshops and seminars. NGOs have understood development, the Government have understood NGOs, and they are now working together. That is why there is partnership in development [between the NGOs and the Government].

Although there was no documentation or proof of any recent or current training seminars or workshops attended by both the National NGO Council and the NGOCB, what the officer claimed as having created an 'enabling environment' could be those seminars held immediately after the passing of the NGO Co-ordination Bill in 1990. Bennett (1995) to a greater degree supports Zack's assertions of the outcomes of such meetings. Bennett says:

This strategy [the dialogue with the government representatives] succeeded, firstly, in slowing down the enactment of the Act until 1992 and secondly, in securing amendments to two sections of the Act. The judicial powers of the Minister were reduced and hence NGOs could seek redress from courts in arbitration of disputes. Further, NGO representation on the NGO Board was increased from five to eight members (p.94).

Throughout the discussions with the informants, it was evident that the NGOCB management had adopted new discourses to describe, legitimise and justify their approach to the work of its clients, the NGOs. Apart from being the 'monitor' and a tool kit for registration, the board talked in terms of partnership or co-operation with the NGOs. What is interesting and important to note in the above interview extract is the similarity in the choice of words and expressions used by the informants. Like Edna, an NGO officer, whose text was analysed earlier in this paper, Zack and Tim, both key personalities in the government's established NGO Co-ordination Board, use words like *challenges*, *accountability*, and *transparency* to describe the operation and relationship between the NGOs and the Board. Edna had said they (the NGOs) were facing "a lot of challenges", both in their co-operation with the Board and in their implementation of projects, and called for a regular forum to correct such challenges. Tim reiterated that their relationship with the NGOs "was indeed a challenge" because the "NGOs at first saw the Board as an enemy". But as Tim claimed, "this was a 'misconception!'" Why? Because as Zack claimed, the "environment has already been cleared through workshops and seminars" or in Edna's words, through "regular forums". The use of 'past tense' by the Board officers is also worth noting. Both Zack and Tim refer to the misunderstanding with the NGOs as an issue in the past. They use verbs like 'used to' and auxiliary verbs such as 'was a misconception' and 'were seen', and 'were looking'. The reference to the problems as 'challenges' by Edna and Tim is an acknowledgement that the problems were solvable rather than irreconcilable conflicts. All of these issues raised by the Board

representatives are aspects of the discourses of partnership, which in some cases has been taken up by NGO representatives themselves.

The discourses of accountability and transparency mentioned above are aspects of neo-liberalism, which emphasises being accountable and transparent. Yet at the same time, the work of the NGOCB contradicts other aspects of neo-liberalism, such as privatisation and an unregulated free market (MacEwan, 1999).

In order to assess the foreign aid that has been channelled through the NGOs operating in Kenya, the Government has had to rethink 'market-friendly policies' (MacEwan, 1999) that would attract or retain the NGOs. According to MacEwan, market-friendly policies are one form of neo-liberalism that states such as Kenya apply in order to access more of the World Bank's, the IMF's and other donor agencies' funds that would otherwise be difficult for the Government to obtain (p.8) (see also, Lang'at, 2001; 'The World Bank—NGOs', 1998). In Kenya, these market-friendly strategies include privatisation of most state-owned authorities and companies particularly in the transport, communications and agricultural sectors.

If this market-friendliness of the Kenyan government is accepted as a possible reason for the new corporatism (forming one body of a large organisation or group of companies for business purposes), then it would explain the reason why the number of NGOs being registered in the country has grown from about 600 in 1992 to more than 5,000 in 2007 (Beja, 2007; NGOCB, 1996; *NGOs Kenya*, 2000). Also it would imply that the Government to some extent has 'empowered' these NGOs for marketability purposes, that is, to operate as a free market. That is why they are now 'partners in development'. The Board is now, as the NGOs informants put it, "only active when it comes to collecting reports at the end of the year". Further, Tim had said, "the reason why some of these NGOs are effective in community development is due to their working experiences at the community grassroots levels. They understand the needs of the poor in those villages sometimes more than the Government." This could be a clear affirmation that these NGOs have not only been empowered but are also 'democratically' accepted as understanding the needs of the impoverished subjects seemingly more than the Government itself. What is noticeable from the responses of the government officers is a contradiction between the recognition by the government of the private provision of the social services via the NGOs and the government's desire to control NGOs through the NGOCB. Also, from the analysis of the responses of the NGOs officers and the NGOCB representatives, I would argue that in the last decade there has been a shift towards minimal control by the NGOCB and greater autonomy for the NGOs (see for example, Ogotu and Ruto, 2007).

IMPLICATIONS

The immediate questions that may be asked are: Who are these NGOs? Where is their strength coming from? The possible answer in the context of this current study is found in discourses of neo-colonialism already highlighted. At the beginning of this paper, Gandhi (1998), McConaghy (2000) and Ngugi (1972, 1986) identified neo-colonialism as a process which in countries like Kenya perpetuates former colonial imperialists' discourses of 'assimilationism' or 'mimicry' and have continued desire for foreign donations as a way of rebuilding their economic development. Where is the possible way forward for development in such countries as neo-colonial Kenya? Handelman (2000) argues for rethinking socioeconomic revolution. Although mention of revolution may conjure notions of revolts, coups and tribal/ethnic wars, Huntington (1968 as cited in Handelman, 2000) suggested an alternative understanding of revolution:

A revolution is a rapid, fundamental, and [radical] domestic change in dominant values and myths of society, in its political institutions, social structures, leadership

and government activity and policies. Revolutions are thus to be distinguished from insurrections ... and wars (p.157).

Further, Handelman identifies 'regime decay' as a state in which leaderships are not fully independent in economic, social and political development and still rely largely on foreign donations (Handelman 2000, p.160). This line of thinking may further reinforce the need for a revolution that challenges neo-liberalisation when the 'great' rich control the economy at the expense of the constructed impoverished subjects. This revolution could be what Handelman (2000, p.162) called "challenged from below" or in MacEwan's (1999) words "democratic economic development strategy" where, the inputs of the locals are considered equally and where 'development' is viewed as a down-up change of lives. Handelman asserts, "[re]volution opportunities ... may develop when the economy deteriorates, standards of living decline, and the government is unable to meet long standing economic responsibilities to its populations" (p.161). Could this be relevant to the current economic situation in neo-colonial Kenya? These ideas are beyond the scope of this paper. It calls for more research that will attempt to identify further the neo-colonial legacies of education, poverty and development in Kenya. The relationship between the Kenya government and its NGOs brought about by the enactment of the NGO Co-ordination Act of 1990 is a complex one. Discourses of neo-liberalism dominate the relationship and as it has been argued by a number of renowned scholars and critics of colonialism, modernity and development, the Kenyan situation is neo-colonial. Gaining political independence appears not to have changed the living situation of most of its population. Instead of the Government providing for its citizens, some relevant bodies appear to have 'democratically' licensed and empowered the non-governmental bodies to 'develop' the impoverished subjects at the 'grassroots levels'. In other words, the Government has entered into a new corporatism with 'development partners' who are largely being supported and aided by Euro-western agents. This takes us back to Ngugi's 1972 question that was posed at the beginning of the paper: Do we think that [Euro-] Western capitalism and classes that run it have suddenly changed their motives and interest in [Kenya]?

Hence, throughout this paper it was shown that there is a need for more practical and workable strategies to enable the locals to progress in various aspects desirable to their short- and long-term existence. Furthermore, more intense post-colonial studies that aim to revisit, remember and, crucially, interrogate the colonial past (Gandhi, 1998) are required. These studies, I argue, will counter and deconstruct the challenges of neo-colonialism and neo-liberalism legitimacy brought about through neo-colonial legacies in both the Kenyan government agencies and the non-government development agencies.

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