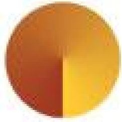

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Invasion or Infusion? Understanding the Role of NGOs in Contemporary Haiti

It is impossible to discuss development in Haiti without talking about nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Currently, most grant aid to Haiti is directed to one of more than 300 officially recognized NGOs. Given this, a critical understanding and evaluation of NGOs is essential; however, there have been very few scholarly articles published which specifically examine them.[1] Despite a paucity of scholarship on NGOs in Haiti, they are being discussed and debated within certain circles in the country, and several methods for evaluating and understanding NGOs have been proposed. Two studies of NGOs have particular significance because of their scope and institutional location.[2] The World Bank published "Haiti: NGO Sector Study" in March 1997, around the same time that the Centre de Recherche Sociale et de Formation Economique pour le Développement (CRESFED) published "Haïti: Invasion des ONG." The former valorized NGOs and referred to the funds channeled through NGOs as an "infusion," while the latter was critical of NGOs, calling their apparently sudden appearance and role an "invasion." While there have been studies before and since,[3] these two set the tone for discourse and policies in Haiti from 1997 to the present, defining two distinct orientations.

Which is correct? Are NGOs "good" or "bad" for Haiti's development? Are they closer to Haiti's people and less corrupt than the government, or are they tools of foreign imperialism? Should Haitian people—either living in Haiti or in the "tenth province" (now "eleventh"[4])—support NGOs? Should *blan* concerned about democracy and Haiti's development support NGOs? If so, which NGOs should be supported? Are NGOs the solution to Haiti's poverty, exclusion, and centralization, or are they part of the problem? More importantly, how can we make or evaluate such claims?

This article attempts to provide a framework for addressing these larger, admittedly polemical questions. To begin to answer these questions requires a clear definition and conception of NGOs; this article therefore begins with a comparison of how NGOs are conceived and defined by different institutions.

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Several model typologies have been proposed for classifying NGOs. Given the statistically oriented survey data available through the current database of the officially registered NGOs (updated in February 2005), validation of these models is impossible. However useful these typologies are as a conceptual tool, they appear *a priori* and thus are of limited utility in assessing claims about the ability of NGOs to "democratize development." The question hinges on "participation," another concept that has wide currency across ideological and institutional divisions with similarly elusive meanings. This article is an attempt to provide a methodological and theoretical grounding for this key concept of participation.

Definition and Conception of NGOs

As Fisher and others have noted, it is easier to define what an NGO is *not* rather than what it *is*, as suggested by the term *non*governmental organization (1997: 441). Agreeing upon a definition of NGOs is not an easy task, as it is an inherently politicized process. According to one anthropologist, "The ways in which people construct the meaning of NGOs—what they are supposed to accomplish, what actually constitutes a genuine nongovernmental organization, and how much definitions really matter—are highly contestable" (Abramson 1999: 240) .

The World Bank defines NGOs as "private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development." (Operational Directive 14.70) The United Nations's definition clarifies the role of NGOs as advocates to promote the interests of the poor:

> A non-governmental organization (NGO) is any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organized on a local, national or international level. Task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of services and humanitarian functions, bring citizens' concerns to Governments, monitor policies and encourage political participation at the community level.[5]

This definition as "watchdogs" echoes then-UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's statement that the role of NGOs was to "hold states' feet to the fire" (quoted in Karim 2001: 94), an idea reflected in research funded by international donor groups such as the World Bank or the U.S. Agency for International Development (e.g., Bailey 1998). The assumptions behind these definitions are that NGOs are more democratic and deserving than governments and closer to the people. USAID has a simpler definition: "an NGO will be defined broadly to include a wide range of local organizations in countries which are recipients of U.S. foreign assistance."[6]

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Others view NGOs in a more negative light. In the afterword of his recent history of Haiti, noted anthropologist and physician Paul Farmer cites Michael Ignatieff as saying, "NGOs are not necessarily more representative or more accountable than *elected* governments" (2003: 368). Sauveur Pierre Étienne, author of "Haïti: Invasion des ONG" discussed above,[7] goes so far as to argue that NGOs are the "iron of the spear of neo-liberal policies that certain Western [*sic*] governments use to weaken the state in Southern countries, working to reinforce dependence of the country on big capitalist countries."[8] Mirroring this suspicion of NGOs, especially Northern NGOs, the preamble to the Haitian law regarding NGOs states that one of the purposes of the law is "to protect national sovereignty" (*Moniteur*, 1286). It is worth noting that several political orientations—Lavalas, social-democratic, and Duvalierist/nationalist—share these suspicions.

The government of Haiti defines an NGO as a "private, apolitical, not-for-profit institution or organization that pursues the objectives of development at the national, departmental, or communal level, and uses resources to realize them" (Article 5, Haitian Constitution).[9] It is interesting to note the narrower vision and definition, namely that NGOs need to be engaged in development and must be apolitical. Also importantly, Article 6 states that the Haitian government, through the Ministère de la Planification et Coopération Externe[10] (MPCE, Ministry of Planning), has the right to recognize or to deny an NGO's legal status.

A general mistrust is reflected and structured in the two foundational regulatory documents of the NGO system: Jean-Claude Duvalier's decree about NGOs on December 13, 1982; and Namphy's revision decree made on September 14, 1989. There are some interesting differences in the two decrees. For example, the revision cancels the requirement that NGOs must have an account with the Central Bank. There are also differences in implementation details. Both these changes possibly resulted from lobbying by a coalition called the Haitian Association of Voluntary Agencies (HAVA). HAVA is a USAID-founded NGO which advocates for the interests of its members, mostly foreign NGOs (such advocacy includes attempting to facilitate the NGO recognition process). However, the basic tenets of the regulatory framework—and the justificatory preamble—remained the same even after the revision decree. The preamble to both decrees declared the legislation necessary to "protect national sovereignty."

Two significant conditions not present in typical multinational agencies' definitions are that NGOs are to be apolitical and that they have resources. Smaller groups—grassroots organizations and sometimes missionary groups—are supposed to register directly with the appropriate ministry, such as Ministère de la Condition Féminine et aux Droits de la Femme

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(Department of Women's Condition), Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Ressources Naturelles et du Développement Rural (Agriculture and Natural Resources), or Ministère des Affaires Sociales et du Travail (Social Affairs and Work). NGOs follow a complex process whereby they submit their paperwork to the MPCE, which conducts "reconnaissance" visits and then forwards the application to an inter-sectorial group that reviews materials such as workplans and budgets (Articles 20-21). For most NGOs, the process is long and arduous, in part because of a backlog. MPCE staff shared, "We know there are many good NGOs that need their official papers. One month, 300 groups contacted our office."[11]

To put that in perspective, as of February 2005, only 343 NGOs were officially registered with MPCE. With the ministry's limited administrative capacity, prospective NGOs often have to wait several years to have their dossiers analyzed and approved. In addition to the official documentation and registration NGOs must obtain, Haitian law also outlines twelve NGO responsibilities, including following all Haitian laws, submitting annual reports, submitting a list of foreign employees complete with visa file numbers, and notifying the government of interruption of work. NGOs also have to "cooperate with the population of the areas in which they work and put in place the submitted programs and projects."[12]

In her report for the World Bank, Morton writes that since the founding of the Office of NGO Cooperation, the "MPCE has been trying ever since to either monitor or control NGO activities in Haiti." (Morton 1997: 40). The former Haitian Minister of Social Affairs argued that the phenomenon of international funding going directly to NGOs, which have no public mandate, makes it hard for the government to establish priorities and ultimately undermines the ability of the state to govern: "Haiti's biggest problem is that the tail is wagging the dog" when it comes to foreign aid.[13] In summer 2002, when asked if the MPCE could speed up the process for NGOs, a staff member explained, "Don't forget that the Haitian government does not have much money."[14] At that time, MPCE staff had not been paid for seven months. When I asked the director to respond to Morton's suggestion to streamline the approval process,[15] the response was, "Our work is very important. The Haitian government alone has the authority to plan for Haitian development. NGOs are good, but they do not have a mandate; only the government has a mandate."

In the first account and definition, promoted by international development agencies, NGOs are seen in a positive light, while states—particularly Southern[16] states—are seen in a negative light. This mirrors a bias within the liberal conception of "civil society" (Havel 1999; Pelczynski 1988). In the second account, widely held in Haiti even considering political differences,[17]

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NGOs are seen as tools of imperialism, harbingers of globalization. This view is shared by solidarity and global justice activists worldwide who defend the sovereignty of Southern countries. How are we to make sense of their roles? Both accounts can be true: some NGOs are indeed closer to the people, grassroots, while some are statelike and bureaucratic, tools of globalization. How are we to know which is which? How can NGOs be classified? To begin to understand the differences between NGOs, a historical framework is needed.

Two Reports, Two Ideologies

Since most donor policies and practices fund NGOs instead of the government, nearly all "development" occurs through the many NGOs that exist in Haiti. Since 1995, following the passage of the Dole Amendment, USAID has been prevented from supporting the government of Haiti.[18] Other donors have followed suit. This end-run around the Haitian government was triggered for a host of reasons. The official reason was that the Préval government presided over a collapse of the Parliament, which is the institution constitutionally authorized to ratify international treaties, including bilateral aid agreements. When the Parliament was suspended in 1999, the Inter-American Development Bank (BID) suspended loans to Haiti. Earlier, in 1998, the International Monetary Fund (IMF, or FMI in French) had suspended its aid pending reforms, such as privatization, that were "agreed upon" (USAID 1997: 1) via the Governor's Island Accord brokered by President Clinton to end the 1991-1994 coup d'état. These actions ended the unprecedented outpouring of aid that came to Haiti upon Aristide's return and following the first democratic transition of power, some $1.8 billion over the first four years (World Bank 2002). Following this brief truce when hopes for Haiti's rebirth were high (Racine 1999; Smith 2001), the "Cold War" between the state and NGO sector resumed, with great ferocity.

The World Bank commissioned a study published in March 1997 by Alice Morton to provide a snapshot of the key problems in the NGO sector in Haiti. Even at the time, international support for NGOs was high: $100 million was given between 1992 and 1994 (Morton 1997: i). At the time of the report's commission, with constitutional order restored following a democratic transition of power, donors were reluctant to resume funding that had been suspended during the Cédras regime because of their "fear of decreased implementation efficiency and effectiveness" in the government (i) and because of a perception that the "absorptive capacity of the GOH is severely limited" (ii). Interestingly, Morton noted that "the agreed privatization of key para-statal organizations[19] is likely to further limit the Government's engagement in most sectors, and to provide additional scope for NGOs and the for-profit private sector" (ii). Therefore, the World

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Bank felt it necessary to analyze and reinforce the administrative capacities of Haiti's growing NGO sector to ensure efficiency, cost-efficiency, and effectiveness in implementation.

The Morton report concluded with several recommendations for the World Bank, NGOs, and the government. To the World Bank and the donor community, Morton recommended eliminating overlapping and duplicate services, tracking results better, and measuring long-term effectiveness. Morton recommended that the GOH "develop reasoned policy toward NGO implementers and service providers" and "develop a better monitoring system and implement it." Morton argued that these recommendations were not meant to control NGOs but to provide a supportive environment conducive to successful work, citing the U.S. government's PL-480 "Food for Peace" program as a good example (Morton 1997: 51-52). Morton called on NGOs to develop terms for collaboration and information-sharing, suggesting that directors of large NGOs "take to the beach" to hammer out their similarities and differences. In addition, predicting a drying-up of funds, Morton argued that NGOs needed to structure plans for their own economic self-sufficiency. This World Bank report symbolized a shift in the institution's policy toward financing NGOs (Cernea 1988; Paul and Israel 1991; Riddell 2007). Like the IMF, the World Bank is granted authority not only because of its funding profile but because of the centrality other donors grant it. To wit, the Interim Cooperation Framework (CCI, in French)[20] adopts many of the propositions in the Morton report as starting points (see Schuller 2008 for further discussion of the CCI).

Also in 1997, CRESFED published "Haïti: l'Invasion des ONG," the master's thesis in development studies of Sauveur Pierre Étienne, Faculté d'Ethnologie. Étienne shared many of Morton's proposals about NGOs, but emphasized that their work should be aligned with that of a government that is responsible for setting an overall development policy and creating conditions for cooperation with NGOs (1997). Étienne also concluded that NGOs should avoid duplication (235) and that there should be coordination and cooperation (229) on the part of NGOs, but he argued that the Haitian government, and not the donor groups, should set policy. Similar suggestions have been made by other Haitian authors who believe that the government should play a policy-making role (Mangonès 1991; Mathurin, Mathurin, and Zaugg 1989; Ministè Agrikilti ak Resous Natirèl 2000).

Breaking from Morton's World Bank-approved analysis,[21] Étienne's nationalist critique argued that international donors have too much power to dictate policy, reinforcing Haiti's dependency on external resources to the detriment of the country. In Étienne's review of the history of NGOs, he asserted that "NGOs were considered by certain international organizations as an effective instrument for the application of their [own] development

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policies."[22] Étienne argued that NGOs are tools used by multilateral organizations to impose their vision of development, representative democracy,[23] and privatization, what Étienne termed "liberalism in its most savage form."[24] Contrasted to European NGOs, Étienne characterized U.S. NGOs as "branches" or "instruments" of the U.S. government (104). Specifically, as Richardson (1997) detailed, Étienne contended that U.S. NGOs help create markets for U.S. agricultural products, such as what is now known as "diri miyami" (Miami rice), through the same PL-480 program that Morton praised (Étienne 1997: 104). Therefore, Étienne argued, "One can conclude that development aid and the channel through which the majority of this aid passed through, which is to say, NGOs, constitute obstacles to development of the country."[25]

Classification of NGOs

There have been several attempts to classify NGOs. Pearce distinguished membership from non-membership NGOs, international from indigenous NGOs, and service-delivery from advocacy NGOs (1997: 259). Farrington and Bebbington categorized NGOs according to role, history, funding, purpose, and structure (1993). Dicklitch argued that "NGOs can be categorized on the basis of the functions that they perform as well as the constituency that they target" (1998: 5). Dicklitch distinguished between voluntary organizations, people's organizations, and "briefcase NGOs" that are basically little other than an individual professional with a briefcase full of founding or other legitimizing papers (1998: 7-9). Bebbington and Thiele contrasted older, pre-international funding NGOs from "opportunistic" or "yuppie" NGOs (1993: 204). Donor groups tend to distinguish NGOs by size and organizational capacity (Morton 1997: i-vi). Bailey analyzed "civic" NGOs that deliberately work as "watchdog" groups against political corruption (1998).

The models coming out of Haiti are similar to those of the general NGO literature. In 1989, a Swiss-Haitian NGO, Groupe de Recherche et d'Action en Milieu Rurale (GRAMIR), published a study of Haitian NGOs, outlining four types, based on ideologies of development (Mathurin, Mathurin, and Zaugg 1989). The first type of NGOs are direct service or humanitarian aid organizations, the second are engaged in some medium or long-term development, the third conduct long-term participatory development, and the fourth try to address inequality as the root of underdevelopment. Keeping GRAMIR's first two types, Étienne (1997: 165-169) amended the classifications slightly. The third and fourth type of NGOs, according to Étienne, operate under the belief that underdevelopment is the cause of the inequalities within the world system. The third type are reformist/advocacy groups, and the fourth work toward a radical transformation. Regarding women's NGOs, Fonds Kore Fanm, a Canadian funding institution targeting

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feminist organizations, commissioned a study of training programs (Clermont, Mangonès, and Métellus 2003). In the study, again, a four-part typology is used to classify women's organizations based on how they define women's rights. To borrow Claude Lévi-Strauss's phrase, these models are "good to think with," especially when attempting to grapple with the extreme variation within NGOs and evaluate their overall impact on Haiti. But how can these models be used to evaluate existing NGOs and real NGO practices in Haiti? The following section will attempt to test these models on the only officially recognized source of data, the list at the Unité de Contrôle et d'Administration des ONG (UCAONG), the cellule within the MPCE that is charged with NGO registry. As of the submission of this article, the list had last been updated in February 2005.

What the Data Say (and Cannot Say)

As noted above, the Haitian government defines what is or is not an NGO through a process within the MPCE. UCAONG maintains a list of NGOs, with contact information, geographic area covered, domain of intervention, areas of expertise, "nationality" (origin of NGO), and sometimes year founded. As of the latest publication of this list, there were 343 officially recognized NGOs operating in Haiti. I used this list to create a database. This database was examined for possible trends, especially trends relating to the questions in this article and the typologies just discussed. To begin, I discuss the year founded to determine whether or not the word "invasion" is appropriate with regard to the presence of NGOs. I then turn to the question

Table 1: **Year Founded.** Source: HAVA 1995; Ministère de la Planification 1998

Year Founded	Number	% of Total
Before 1947	13	9.7
1947—1956	9	6.7
1957—1971	18	13.4
1972—1984	34	25.4
1985—1987 (*dechoukaj*)	26	19.4
1985 [26]	***7***	***5.2***
1986	***9***	***6.7***
1987	***9***	***6.7***
1988—1990	13	9.7
1991—1994 (coup d'état)	22	16.4
TOTAL	**134**	**99.9**

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of national origin of the NGOs, followed by domain of intervention. While these data can generate interesting hypotheses for further research, they cannot corroborate the typologies just discussed.

The word "invasion" implies a sudden proliferation of NGOs in Haiti. Given the publicly available information (a list published in 1995 by HAVA), Table 1 (preceding page) offers some evidence to back this up. Far more NGOs were founded during the three-year *dechoukaj* (26) and the coup d'état (22) period than the three-year period in between and the much longer time periods before. The term "invasion" also implies that the majority of NGOs are foreign. There are a few methodological challenges in assessing this. According to MPCE, an organization is "Haitian" if it was founded in Haiti. But there are no clear standards in the HAVA and MPCE list for deciding whether a group with two boards—one in Haiti and one in the United States (what Morton calls a "transitional" intermediate NGO)—would be considered "Haitian," "American," or "Haitian-American." For example, groups like the Scouts,[27] the Red Cross, and ARC (a disability service organization), not to mention four groups called "Cooperation Haitian-Netherlands," were all listed as "Haitian." Given significant extra work to register as a foreign NGO—including contacting the Haitian Embassy in the home country, translating founding documents into French or Kreyòl, and obtaining certification from the government of the country of origin—international or bilateral groups might prefer calling themselves Haitian.

According to Namphy's 1989 decree, a "Haitian" NGO must have its central

Table 2: **Nationality.** Source: HAVA 1995; Ministère de la Planification 1998[28] * French, Canadian, and U.S. aid are all bilateral sources of aid, meaning there is an official agreement between two countries.

Country of Origin	Number	% of known-origin NGOs	% of Total NGOs
Haitian	191	71.5	61.8
American	34	12.7	11.0
Canadian	14	5.2	4.5
French	7	2.6	2.3
Other EU	13	4.9	4.2
[Other] bilateral*	6	2.2	1.9
International	1	.4	.3
Israeli	1	.4	.3
No information	42	—	13.6
TOTAL	**309**	**99.9**	**99.9**

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office in Haiti, and at least three-quarters of its decision-making board should be Haitian. Of the 42 groups in the database that did not include this information, 21 had English names, suggesting a U.S. origin. Despite these problems, this is the official list from the government of Haiti, and it can provide a way of seeing whether foreign and Haitian NGOs share a set of priorities, for example. Table 2 (facing page) lists the nationalities of the NGOs in the database. At least according to the information in these publicly available databases, the vast majority—almost three-quarters—of NGOs working in Haiti are "Haitian," evidence that complicates an argument of a foreign NGO "invasion." But does the NGO's listing as "Haitian" mean that Haitian people are setting the organization's work priorities? Since this database does not list the amounts, sources, and mandates of the foreign aid, this question cannot be answered using this method.

Another key locus of critique is that NGOs serve to impose their donors' *politik* (while the translation is imprecise, this term can mean "politics" or "policies"[29]). In a rare display of candor, a U.S.-based NGO director told me, "We essentially follow the money."[30] Assessing NGOs' *politik* with given models, such as Étienne's four-part typology, is impossible given official data available. Instead of ideological orientation, the only classification available is describing the NGOs by domain of intervention, as Table 3 (below) shows. Even given this, there is considerable overlap in NGOs that provide the listed services. For example, 106 groups provide health *and* education services. Of the 92 groups that work in the agricultural sector, almost half (45) work in the health and education sectors as well. This suggests that these are either large multi-service agencies or community-based organizations (CBOs) that focus on needs in their community. Looking at the names of these organizations,

Table 3: **Types of Programs.** Source: HAVA 1995; Ministère de la Planification 1998

Sector	**Number**	**% of NGOs**
Health	156	50.5
Education	148	47.9
Agriculture	92	29.8
Social Assistance	49	15.9
Community Development	35	11.3
Credit	11	3.6
Human Rights	8	2.6
Women	7	2.3
Environment	6	1.9
Literacy	5	1.6

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Sector	Haitian		U.S.		Canadian		EU	
#=number %=% of NGOs in sector	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Agriculture	55	67.9	14	17.3	5	6.2	7	8.6
Community Development	19	73.1	3	11.5	3	11.5	1	3.8
Credit	5	55.6	2	22.2	1	11.1	1	11.1
Education	90	75.0	15	12.5	6	5.0	9	7.5
Environment	3	50.0	1	16.7	1	16.7	1	16.7
Food Assistance	2	40.0	3	60.0	-		-	
Health	84	67.7	20	16.1	9	7.3	11	8.9
Human Rights	6	75.0	1	12.5	1	12.5	-	
Literacy	3	60	1	20	1	20	-	
Social Assistance	33	82.5	3	7.5	2	5.0	2	5.0
Women	7	100	-		-		-	
OVERALL	**191**	**73.7**	**34**	**13.1**	**14**	**5.4**	**20**	**7.7**

Table 4: **Haitian, American, Canadian, and EU NGOs, by sector.** Source: HAVA 1995, Ministère de la Planification 1998

there seem to be two CBOs in this list, both Haitian in origin.The list also includes several large organizations, such as World Vision International and Adventist Development and Relief Agency, several of which serve "all of Haiti." This raises the question, are foreign NGOs more likely to work on priorities different from those of Haitian NGOs?

Looking at the NGOs by sectors and country of origin (Table 4, above), it appears that, in general terms, health, education, agriculture, and social assistance are priorities for NGOs of every nationality. There are, however, some interesting differences that may not be statistically significant given the sample size. Nonetheless, they present some interesting questions for further research. For example, Haitian NGOs are more likely than foreign NGOs to engage in social assistance (82.5 compared to 73.7 percent). Is this because foreign NGOs are moving more quickly than Haitian NGOs toward adopting "development" as a macro strategy, rather than providing basic services—"following the money," as it were? Or does it signify that local NGOs see service provision as a greater priority, especially in the wake of privatization of state-run social programs? These are interesting starting points for further research. To answer both questions, a longitudinal study would be helpful.

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By contrast, food assistance is not an equally high priority among NGOs. For example, U.S. NGOs constitute a majority (60 percent) of NGOs providing food assistance, despite representing 13 percent of the general NGO population. Is this a result of different national interests, such as, perhaps, the disposal of the export of surplus U.S. crops since the New Deal in an effort to raise the U.S. prices of grain for farmers? (Richardson 1997)

There are other ways the database can be analyzed; I have explored patterns in location of services, location of central offices, and even whether or not the organization has an explicitly Christian name. There are potentially interesting starting points for other research: for example, NGOs working in education comprise 74 percent of Christian-named NGOs, compared to 48 percent of the total NGO population. However, most of this information—the only publicly available data source—cannot be used to corroborate existing theories or typologies. This is not to say that the list has no usefulness; I have posted this information on a Web site for other scholars and NGOs interested in identifying NGOs that work in a given area.[31] However, it is clear that there are insufficient data to classify the list of NGOs using the four-part typology that Étienne borrowed from GRAMIR. How, then, are scholars and NGO practitioners to make use of this typology or evaluate the larger critique of NGOs that are doing their donors' bidding?

What is needed?

The typologies discussed in this article certainly have their utility—in interrogating the net effect of the "NGO invasion" in Haiti and elsewhere (Étienne 1997) and in making sense of the multiplicity and expansion of NGOs and NGO roles. However, as the previous section highlighted, there are several teleological as well as methodological challenges associated with these classifications. First of all, to a person conducting research, whether academic or applied research—for example a church group, labor union, or solidarity organization—or interested individual seeking a Southern NGO partner to support, these classifications appear *a priori*. While the classifications, especially GRAMIR's four-part or Sen and Grown's six-part typology, provide useful questions for a researcher to ask, these pre-existing classifications can appear suspect, as criteria for a given NGO's inclusion in one or another category are not clear. Most troubling is Étienne's assertion that NGOs can be classified based on their donors' *politik* (1997: 164). Aside from conflating institutional levels, this assertion assumes an answer to rather than interrogates the very question about how foreign funding influences NGOs.

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The critiques of application and verification aside, the logic behind Étienne's typology is useful, suggesting that type 1 or 2 NGOs,[32] regardless of origin (see Schuller forthcoming for elaboration), seem likely to impose their (or their donors') *politik* on the local community. A Ministry of Agriculture report decried the abuses of this system: "It is imperative that NGOs and donors *stop using peasants' organizations* [sic] to justify what they want to put in place or justify their projects" (Ministè Agrikilti ak Resous Natirèl 2000: 21). However, GRAMIR's typology expresses some hope that some NGOs (types 3 and 4)[33] do engage in collaborative relationships with local communities, whereby local agents define the project's *politik*. While there are several other factors, assessing local participation is thus central to the larger debates of NGOs.

Participation

Participation is a term that has attracted a great deal of use and attention. International development institutions have invested in "participation" since a round of self-evaluations in the 1980s showed that greater participation by the target population increased the likelihood of successful outcomes (Ferguson and Gupta 2002: 988; Shah 1998). In the U.S. and Western Europe, the rise of participation as a goal has roots in the 1960s and early 1970s, when citizen-activists demanded a change in the social contract, including local autonomy and participation in decision-making processes (Castells 1983). During this period, neighborhood associations and tenant associations sprouted up, complementing the labor and civil rights organizations that had defined the left. This "New Left" defined democratization as part of their objective and their social movement strategy (Alvarez and Escobar 1992; Edelman 2001; Laraña, Gusfield, and Johnston 1994). States and international development agencies alike have adopted, and often co-opted, this rhetoric (Cooke and Kothari 2001; Leve 2001; Paley 2001). However, this move also provided social movements among certain groups—such as low income tenants (Schuller 2006), indigenous peoples (Postero 2005), or Haitian peasants (Mathurin 1991)—with a legitimate claim and a target for their activities (Alinsky 1971).

Participation has been a central theme in Haitian political discourse—one of the three pillars in Aristide's 1990 electoral campaign—and its centrality continues today (see also SOFA, PAPDA, and SAKS 2004). Despite its widespread usage, the meanings and structures of participation are far from clear (Mathurin 1991). A peasant in Bamòn argues that "participation just means that we get to carry a lot of heavy rocks on our heads" (Smith 2001: 34). But especially marginalized groups in Haiti believe that participation is important. As M. Catherine Maternowska warns, when development efforts do not offer people the chance to be heard, when they are

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dehumanized and humiliated, the only recourse to express their frustration is to strike out, for example by stoning the motorcade of Tipper Gore, wife of then-U.S. Vice President Al Gore (2006: 128).

Assessing Participation: A Working Model

In consultation with Ernst Mathurin, director of GRAMIR, I developed a chart for assessing "participation" within an NGO, outlining eight phases of a development project. In interviews with donor groups, NGO directors, staff, and recipients, I asked who participated in the following stages, if at all, and then how.[34] I corroborated interview information with my own observations. While not a perfect measure for participation, it provides a snapshot that can be analyzed and compared. It takes only a few minutes in a larger interview to fill this out, and each term is defined and operationalized. And because of its relative simplicity, it can be used by non-specialists, as in a focus group

Table 5: **Participation** (translated from the original Kreyòl)

	Donor	NGO Staff	Target Population
Discussion—What problems exist in our area?			
Prioritization—Making decisions—what are the most pressing concerns?[35]			
Conception—What solutions exist for these problems?			
Planning—Make a plan, assess resources available			
Organization—Tasks and timeline finalized; who does what, when?			
Execution—Put our hands together to work, on the ground working			
Follow-through—Supervise work, assure that it is being done properly			
Evaluation—Assess how the work was done. What worked well? What needs improvement? Etc.			

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	Donor/Director Perceptions			Aid Recipient Perceptions		
	Donor	NGO Staff	Target Pop.	Donor	NGO Staff	Target Pop.
Discussion—What problems exist in our area?			X			
Prioritization—Making decisions—what are the most pressing concerns?			X			
Conception—What solutions exist for these problems?		X	X	X	X	
Planning—Make a plan, assess resources available		X	X	X	X	
Organization—Tasks and timeline finalized; who does what, when?		X			X	
Execution—Put our hands together to work, on the ground working		X	X		X	X
Follow-through—Supervise work, assure that it is being done properly	X	X			X	
Evaluation—Assess how the work was done. What worked well? What needs improvement? Etc.	X	X	X		X	

Table 6: **Differences in perspectives**

meeting of recipients of NGO assistance (see Table 5, preceding page). The objective is to ask each research participant—either in an interview or by having them fill out the table on their own—who completes each given task in a development project.

While "conception" or "evaluation" may be differently defined and operationalized, the terms used were my own interpretation and definition.

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There was therefore a standardized lexicon for research participants, which proved especially useful with populations that were not development professionals. Because this tool can be (and was, in my case) used by aid recipients to assess participation, it allows a polyvocality missing from most statistically oriented, often donor-funded NGO research, in which one voice (usually the director's) speaks for the entire organization. In addition to real-world or perceived pressures to cover up problems or provide positive spin—especially to donors—directors might not know what goes on in the field or after hours. While it may seem intuitive, it bears noting that differences in position or social location shape people's understanding. As Table 6 (below) shows, donors and directors have different understandings of local participation from those of the "participants" themselves. I asked people to mark with an *X* who completed a given step in a development project: NGO staff, donors, or aid recipients.Table 6 (facing page) represents a composite of answers. For example, donors and NGO directors believe that the aid recipients—"target population"—participated in defining the problem, prioritization, project conception, planning, and evaluation, in addition to execution. Interestingly, local community members only see that they participated during the execution—in other words, when work needs to be done, "carrying heavy rocks" to cite the peasant in Jennie Smith's ethnography.

Also interesting for this analysis is that, to the aid recipients, projects seem to appear from out of nowhere, not having arisen from a discussion of problems or priorities. This may not be far from how some NGOs operate. Said one peasants' association leader who became involved with an HIV/AIDS prevention program, "They just showed up. They came in their truck and asked to meet with community leaders. People pointed them in my direction, so they talked with me. I agreed with what they were trying to do, so I became involved."

While there are shortcomings with this model of assessing participation—for example, this snapshot cannot include a qualitative analysis of how the various populations participated in the stage of a development project or what specific activities—Table 6 clearly identifies the critical need to include the perspectives of aid recipients, as they are very different from the director or donors. Even the best-designed, clearest, means-tested, explicit, and theoretically rich survey research will not, indeed cannot, assess participation or effectiveness if only one voice—that of a director or designee—speaks for the entire NGO. This is not a minor concern, as scholars are already familiar with Haiti's extreme social divisions. In the context of NGOs, recipients of aid tend to be of a different class from NGO staff; as I detail elsewhere, I have heard many people discuss the existence of an "NGO class."[36]

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Comparing Two Women's NGOs

The "snapshot" mentioned above has other limitations, as it freezes NGOs in time. Most people familiar with NGOs know that they are constantly changing. For example, as NGOs "scale up"—expand their services, funding, and/or staff—organizations tend to become more hierarchical and distanced from the local communities they purport to serve, a result of what Robert Michels calls the "Iron Law of Oligarchy" (1949). Particularly in the context of international development funding, scholars have noted an increase in instrumentality: ever-increasing accountability regimes using statistical measures combined with an ever-increasing intertwining of foreign policy with international development (Atmar 2001; de Waal 1997; Duffield, Macrae, and Curtis 2001; Middleton and O'Keefe 1998).

But this tool is precisely useful in documenting these shifts—this instrumental use of NGOs. Rather than take for granted a position that NGOs can be classified based on their donors' *politik*, it can be used to compare NGOs that work in the same sector, with similar "target populations," but who have different donors. Are there differences between "Haitian" and foreign NGOs? Are there differences between U.S. and European NGOs? Are there differences between Haitian NGOs that correspond to differences in their sources of funding? This last question forms the starting point for my research that analyzes the impact of international development on participation and autonomy within women's NGOs (Schuller 2007). I compare two women's NGOs—both of them "Haitian," founded by donor groups in about the same time period, and engaged in HIV/AIDS prevention. They differ in orientation, and in their relationships with the recipient communities (including participation). One of them receives primarily Northern NGO funding, while the other has exclusively public funding, including USAID.

As Table 7 (facing page) shows, in the USAID-funded NGO, which I will call Sove Lavi (Kreyòl for "saving lives"), recipient communities participated only during the execution of the project and sometimes during the organization. They were rarely consulted in the planning of the project. As one of Sove Lavi's community leaders critiqued, "That's not participation. That's 'Do [this] for me.'"[37] In the other NGO, Fanm Tèt Ansanm (Kreyòl for Women United, literally "heads together"), recipients participated in identifying the problems, prioritizing them, and identifying potential solutions to the problems, as well as the "carrying the rocks" part of the execution phase.

Continuing the Analysis

The above comparison is suggestive of the larger patterns and critiques that Étienne raises. However, it is only the starting point for larger analysis.

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	Sove Lavi Publicly funded NGO			Fanm Tèt Ansanm Privately funded NGO		
	Donor	NGO Staff	Target Pop.	Donor	NGO Staff	Target Pop.
Discussion—What problems exist in our area?					X	X
Prioritization—Making decisions—what are the most pressing concerns?	X	X		X	X	X
Conception—What solutions exist for these problems?	X	X			X	X
Planning—Make a plan, assess resources available	X	X			X	
Organization—Tasks and timeline finalized; who does what, when?		X			X	
Execution—Put our hands together to work, on the ground working		X	X		X	X
Follow-through—Supervise work, assure that it is being done properly		X			X	
Evaluation—Assess how the work was done. What worked well? What needs improvement? Etc.	X	X			X	X

Table 7: **Comparison of two women's NGOs**

As noted above, the snapshot tool does not show a qualitative analysis: it cannot indicate what specific actions or processes were followed (the next step in the research was asking these questions), or whether the participation was what Freire termed "under consent" or "power participation" (cited in Regan and Institut Culturel Karl Lévêque 2003: 10). Most importantly, it does not offer an explanation of why NGOs with different donors may

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have different *politik*, different relationships between the NGO and local communities. For this, a much longer and involved analysis is required. Such an analysis should include local voices: how do local people evaluate the NGOs and their donors? Such an analysis should also include their lived realities and perspectives—through long-term participant observation and/or documenting their extensive life histories, their *istwa* (Bell 2001).

Currently, NGOs in Haiti receive nearly all official grant aid: whether bilateral such as USAID or Association Canadienne pour le Développement Internationale (ACDI); multilateral (such as l'Union Européenne); or public/private entities such as the Global Fund to Combat AIDS, Malaria, and Tuberculosis. In addition, through the Fonds d'Assistance Économique et Sociale (FAES), NGOs are beginning to receive funds from Haiti's lenders, especially the Inter-American Development Bank (known in Haiti as BID), even though by their charters they are supposed to exclusively fund governments. International agencies have recognized and endorsed the Préval-Alexis government as legitimate, ending the two-year interim period and constitutional crisis with a round of promises of $750 million made at a donors' conference in Pòtoprens on July 25, 2006. Will the amount actually disbursed be channeled through the government or through NGOs?

For good or ill, NGOs are running the show in terms of development in Haiti. Coming to a critical analysis of their work is a necessary and central task; it should be the subject of engaged dialogue in the public sphere, both in Haiti—by which I include Haiti's "tenth" (now "eleventh") province—as well as the solidarity communities. Now that Haitian people have expressed their will for sovereignty, now that the interim period is over, what is their vision for development? What priorities are people *andeyò*—not only in the provinces but also the traditionally excluded urban poor masses—expressing? All these questions demand serious, sustained attention to the role of NGOs, particularly the diffuse notion of "participation." It is my greatest hope that this article continues and expands upon a lively public discussion and debate on the subject.

Endnotes

The argument in this article was first articulated in a paper for the Haitian Studies Association's annual conference in Pòtoprens, October 2002. I am indebted to the Faculté d'Ethnologie for providing the opportunity to teach a class, "Antwopoloji ONG," and grateful for the critical conversation of the students that helped sharpen and clarify the argument. Research for this article was supported by a Graduate Research Fellowship at the National Science Foundation; the Department of Anthropology and Humanities and Social Science Research Grant at the University of California, Santa Barbara; the African American Studies Program at the University

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of Florida. I am grateful to editor Claudine Michel and managing editor Chryss Yost for support and careful engagement of the article. Also gratefully acknowledged are Susan Stonich, Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, and *JOHS* anonymous reviewers for helpful feedback and advice. All translations from the original French and the original Haitian Creole are those of the author.

[1] Articles have begun appearing on hometown associations (Pierre-Louis 2002, 2006).

[2] Both studies were relatively widely available in donor offices and libraries, such as at USAID and the United Nations, at least until both libraries closed their public consultation services during the 2004-6 interim period.

[3] The European Union commissioned a study of the NGO sector, published in March 2005, updating Morton's widely cited and disseminated World Bank study of March 1997. Étienne's follows a study by GRAMIR, noted below, and was cited in an NGO's self-critique published by ICKL and SAKS in 2003.

[4] During the 2004-06 interim regime, the province of Nippes was created, splitting the Grand-Anse department into two. There are now officially ten provinces in Haiti.

[5] Source: http://www.un.org/dpi/ngosection/brochure.htm, visited July 2, 2004

[6] Source: http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/npi/corerept/npi-ngo.htm#rationale, visited July 2, 2004.

[7] This piece was also his master's thesis in development studies at the Faculté d'Ethnologie, under the direction of Gerritt Desloovres and Suzy Castor.

[8] Étienne 1996: 236. The text in the original French was, «ONG qui sont le fer de lance de la politique néo-libérale de certains gouvernements occidentaux visant a affaiblir l'État dans les pays du Sud, travaillent au renforcement de la dépendance du pays par rapport aux grands pays capitalistes.»

[9] The text in the original French was, «Toutes Institutions ou Organisations privées, apolitiques, sans but lucrative, poursuivant des objectifs de Développement aux niveaux national, départementale ou communal et disposant de ressources pour les concrétiser.»

[10] Here I am using the French name for the ministries, because the vast majority of official communication is in French, with a few exceptions in Kreyòl, including a report I cite below.

[11] The original Kreyòl was, "Nou konnen, gen anpil bon ONG ki bezwen papye ofisyèl. Te gen youn mwa, yon 300 gwoup kontakte biwo nou." Interview with author, August 2002.

[12] Article 28, section h. The text in the original French was «coopérer avec les populations des zones dans lesquelles elles travaillent et mener à terme les programmes et projets soumis.»

[13] Personal communication with author, August 2001

[14] The original Kreyòl was "Pa bliye, gouvènman ayisyen pa gen anpil kòb." Interview with author, August 2002.

[15] These suggestions had been made in Morton's 1997 report.

[16] Following convention in scholarly and activist literature, I use the term "South" to denote countries that used to be called "Third World" or "developing countries" – Latin America and the Caribbean, South Asia, Africa.

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[17] CRESFED has ties with the OPL, one of the first opponents to the FL party and Lavalas governments.

[18] This congressional action was sponsored by Senator Robert Dole and passed both houses of Congress, imposing greater congressional control over USAID, at the time a semi-autonomous branch of the U.S. State Department. Among other things, the Amendment (to the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act, authorizing USAID) laid out a policy framework for not supporting direct financing of the Haitian government.

[19] i.e., Teleco, EDH, SNEP/CAMEP, APN, etc.

[20] The CCI was formally adopted at a July 19-20 donors' conference in Washington, outlining the development priorities for the interim Latortue government and coordinating pledges to meet these goals, totaling almost a billion U.S. dollars. As I outline in another publication (Schuller 2008), the CCI was controversial among people in Haiti.

[21] A similarity is noted in passing: "In Haiti, as elsewhere, NGO programs are donor-driven" (Morton 1997: 50).

[22] Étienne 1997: 99. The text in the original French was «les ONG étaient considérees par certaines organisations internationales comme un instrument efficace pour l'application de leur politique de développement.»

[23] i.e., Western representative democracy of an elected body with oversight as opposed to more local or direct democracy.

[24] p. 63. The text in the original French was, «libéralisme (néo-libéralisme), sous la forme plus sauvage ...»

[25] p. 65. The text in the original French was, «on pourrait conclure que l'aide au développement et le canal par lequel passe une grande partie de cette aide, c'est-à-dire les ONG, constituent des obstacles au développement du pays au lieu d'y contribuer.»

[26] I am emphasizing the three years of the *dechoukaj* in part to test the idea of a post-Duvalier NGO "invasion."

[27] The NGO name is "Scouts"–it does not specify "des Filles" or "des Garçons."

[28] Note this number is different from the February 2005 total because this was from an earlier data source, the last one for which this information was publicly available.

[29] For example, *politik devlopman USAID [yo]* can read "USAID's development policies" or "politics of USAID development." *Politik neyoliberal [yo]* can mean "neoliberal policies" or "politics of neoliberalism."

[30] Interview with author, August 2002.

[31] The Web site is http://www.uweb.ucsb.edu/~marky/NGOLIST.htm

[32] Type 1 provides services, whereas type 2 does some form of development, but within a neoliberal model.

[33] As noted above, while type 3 and 4 NGOs both address inequality as the root of underdevelopment, type 4 NGOs are there only to support local groups in their project definitions. Type 3 NGOs do more of the project conception.

[34] I interviewed six donor representatives, both NGO directors, nine NGO staff members, and sixteen aid recipients.

[35] The second and third phases in the process may be combined or reversed. For example, it is possible that conception is the second phase, etc.

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[36] I heard this term used by people of middle and lower social status groups, by people who worked for NGOs and those who received NGO services, as well as by people who are not affiliated with NGOs—in the provinces and in Pòtoprens (Schuller forthcoming).

[37] The original Kreyòl was "Sa pa patisipasyon, sa se 'fè pou mwen.'" Interview with author, February 2005.

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