‘EXPLORING THE ROLE OF ORGANISATIONS OF THE URBAN POOR (OUPS) IN BUILDING THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CAPITAL OF SLUM COMMUNITIES IN KISUMU, KENYA’

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ABSTRACT:
In 2005 Sattherthwaite and D’Cruz made the bold assertion that ‘Perhaps the most significant initiative today in urban areas of Africa and Asia in addressing poverty… is the work of organizations and federations formed and run by the urban poor or homeless’. With growing numbers of NGOs in urban areas, as well as pressure on governments to increase citizen involvement in decision-making, large-scale Organisations of the Urban Poor (OUPS) are becoming recognised as potentially important civil society actors in urban decision-making and implementation. Urban poor federations such as Slum Dwellers International (SDI) have spread rapidly through the developing world, while at the same time NGOs have begun supporting umbrella groups as longer-term representatives of the urban poor.

In Kisumu (one of the fastest growing cities in Kenya and focus of the 2007 post-election violence), both SDI and NGO supported groups are operating in several wards of the city, attempting to perform similar functions of representation and coordination in the community. However, there are differences both in their supporting organisations, and in the way the groups themselves are structured and function internally. For example, while NGO supported groups may be seen as less antagonistic, and therefore perhaps better able to connect to local state actors, they may also be more constrained by the same overarching structures of donor aid and financing that has been found to limit the NGOs which support them. So how representative are they? Do they increase solidarity? And how do they influence, or are they influenced by external actors? This paper presents early findings from research into the Horizontal and Vertical Social Capital of SDI and NGO supported umbrella groups in Kisumu in order to understand how effective these groups are in their intended role as bridges between external partners and the community.

KEY WORDS:
Social Capital; Urban; Slums; NGOs; Governance; Participatory Planning
NGOS AND FEDERATIONS OF THE URBAN POOR AND THEIR ROLE IN BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

One of the major shifts in development thinking since the turn of the century has been the recognition of the role that Organisations of the Urban Poor (OUPs) can play in development, and particularly urban development. While ‘community participation’ has long been a buzzword, now urban communities, and particularly poor urban communities have grown to a scale that this no longer means small local groups working with development partners, but instead federations of the poor that have networks reaching hundreds of thousands of people locally, nationally, and even globally. While in the past decision-making power was largely in the hands of government or international partners, now ‘slum dwellers’ themselves are organising at a scale that can not only influence decision-makers, but through pooling resources, they can be key-stakeholders themselves in lobbying for and implementing projects. Large-scale OUPs are becoming recognised as potentially important civil society actors in decision-making and implementation\(^1\) as well as more authentic voices of the poor\(^2\).

In countries where there is a supportive state, or strong civil society, the urban poor have begun to self-organise, forming large-scale community-based organizations (CBOs), and advocating for themselves\(^3\). In such countries, a supportive state can provide not only the legislative framework for participation, but also a range of enabling mechanisms that support the poor in realizing their rights\(^4\). While there is still some way to go in improving these mechanisms, and thus the degree of influence the urban poor are afforded, countries such as Brazil, India and South Africa have made significant progress in integrating poor urban residents in urban planning and infrastructure development decisions. The increasing potential for the poor to establish CBOs and through these to advocate for themselves in the urban planning process, calls into question the need for support from external actors. In particular, it raises questions about the traditional role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as representatives for the poor\(^5\).

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\(^2\) Nyamugasira W, “NGOs and advocacy: how well are the poor represented?” in Development in Practice 8:3 (1998): 297-308


\(^5\) see Nyamugasura W…, and d’Cruz C…
However, whilst this may be the case in countries with a supportive government and / or a strong civil society, in many countries one or both of these are not present, and far less progress has been made. While there may be the institutional potential for poor urban residents to advocate for themselves in urban planning processes, communities may lack the capacity or cohesion to support this process. In other words, social capital among the urban poor is not sufficient to enable them to realize such legal rights. In these cases, should it then be the role of the NGO to develop poor urban residents' capacity, in particular the stock and character of social capital SC, to enable them to advocate for themselves, and is this possible within the context of a fragmented civil society?

Questions still remain about the implications of different approaches to building social capital in urban slums, and the real position these groups play in decision-making. Many would argue that the socio-political historical basis of African civil society has produced nations that are as yet too segregated and turbulent to support the development of a strong civil society able to advocate for itself. Even the relevant success of the social movements in South Africa has been incorporated and/or marginalized by the ruling party’s political hegemony, resulting in the ‘atrophy’ of organized participation so that local government reform has digressed to a ‘bureaucratic and commandist logic’. Whilst the number of social movements and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) may be increasing, and this may be taken as a sign of a strengthening civil society, the structure of dominance and leadership is repeated in many of the organizations. Participation is still understood in terms of patron-client relations and organizations are often lead by one representative, with the development of horizontal ties within communities discouraged. In addition, links between civil society and government are often highly

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6 Heller, P...
8 Heller, P… (2001:131)
‘clientelistic’ in nature, making the notion of the political autonomy of civil society in Africa highly questionable.

Past studies of projects that have sought to ‘build’ SC within communities, have found that rather than building new SC, they have instead relied on existing SC, strengthening existing hierarchies and failing to reach the most vulnerable in communities. At the same time the focus of donor funding, and imposed time-scales have lead to both Northern NGOs and their Southern counterparts focusing on short-term projects with tangible outcomes, rather than on the process of community building itself. However, the increasing interest of donors in SC, while criticised for its tendency to gloss over underlying issues of power and control within communities, may also present an opportunity for NGOs to push for more long-term funding and a focus on building SC in areas where it is deemed to be ‘weak’, particularly in contexts where the state is not supportive.

Established approaches by NGOs over the past thirty years have emphasized the production of physical outputs: infrastructure, clinic buildings and so on. Improved SC has generally been regarded as a desirable, but secondary outcome. In contrast, many of the large-scale CBOs now being established are focusing on the more flexible, sustainable, and potentially empowering approach of building SC through microfinance and credit and savings groups, an approach that is also beginning to be taken on increasingly by NGOs. Some NGOs are now focusing on the development of community SC, and the development of institutions and mechanisms, which can enable the community to act as its own advocacy in the participatory development processes mentioned above – even where there is no facilitation from the state. However, as with the criticisms of the use of the term SC by donor organisations, similar criticisms have been made of the credit and savings systems being established by CBOs and NGOs in that they may serve to strengthen existing hierarchies and patron-client relations within poor communities, and may not be reaching the poorest and most vulnerable.

The well-established role of NGOs as bridges between civil society and the state should be reevaluated. Nyamugasira and d’Cruz and Satterthwaite see a need for change in NGOs in the way they approach partnerships. As Nyamugasira puts it, if NGOs are to act as a genuine partner to the poor then they must be one that ‘adds value to what they are already doing. NGOs should perhaps concentrate less on projecting their supposed altruism and work harder to develop more of the appropriately selfish interest that spurs and drives people’s (including poor people’s) entrepreneurship.’ If, as Watson (2002) sees it, there is a lack of the entrepreneurial informal activity

11 Nyamugasira, W...
14 Nyamugasira, W... (2002:12)
that stimulates alternative pathways to poverty reduction initiatives within the poor urban community, then perhaps the role of NGOs is to stimulate this entrepreneurial spirit.

While NGOs may be well placed to support the development of OUPs, there has been increasing criticism of the influence that overarching structures of donor aid financing has had on the relationship between Northern and Southern NGOs, and in turn how this influences their interventions in the development of Social Capital networks in communities. Urban poor federations such as Slum Dwellers International (SDI) have spread rapidly through the developing world, with networks of OUPs connected to them. Their relative autonomy may mean that they can ‘negotiate better with the state and support each other to be more responsive to the needs of members.’ The ability of these networked groups to link existing horizontal Social Capital in the community, with more of a focus on long-term processes rather than short term products, may make them better at increasing solidarity within the community, as well as linking them and the wider International network of slum dwellers. In other words, SDI networks may be better placed to support the development of associations that meet the need for a new ‘radical politics of development.’ However, they may also be less well placed to form the necessary links to decision-making processes, and their position within the community, and the internal power structures and politics associated with this may have damaging affects on the long-term sustainability of these groups.

This study therefore aims to gain a more in-depth understanding of the social capital of two distinct types of OUP in Kisumu, Kenya within the slum areas of Manyatta and Nyalenda; those that have been built and/or strengthened primarily through external NGOs or through joining the slum dwellers federation of Kenya (Muungano Wa Wanavijiji). Through the analysis of these two types of OUP it is hoped that an insight will be gained into the way these two types of organisation are structured in this area in terms of the relationships and connections that they facilitate, and how they may have a positive or detrimental affect on their members as well as the wider community, thus providing evidence to inform future development interventions that seek to ‘build social capital’.

17 Mitlin, D… (2001:164)
SOCIAL (AND POLITICAL) CAPITAL AND ITS ROLE IN BUILDING SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS IN THE CONTEXT OF URBAN POOR COMMUNITIES

[fig 2] a version of the sustainable livelihoods model showing social capital as one of five household assets

Social Capital is recognised as one of the key assets needed to build sustainable livelihoods. However, while the importance of Social Capital in development is widely accepted, its definition and core components, and subsequently how (or if) it can be measured or assessed, if it can be built or utilised as a resource, and the positive and negative implications of external actors trying to do so have been much debated.

As with other similar terms, the concept of Social Capital (and therefore its treatment in development) was first developed in societies neither as mobile, nor as interconnected as the world is today. The notion of community is no longer solely used to identify a geographical area. Instead there are communities at all levels and all scales, from the local to the national to the global. Community can now define any group of people who have something in common (communities of place are only one of five types of communities defined by Nabeel Hamdi\(^\text{19}\)). Therefore the assessment of the connections that people form within these ‘communities’ in the multiple roles and identities that are taken on in society today has lead to much debate about how social capital should be defined to incorporate both its structure and content and its positive and negative implications on the dynamics and hierarchies of power in the modern context. This debate is particularly relevant in the complex lives and associations of the poor, and even more so in the multiple levels of association and influence that are either obtainable or restricted for the urban poor. The next section gives a discussion of some of the key aspects.

\(^{19}\text{Hamdi, Nabeel, Small Change: about the art of practice and the limits of planning in cities (Earthscan, 2004)}\)
components of Social Capital and how they will be used to assess the social capital of organisations of the urban poor.

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND ITS MEASUREMENT: KEY CONCEPTS TO BE CONSIDERED

As Narayan and Cassidy state\(^\text{20}\): “Theories such as social capital comprise constructs that are inherently abstract and require subjective interpretation in their translation into operational measures. Such operational measures are invariably indirect surrogates of their associated constructs”. In other words the methodology chosen is normally reflects the way it has been defined by the author. Therefore, before defining the methodology for analysing social capital, we must first outline the definition of the concept that will be used in this analysis, and its particular relevance to the case being studied (organisations of the urban poor).

Ven Deth\(^\text{21}\) suggests that there had begun to emerge a clear orthodoxy in the measurement of social capital through purely quantitative terms, but that this seems inconsistent with the way it has been conceived, as both structural (“relatively objective and externally observable social structures, such as networks, associations, and institutions, and the rules and procedures they embody\(^\text{22}\)” and cognitive social capital (“subjective and intangible elements such as generally accepted attitudes and norms of behaviour, shared values, recipricocity and trust\(^\text{23}\)”).

The UK Department for International Development (DfID) identifies three core components of Social Capital\(^\text{24}\):
- relations of trust, reciprocity and exchanges between individuals which facilitate co-operation
- common rules, norms and sanctions mutually agreed or handed-down within societies
- connectedness, networks and groups, including access to wider institutions.

“The analysis of social capital looks at the quality of various types of connectedness that affect people for better or worse\(^\text{25}\)”. This underlines the need not only to quantify and describe the structure of social capital, but also to assess its ‘quality’, in terms of its potential to ‘affect people for better or for worse’. The first two components of the DfID description could be said to describe the “cognitive” elements that are shaped by the attitudes and beliefs of individuals, and the third could be said to describe the

\(^{22}\) Grootaert, C, and Bastelaer, T.V. “Social Capital: From Definition to Measurement” in Grootaert, C, and Bastelaer, T.V. (eds.) Understanding and measuring social capital: a multidisciplinary tool for practitioners, Directions in development (World Bank, 2002:3)
\(^{23}\) ibid
\(^{24}\) “Social Capital” in Carney, Diane (ed.), Key Sheet number 3 for Sustainable Livelihoods, Overseas Planning and Implementation, (The Department for International Development and Overseas Development Institute, 1999)
\(^{25}\) ibid
“structural” component of Social Capital in terms of the groups that and networks that these individuals are connected to.

The DfID paper then goes on to describe how Social Capital can build trust and facilitate collective action, but at the same time can also act as a ‘foundation for negative actions and exclusion’. Much criticism has been levied at the World Bank for its use of broad concepts such as social capital to describe social relationships without adequate attention to the power relations embodied within them (Ben Fine among others has written a number of articles on this). While the potential outcomes of connections between groups and individuals cannot be predicted, the potential positive or negative implications in terms of power relations and existing hierarchies between the actors involved should be considered. Therefore any analysis of Social Capital should take into account both the structure and the content of a social network, and should give equal importance not only to understanding how it functions, but also how it may have a positive or negative impact, and create or destroy potential opportunities for both those who are internal and external to it.

As well as structural versus cognitive social capital several definitions are used in this paper to highlight these relationships:

- Horizontal versus Vertical social capital: Horizontal Social Capital as described by Mckenzie and Harpman26 “can be considered to include… social capital… confined to a particular social strata” while Vertical social capital is described as ‘the degree of integration of groups within a hierarchical society that allows them to influence policy and access justice and resources from

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26 Mckenzie Kwame and Harpman Trudy, “Meanings and uses of social capital in the mental health field” in Mckenzie Kwame and Harpman Trudy (eds.) Social Capital and Mental Health (Jessica Kinglsey Publishers, 2006:16)
those in power’. I would extend this definition to include not only groups, but individuals. The use of Horizontal and Vertical social capital is useful in describing hierarchical structures and how ties formed change or enforce a person or group’s position within them. Those ties that are vertical will connect to higher levels of a hierarchy, while those that are horizontal connect to others at a similar level.

- **Strong versus Weak (or thick versus thin) ties:** How ingrained or fragile relationships are between individuals or groups. The heterogeneity, and changing nature often found in urbanized areas may mean that the majority of the networks and associations that are initially formed are likely to be weak as people migrate from a range of different backgrounds, whereas ties between family members, or members of a similar cultural background are likely to be strong. How this can be measured relates to the relations of trust, recipricocity etc as stated by DFiD. However, it should not be assumed that ‘weak’ or ‘strong’ ties are more or less beneficial, and in the case of the urban poor both are needed to build solidarity while building new linkages of inclusion and relationships that may increase access to resources.

- **Bridging versus bonding social capital:** This refers to processes of inclusion and exclusion within groups (another aspect of power relations which development agencies have been criticised for overlooking). Bonding SC refers to associations between people who are like one another in many respects whereas bridging brings together people are unlike one another. Bonding social capital is often characterized by homogeneity, strong norms, loyalty and exclusivity and is likely to be inward looking in nature, and be based on strong ties between group members, while conversely bridging Social Capital, whilst more outward looking is often much weaker in nature, and therefore more fragile, and harder to construct.

- **Inward looking versus outward looking:** Inward looking groups will "promote the material, social, or political interests of their own members" whereas outward looking groups will promote "public goods".

In addition there is the notion of positive and negative social capital (or productive versus perverse), however this definition may be unhelpful, as it refers more to the outcome of social capital, and also is dependant on the perspective of those analysing the situation (what may be positive for some, may be negative for others, and what may be seen as positive for economists and NGOs in terms of lowering transaction costs, may not in fact be building networks of solidarity, or conversely inclusion within communities). Therefore, what is more useful is to assess relationships in terms of how they may be beneficial and to whom, and how they relate to existing versus potential hierarchies of power (which will be assessed in the above categories).

While Muungano prefers to refer to itself as a ‘social movement’ rather than an organisation, for the purposes of this paper it will be referred to as such because (along with the Neighbourhood Planning Associations) it fulfils Mancur Olson’s definition of an organisation as a large group with the aim of furthering the interests of its people. Therefore not only should the social capital of the organisation

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28 Mckenzie, K and Harpman, T… (2006)  
itself be assessed, but also that of the smaller groups connected to it. The Social Capital of these two types of organisation will be assessed in terms of group social capital, defined by Oh et al\textsuperscript{30} as “the configuration of a group’s members’ social relationships within the social structure of the group itself, as well as in the broader social structure of the organization to which the group belongs, through which necessary resources for the group can be accessed”. There are several dimensions that should be used to assess the social capital within these organisations:

- **Internal SC**: That of the individual members and their relative position within internal hierarchies (i.e. who has power, who is included, excluded within groups, and the level of trust and solidarity within the group). This will be examined in terms of relations between the higher and lower levels of the organisation (internal vertical social capital), as well as trust and cohesion and elements of inclusion and exclusion within both levels (internal bridging and bonding social capital)

- **Horizontal SC**: How the organisations link to and are perceived by the wider community (horizontal social capital)

- **External Vertical SC**: The relationship that the organisation has with influential decision-makers (government and other development partners), both in terms of potential gain as well as dependence and negative impacts.

**CONTEXT: KISUMU, KENYA**

The complex history of urban development, and the apparent increasing weakness of both civil society and the state in many African nations, has called into question whether social capital is strong enough at a local level in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) for the poor to have the capacity to advocate for themselves\textsuperscript{31}. Where in existence many of the social, or grassroots movements are both fragile, and also tied to ethnic interests, making them inward looking in nature, and rarely of the “bridging” kind associated with the development of strong horizontal links across communities. Any interventions that might change the nature of the complex social and economic webs on which the livelihoods of members of these communities rely should try to understand how they might impact on this careful balance as issues of identity in Africa are highly contentious and have formed the basis of much of the civil unrest that has occurred in the history of the continent\textsuperscript{32}.

Watson (2002) paints a fairly pessimistic view of the lack of capacity, and potential risks in collective action within the highly heterogeneous and unstable urban communities in Africa, while others such as d’Cruz and Satterthwaite highlight the increasing number of larger-scale organizations of the poor that are beginning to develop. Perhaps the negative view of African civil society that Watson portrays is not as gloomy as it may appear and there is the potential for organizations of the poor to overcome the structural socio-economic barriers and the lack of capacity that African society presents in the development of civil society.


\textsuperscript{31} Watson, V... (2002)

\textsuperscript{32} ibid.
Kisumu is the third largest city in Kenya, located next to Lake Victoria in the West of the country. A study by the UN in 2005 found that “Despite being endowed with a massive potential in natural resource availability, Kisumu still registers one of the highest poverty levels in Kenya exacerbated by a rapidly growing informal sector against a backdrop of collapsing or retrogressing private sector growth”. The report found that 60% of the population live in informal settlements, with 48% of the city’s population living within the absolute poverty bracket (compared to the national average of 29%). In 2007, Kenya demonstrated the underlying ethnic tensions present within the country through the widespread post-election violence. The violence during this time was most intense within the slum areas of the country, and particularly in Kisumu where the majority of residents are from the Luo tribe of the opposition candidate took out their frustration of the results of the election. Since the post-election violence, much has been done to repair the damage caused though the memory is still fresh amongst the city residents.

However, there has been much external investment in the area to try and improve the conditions, and while the post-election violence portrays a community divided, there is in fact a burgeoning number of community groups within the slum areas of Manyatta and Nyalenda (among others) in Kisumu (as will be discussed in the following section). In addition, since the violence in 2007 a new constitution has been drafted, and efforts have been made to put in place reforms that will see more resources and power being distributed to the local level, which may in turn provide more opportunities for citizen involvement in decision-making.

EXISTING SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE COMMUNITY

It was estimated by representatives of the social services department that there may be around 500 groups registered in the area of Manyatta alone. It is a legal requirement for groups in Kenya to register with the social services department, and though many groups still do not, many do in order to access the funding opportunities available, as well as for security in terms of arbitration of any disputes that may arise. The majority of groups that register with the social services department are self-help groups. These tend to have around 20-30 members and are formed around an area of interest specific to their members. For example many women’s groups are formed to support a merry-go-round system of savings where members take it in turn to pool their finances so that one member can use this lump sum to buy household items etc. Others form around businesses, or as support groups for vulnerable members of the community. The majority perform some kind of savings and loaning scheme amongst their membership. There are three forms of self-help group registered at the social services department: youth groups (70% of members must be youths), women’s groups (70% of members must be women, and all leaders must be women), and more general self-help groups (mixed membership). Specific funding is available to women and youth groups from the government in the form of loans, which can be accessed through the social services department once the group has been registered for one year.

The next step up from self-help groups is community based organisations. These are larger groups (with fifty or more members) that often evolve from smaller self-help groups. While the focus of self-help groups is meant to be (as conveyed by their name) on increasing the well-being of their members, the focus of a CBO is meant to be towards the wider good of the community. Therefore it can be said that while self-help groups are mainly inward-looking in nature, CBOs should be more outward looking. Many CBOs act as umbrella groups, representing a large proportion of the population and with many self-help groups affiliated to them. The major advantage of CBOs is that they can initiate larger projects as they have a larger resource base. Also they are recognised by the government as links to the community and therefore can access specific sources of funding and tender applications, as well as being linked to other external partners who may wish to access the community. Once groups form CBOs and their resource base has grown, they sometimes go on to form microfinance institutions so that they can not only save and lend amongst themselves, but also to external groups and individuals.

The major challenges with all groups were identified as being through poor leadership. Often those taking on leadership roles were the better educated, and more advantaged in the community, who then went on to abuse their position of authority through embezzlement of group resources or funds. This was the major cause of disputes amongst groups, and was a regular occurrence. It was noted that, as often CBOs were formed from smaller self-help groups, the leadership stayed the same, however with no additional training in order to deal with the difficulties of managing a much larger group. As groups grow in size disputes become more common as members form smaller factions within the larger group with differing viewpoints on the way the group should be managed and focused. Therefore it was also a common occurrence for larger groups to divide into smaller groups once they reached a certain size.

One major issue that was identified by both community members and other actors interviewed, was the presence of many community groups and organisations that were in effect ‘ghost’ or ‘briefcase’
organisations. In other words the group registered, and either functioned for a short while and collapsed, or was never in fact a functioning group but still remained in existence on paper in order for the officials to access financing. To try and avoid this, the social services officials said that they tried to monitor the groups in terms of their activity, but their resources to do this were limited.

MUUNGANO AND THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING ASSOCIATIONS

There are four NPAs in Manyatta and Nyalenda sub-locations, one for each ward (Manyatta A and B, and Nyalenda A and B). Three of the four neighbourhood planning associations were established in 2009, while the other was formed from a residents association already in existence.

The NPAs consist of a ward level committee connected to unit level groups or representatives. Alongside this core structure are task forces formed around a number of key development areas (these vary between units and wards, but for example there is often drainage, water, energy, solid waste management etc). There are task force representatives both at unit and ward level who act as advisory committees on these issues in their area, as well as coordinating any related activities associated with these activities. The aim of the NPAs is to understand the needs of the community so that they can represent the people in their area to development partners, as well as to coordinate activities, with the long-term aim of improving living standards.

The Muungano ‘networks’ have been in existence for a number of years (exact date of formation unknown), and are part of a wider network that extends across the whole of Kenya and beyond. There is one ‘local network’ in both Manyatta and Nyalenda (though the Manyatta network extends beyond Manyatta to encompass the areas of Kajula and Kibos). Each network consists of an umbrella body to which self-help groups (see above for description) are joined through membership. On the Pamoja Trust website it states that ‘Muungano primarily organizes communities around issues affecting them and mobilizes through daily savings in savings schemes, conducts community-led enumeration, propagates cross-settlement learning and sharing through periodic exchanges and implements community driven housing and infrastructure projects’. While in other parts of Kenya the main focus has been to secure tenure for slum dwellers this is less of an issue in Kisumu as the majority of land is owned by residents, therefore the focus has been more towards provision of basic services and amenities with the additional aim of empowering members financially through group savings and loaning.

Therefore the aim of Muungano is very similar to that of the NPAs in terms of representing the needs of the community, and trying to improve basic services. However there are several key difference between the organisations. Firstly, the history of Muungano has been more towards lobbying and advocacy, whilst in other areas the aim of the NPAs has been less to act as an autonomous group, and more to become integrated into existing decision-making structures within the local authority (ex-officials have honorary membership on the ward committees, and in another area of Kenya the NPAs have become more integrated into the Local Authority decision-making structure).

While the NPAs were set up (or strengthened) to be a long-term structure in the community with the focus to address development issues in their area, the Muungano groups were set up with a similar long-term focus on achieving development in their area, but with a less rigid network (or social
movement), and with the additional short-term aim of empowering members through group savings (which in turn contribute to the long-term development goals of the network). There are advantages and disadvantages to the structure of both groups, which will be discussed in the following section.

**A COMPARISON OF THE TWO ORGANISATION’S SOCIAL CAPITAL:**

![Diagram of Muungano and NPA structures](image)

[fig 5] an illustration of the Muungano structure versus the NPA structure in an area of Kisumu

**HORIZONTAL SOCIAL CAPITAL**

A key factor that was identified by both organisations in the participation of community members in the networks of both groups was the location of meetings. If the distance to meetings was too far then members were less likely to attend regularly or attend at all. At the higher-level meetings (for the whole organisation) having a fixed meeting place in a key location in the area (e.g. on a key route through the settlements) was seen as an advantage by both organisations as it would increase awareness of them in the community, and also increase trust in the sustainability of the group.

The flexibility of membership in Muungano (any group can join the network dependant on them paying a membership fee and contributing to savings) has meant that many more groups have joined each network, and there is the potential for more to join as awareness spreads and the network expands. However, while the smaller savings groups could form and choose to hold their meetings wherever was most convenient to their members, there was a greater concentration located closer to where the larger network meetings were held, with groups from further distances finding it more difficult to attend (it was under discussion that some groups may break from the larger network to form a smaller network that can meet at a more convenient location to their member groups). As the NPA groups are location based there can only be a set number of groups that link the Neighbourhood Planning Associations to the wider community (one for each unit), thus there is limited scope for the organisation to expand. Therefore, the large area that the Muungano groups cover and flexible membership has meant that there is an uneven distribution of groups connected to it, and the NPA
groups’ fixed location for meetings at the lower unit level means that there is a more even distribution of groups across each area.

Both groups suffered from mistrust by the community in established groups. It was described that there was a general feeling of mistrust of the intentions of the group, and a feeling that the longer a group was in existence the more it was an established entity that they could not become a part of. The feeling of mistrust may also be due to experience of past groups having failed, either through disagreements between group members, or through the mismanaged of group resources by the leadership (a common occurrence) or worse still the cooption of group members for their own means.

The natural evolution of groups (as described by the social services representatives) was that beyond an optimum size (around 20-30 people) a group became harder to manage and sustain and often became divided. With a limited number of smaller groups in each area, the restricted structure of the NPAs does not allow for the natural pattern of growth of groups. It may be difficult for them to grow in size while maintain trust, and thus they are limited in their ability to expand. Conversely the Muungano structure encourages members to join in groups (in other areas of Kenya there is more emphasis on individual membership) to the overarching umbrella structure. This gives more flexibility for groups to form, grow, divide etc and follow the natural course that social capital seems to take in the community, while, as members save individually, still maintaining their link to the Muungano umbrella.

While the networks at community level of the NPAs are location based (one group in each unit), the networks for Muungano are more open and flexible (open to all community groups) and often membership is spread through the networks of existing members (based around interests, friendship, family or work), therefore perhaps more open for groups to form and create their own identity, while still being part of a larger network. Therefore, while the Muungano networks may be better at linking existing social capital and reaching a larger number of people, the area of coverage and the location-based approach of the NPAs ensures that there is a more even distribution of membership across the whole area.

INTERNAL BONDING AND BRIDGING SOCIAL CAPITAL

While some effort by the supporting NGOs had been made in the NPAs to try and ensure participation of marginalised groups in their formation, there seemed to be a much greater participation of women both at the smaller and wider group level within the Muungano network. Greater participation of women within the leadership at the higher level may be due to the greater participation within the smaller groups. As noted previously, both women’s and youth groups are common forms of self-help groups, and there are a number of these that form part of the Muungano network. Therefore, as women and youths play leadership roles within the smaller groups, it seems likely that they would build their confidence in taking on these roles at higher levels (one lady I interviewed on my first visit to the area was a secretary in a women’s group, and when I returned to the area had gone on to take the role of area convenor). However, as the Muungano networks tend to spread through word of mouth from existing members, there may be more potential for those who are already excluded from the social networks of existing members to continue to be excluded (there seemed to be a strong network formed through the connections of pastors in the community in one of the Muungano networks). Therefore both groups are at risk of becoming exclusionary, Muungano through its use of existing networks, and the NPAs through their inflexibility.
Self-help groups (as discussed in the previous section) are mostly formed to focus on the needs of their members, rather than on the needs of the wider community and therefore tend to be more inward looking in nature. However, the size of self-help groups as well as their formation around a particular area of interest is conducive to building stronger bonding social capital between members, as well as presenting opportunities for otherwise marginalised groups to come together to support each other (e.g. youth or women’s groups). The stronger the bonding social capital (or trust) between group members, the more confidence they have to act and take decisions together, as well as more openness in sharing information that they have learnt from elsewhere. Therefore while these groups may be inward-looking and homogenous within themselves, when they are connected to a wider network of both homogenous and heterogeneous groups there is a greater potential for them to change hierarchies and social norms that may be have a negative affect on their members.

While the focus of the NPA unit groups may be more outward looking (due to their formation as representatives of the community), this may be at the cost of cohesion within the group itself. Those groups that were perceived as most successful were those that were active in savings and loaning activities, rather than whether or not they were more or less active in community development activities. This was also true of the task forces that had been formed around areas for development. Those that were most active were those that were formed around a sustained activity (e.g. waste management groups). This emphasises that groups are more likely to be successful (or sustainable) at the local level where they are formed around a shared interest amongst members, and in particular where this interest is related to income generating activities, or alternatively as a support group for specific members of the community (e.g. youth or women).

THE EFFECT OF POVERTY ON BONDING AND BRIDGING SOCIAL CAPITAL
As noted above, the NPA unit groups that had successfully established systems of savings and loaning within their groups had reported an increase in participation, and were seen as more successful. However, they also reported members attending only to benefit from the savings and loaning, and not wanting to engage in other group activities. All Muungano groups practice savings and loaning, and they therefore seem less dependant on NGOs in order to sustain them. However, when discussing with social services, the greatest cause for conflict amongst groups was the embezzlement of funds by the leaders of groups, and indeed there were several cases of divisions being caused by the leadership misusing funds or resources from Muungano groups at all levels of the organization.
In addition, as both groups required some kind of contribution to become a member, this had the effect of excluding the poorest members of the community (see Cleaver and Hickey among others for further discussion on this type of exclusion).

Introducing financial contributions may increase bridging social capital through attracting membership of community members who may otherwise be attracted to join, and bonding social capital, through sharing resources amongst members of the group. However, at the same time it may reduce bridging social capital, by excluding those who cannot afford to participate, and bonding social capital, by increasing the potential for free-riders, and increase conflict through mismanagement of group resources. Therefore, the use of savings and loaning in groups may make the groups more sustainable and independent in the short term, but may risk their long-term sustainability.

VERTICAL SOCIAL CAPITAL (INTERNAL)
Both the NPAs and Muungano operated by networking smaller groups based across large areas (wards, locations, or more) to umbrella groups. It was intended by both organisations that the smaller groups would be represented at the umbrella level but both suffered from poor participation and decreased trust at the higher level. As discussed above, this can partly be attributed to the distance that the members had to travel to attend ward level meetings. In addition it was expressed by both organisations that this was also connected to the level of trust between members at the smaller group level, and thus the level of cohesion. As well as feeling more able to express themselves at the smaller group level, it was also easier to resolve conflicts and address issues as they were ‘neighbours’ in the same community. Therefore, instead of attending themselves, many group members relied on the leadership to attend the wider network meetings.

While members from both organisations recognised the value of being connected to the larger network in terms of the umbrella group’s role in accessing resources, there seemed to be more active involvement in general at the umbrella group meetings by a larger proportion of the Muungano group members, as well as a greater feeling of ownership in the wider group. This may be due to the investment that members have made, both in terms of their own finances, and in the shared resources that the groups had. However, both NPA and Muungano groups demonstrated that conflict and divisions at the higher level were harder to resolve, and could potentially be very damaging both in the levels of trust among group members, but also between the wider community and the organisations themselves.

VERTICAL SOCIAL CAPITAL (EXTERNAL LINKS TO GOVERNMENT)
Muungano was established as a social movement, therefore there is no need seen by the umbrella networks to register, as they are not officially (or do not want to be seen to be) a structure in the community. This reflects their wish to be more flexible. However, while this may have been more desirable in terms of trust of community members in the network, and particularly in its original role in lobbying and advocacy, the focus of the networks in more tangible development issues means that becoming some kind of legal entity is required. The majority of the self-help groups connected to the umbrella are registered, and some of the networks have been forced to register in order to have the legal status to be able build projects in their area, but there seems an overall reluctance to do so. As discussed in the previous section, there are a number of advantages to registration. Firstly, as noted, a group needs to be a legal entity in order to access finances, to be recognised by the government, and thus to construct projects. Secondly those groups registered with the social services department (CBOs

and self-help groups) benefit from receiving external advice, training and arbitration (should any disputes occur) from the council. They will also be recognised by the council and have access to information and resources that are available via the council (such as loans to women’s groups etc.).

There are several other forms of registration that several of the NPA organisations are seeking either together as a whole, or a section of their membership, such as forming a cooperative to access housing finance, or forming an association. These higher forms of organisation benefit from a legal status that allows them to access larger funding schemes, however at the same time they may lose out by not having a direct link to the local authority (they are registered at the national rather than local level).

In recent years a number of mechanisms have been introduced to channel more funds to local communities. However, the funds (which include the Local Authority Transfer Fund, the Constituency Development Fund, the Road Maintenance Fund, the Education Bursary Fund, and the HIV/AIDS Fund among others) are managed at the national level, with only the LATF (which accounts for only 13% of the budget for devolved funds) actually being channelled through by the local authority and therefore there has been minimal accountability to citizens.

In addition, as discussed above there are a number of devolved funds that are available to groups through their registration status.

There have been opportunities to influence the allocation of the LATF through the Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan, which is supposed to be devised in consultation with community members. LASDAP meetings were observed in several of the wards where the research was being carried out in order to understand how accessible the local authority’s approach to dealing with community members is, and how they are engaging in the process. Firstly it was observed that there was a general feeling of aggression and resentment in the meetings attended. Due to past uncompleted projects, and a lack of feedback and transparency on the allocation of funds, community members felt a lack of trust in the process. In general there was a lack of engagement of members of the NPAs (Muungano was not being observed at this time), and a general feeling of confrontation. Members confirmed that they do not attend because of a lack of trust, the way the local authority communicates with them, and a general feeling that those involved will have little impact over the proceedings. A local authority official confirmed that it is common for devolved funds to be mismanaged within the local authority. A local NGO official observed that because of the budgeting cycle of the government, funds are not allocated to the local authority until over six months after the LASDAP process, so that for much of that time there is nothing they are able to report to community members, and by the time funds are received they may be unable to complete the projects identified in the time available.

All groups mentioned how they see the chief and the chief’s baraza as links to information about potential partner organisations and what is happening in the community. While chief’s barazas are not a regular occurrence as in rural areas, they are still seen as an opportunity to share the groups' activities as well as to find out what is going on in the local area. The councillor was also seen as an important contact in the community. International partners, as well as government funding opportunities often come through the local authority / administration in order to access the community, and would then be directed by the chief and/or area councillor towards the groups either through announcement in the baraza or directly through their connections.
The NPAs in particular benefit in having ex-officials as part of their ward committees. While the officials tend not to attend meetings regularly, their link to the NPAs means that they have may have a greater recognition and stronger link to key local stakeholders within local government. However, at the same time their direct link may cause distrust from some members of the community, and even members of the NPAs complained that they were not always informed of all opportunities and their were still instances of corruption.

**VERTICAL SOCIAL CAPITAL (LINKS TO NGOS)**

As noted above, with limited opportunities for involvement in government allocation of resources, with a general distrust in local authority proceedings, and with a lack of resources internally, while both NPAs and Muungano networks expressed their independence from development partners, both demonstrated a dependence on the NGOs that support them.

The NPAs, having been formed and shaped by NGOs tended to be very much dependent on their continued involvement. Much of the focus, aims and structure of the NPAs seemed to be geared towards the aims (and funding areas) of their NGO partners. This was also reflected in the attitudes of community members. It was common in both groups for members to talk about ways to attract more donor funding. Alongside the unit groups task forces had been set up around areas for development (e.g. drainage, waste management, water, energy etc), however, as noted above, the long-term focus of these meant that most had become inactive. Committees were maintained so that if there was some funding for an activity or related project then members could be mobilised, but with little change on a weekly basis many had stopped meeting regularly, or reported irregular attendance from community members. Those that had been set up by NGOs, without necessarily meeting a perceived community need had suffered the most from inactivity. Committees were maintained so that if there was some funding for an activity or related project then members could be mobilised, but with little change on a weekly basis many had stopped meeting regularly, or reported irregular attendance from community members. Those that had been set up by NGOs, without necessarily meeting a perceived community need had suffered the most from inactivity. Committees were maintained so that if there was some funding for an activity or related project then members could be mobilised, but with little change on a weekly basis many had stopped meeting regularly, or reported irregular attendance from community members. Those that had been set up by NGOs, without necessarily meeting a perceived community need had suffered the most from inactivity. Committees were maintained so that if there was some funding for an activity or related project then members could be mobilised, but with little change on a weekly basis many had stopped meeting regularly, or reported irregular attendance from community members. Those that had been set up by NGOs, without necessarily meeting a perceived community need had suffered the most from inactivity. Committees were maintained so that if there was some funding for an activity or related project then members could be mobilised, but with little change on a weekly basis many had stopped meeting regularly, or reported irregular attendance from community members. Those that had been set up by NGOs, without necessarily meeting a perceived community need had suffered the most from inactivity. Committees were maintained so that if there was some funding for an activity or related project then members could be mobilised, but with little change on a weekly basis many had stopped meeting regularly, or reported irregular attendance from community members. Those that had been set up by NGOs, without necessarily meeting a perceived community need had suffered the most from inactivity. Committees were maintained so that if there was some funding for an activity or related project then members could be mobilised, but with little change on a weekly basis many had stopped meeting regularly, or reported irregular attendance from community members. Those that had been set up by NGOs, without necessarily meeting a perceived community need had suffered the most from inactivity. Committees were maintained so that if there was some funding for an activity or related project then members could be mobilised, but with little change on a weekly basis many had stopped meeting regularly, or reported irregular attendance from community members. Those that had been set up by NGOs, without necessarily meeting a perceived community need had suffered the most from inactivity. Committees were maintained so that if there was some funding for an activity or related project then members could be mobilised, but with little change on a weekly basis many had stopped meeting regularly, or reported irregular attendance from community members. Those that had been set up by NGOs, without necessarily meeting a perceived community need had suffered the most from inactivity. Committees were maintained so that if there was some funding for an activity or related project then members could be mobilised, but with little change on a weekly basis many had stopped meeting regularly, or reported irregular attendance from community members.

In addition (as discussed above), the rigid structure of the NPAs set up by the NGOs had meant that they are less flexible and thus less able to expand to reach more people, and evolve around the day to day needs of their members.

The Muungano groups seemed to have more independence within themselves in terms of economic empowerment activities (which meant they were less focused in the short term on NGO support to sustain them) but the network for the entire country had suffered from a division in their main supporting NGO. While the NPAs seem to be better connected to local officials who link them to potential development partners, Muungano is structured so that a supporting NGO manages the finances, and links them to other development partners. So when internal politics forced a division in their main supporting NGO, this forced a split between all Muungano groups as they decide which NGO will represent them in the future. The groups interviewed as part of this research had chosen to stay with the original NGO that had already helped them gain access to a number of resources, however, there were now major disputes over the division of access to and use of shared resources between the two factions, as well as concerns over access to their finances, and how these would be managed in the future.

In addition, both groups noted that there was not enough communication from NGOs in terms of their activities in the area, as well as updating them as the projects that they were working with them with progressed. The NPAs also said that, though they had been formed to assist NGOs in performing implementing projects within the community, they received little assistance in terms of their own
management costs, and little feedback on progress of projects. Several members from the NPA expressed frustration that they were not kept informed of delays, or progress in projects, which damaged trust both between themselves and the NGOs they were working with, and internally in the organisation as they were not able to keep promises that were made.

Therefore, while NGOs were seen as the most valuable links by both organisations in terms of access to resources (either directly or through their position to build partnerships with other organisations), there was also frustration over their lack of accountability to the groups, and their lack of recognition of the role that the groups were playing in assisting them in implementing their development activities.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

As can be seen from the findings of this study, organising at a large scale is not an easy task. In Kisumu it is common within the existing social capital of the area, that when a group grows beyond a certain size, it becomes much harder to manage and to maintain the incentives and trust of members to sustain it. As Olson discussed in his book “the logic of collective action”37, there is a difference between large groups and small groups in structure as well as levels of trust and cohesion within them. It can be said that both types of organisation have the potential to have both positive and negative affects on social capital in the areas where they are located, and lessons can be learnt from both.

First, before trying to ‘build’ new social capital in an area, a more effective approach would be to identify what form of organisation already exists in an area, and then find the best approach to link these groups together. As Olson discusses, small groups have the advantage that a larger proportion of their members actively don’t want them to fail, in the case of the organisations interviewed for this study, there was a higher level of trust in small groups, which was harder to maintain in the larger groups. Therefore it can be concluded that small groups are important for building the bonding social capital needed to maintain levels of trust within an organisation. Rather than trying to build a large organisation with many members, a more effective strategy may be to try and build a network that links many small organisations together.

Which brings the second point. In order to be representative, an organisation should aim to have a relatively evenly distributed number of groups across an area. While this study did not go into great detail over the optimum area for a network, it can be seen from the structure of the two types of organisation, that when a network is allowed to spread organically, then it will tend to cluster towards where the organisation meets. Therefore in order to maintain an even spread, there needs to be a meeting point that is local enough for smaller groups to access.

Another point can be noted from Olson’s work, in that he states that in order for a large organisation to succeed there needs to be either “compulsory membership”, or some kind of “non-collective goods”38 to give potential members an incentive to join. This could be redefined in the case of the OUPs studied to say that in order to be successful, and to attract more members, an organisation needs to have both short-term and long-term advantages for members to join. Where there are only long-term goals (as

37 Olson, Mancur…. (1973)
38 ibid (1973:16)
seen with the NPAs) it is hard to sustain groups that are focused only towards achieving these long-term goals, whereas where the groups were focused towards some kind of income generating activity then they were more successful. Therefore, it could be argued that the success of the Muungano network in attracting members can be seen in that groups are allowed to form around their own particular short-term interests (e.g. buying household items, providing support etc), but linked together in their shared long-term interest of developing their community.

However, it seems that neither group is truly sustainable or autonomous without external support. It is evident from both the way groups form and divide within the wider community, as well as the difficulties described by members of groups conducting savings and loaning, and the divisions created within Muungano, that in sharing resources members increase the risk of destroying social capital in the long term through mismanagement; and that this risk appears to increase the larger the group becomes.

Therefore it may be possible for groups to pool their resources together in a large group, but without some form of external arbitration or management of these resources then the risk is much higher that the group will fail in the long-term. However, where groups have been formed and structured towards meeting the needs of development partners, rather than the short-term needs of the people themselves, then they are more likely to have a greater dependency on the organisations that support them to sustain them.

It is also important for organisations to connect to decision-making structures within local government in order to be aware of potential opportunities that might be made available through these networks (either through direct funding or links for partnerships). However, the degree to which the organisation is seen to be ‘formal’ may affect the way the organisation is perceived by community members.

Therefore I would conclude that (as has been suggested in the past) in attempting to ‘build’ social capital, care must be taken in first understanding the existing form that social capital takes in the area in terms of how people may be organising themselves (the types of groups or organisations and their focus) to meet the short-term needs of the community; how social capital already evolves, grows and is destroyed and how that affects existing power dynamics within the area. I would then suggest that it must be accepted that any form of large scale organisation will need some kind of support in order to maintain it, but that support should ideally be seen in terms of partnership to build independency, not strengthen dependency. For this to happen, partner organisations need to recognise that OUPs are being used as a resource, and should therefore be supported and kept informed and be accounted to as much as they would to their donors.