

**INSTITUTIONALISED ACTIVISM AND POLITICISED NGOs: THE STATE'S
ENGAGEMENT WITH NGOs IN SUDAN**

by

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B.A., McGill University, 2015

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES
(Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

October 2018

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Institutionalised Activism and Politicised NGOs: The State's Engagement with NGOs in Sudan

submitted by Khaldah Salih in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

in Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice

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Abstract

This research explores the relationship between NGOs, activism, the state, and international agencies in Sudan. There is growing importance pursuing activism within institutional structures, and the constraints that funding and donor interests can have on the potential of that activism. The Sudanese state's policies towards NGOs have been hostile, leading to activists and NGO staff being arrested and NGOs being shut down. The Voluntary and Humanitarian Work Act of 2006 regulates the NGO sector in Sudan and enforces the Humanitarian Aid Commission. These legal mechanisms act as apparatuses of surveillance against activists and NGOs. Literature on Sudanese feminism and NGOs defines categories based on proximity to the state and political or religious ideology (Badri, 2008; Nageeb, 2008). Interviews were conducted with 10 experts in the sector and six staff members from SIHA Network, an NGO in Sudan which pursues advocacy for women's rights, to explore how people in the field experience the relationship with the state, issues of surveillance, and concerns on international funding. This research is based on a theoretical framework informed by feminist critiques of development (Spivak, 1999) and NGOs (Jad, 2004; Rodriguez, 2017; Smith, 2017), and Foucauldian approaches to surveillance and state power (1995), and governmentality (1991). I argue that the Sudanese state's practice of surveillance on NGOs which practice activism has long influenced their development and their current concerns, and leads activists and NGO staff to practice self-surveillance on their work. Activists and NGO staff were more concerned with the state's policies and other activists' and NGO staff's relationship to the state than they were with international funding. I argue that the relationship between activists and NGOs, and the state is what defines their categories and relationships to each other.

Lay Summary

This research explores the relationship between NGOs, activism, the state, and international agencies in Sudan. There is growing importance pursuing activism within institutional structures, and the constraints that funding and donor interests can have on the potential of that activism. The Sudanese state's policies towards NGOs have been hostile, leading to activists and NGO staff being arrested and NGOs being shut down. Interviews were conducted with 10 experts in the sector and six staff members from SIHA Network, an NGO in Sudan which pursues advocacy for women's rights, to explore how people in the field experience the relationship with the state, issues of surveillance, and concerns on international funding. I argue that the Sudanese state's practice of surveillance on NGOs which practice activism has long influenced their development and their current concerns, and leads activists and NGO staff to practice self-surveillance on their work. I argue that the relationship between activists and NGOs, and the state is what defines their categories and relationships to each other, more so than their concerns with international funding.

Preface

In order to conduct the fieldwork, approval for the study was obtained from the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) on June 20, 2017 (UBC BRED number: H17-01036).

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List of Abbreviations

NISS	National Intelligence and Security Service
NPIC	non-profit industrial complex
SCP	Sudanese Communist Party

Glossary

<i>al-salih al-'aam</i>	the public good
<i>elmunazamat elisslamia</i>	Islamist organisations
<i>Inqaz</i> regime	salvation; refers to the National Congress Party coming to power in 1989
<i>Itihad el-Nisai</i>	Sudanese Women's Union
<i>munazama</i>	organisation
<i>munazamat elgender</i>	gender organisations

Acknowledgements

I thank the faculty, students, and staff at The Social Justice Institute for making it a wonderful place to work and learn. I thank my supervisors, Dr. Gillian Creese and Dr. Mark Harris have offered me tremendous support and feedback throughout this process. I also thank Dr. Dina Al-Kassim, Dr. Leonora Angeles, Dr. Denise Ferreira da Silva, and Dr. Leila Harris for their wonderful courses which have allowed me to think through this project.

I am especially thankful to the participants of this study who offered me their time and their thoughts, and were extremely engaging and welcoming. They provided me with their unique perspectives, were completely honest, and I found speaking to them enriching for me as an scholar, as an activist, and as a concerned citizen. This thesis is completely based on their knowledge.

I am very grateful for the wonderful friends I made during my time as a graduate student, who have inspired me and pushed me in so many ways. And I offer my enduring gratitude to my family who have supported me through everything I have done.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

With growing political repression, the need for dissenting voices and organised activism grows, yet the space for it becomes increasingly limited. I am exploring how activism and the space it holds function and move in Sudan, an increasingly politically repressive state. I approach this research with a personal interest and investment. I am Sudanese, I believe in the potential and need for activism, but am concerned about its limitations. I have worked in and observed the NGO sector, its inner workings and its distinct relationship to the state, and have questioned its potential when confined by international funding and Western interests.

I am mapping the relationship between NGOs, activists, the state, and international agencies. In particular, how the concerns and priorities of those in the field are articulated. Viewing NGOs to be part of a larger structure of international development, Human Rights and institutionalised activism, I explore how understandings of the ideology of development (Spivak, 1999) have played a role in the functioning of NGOs and the potential of institutionalised activism. I recognise the possible need for activism to be institutionalised, for the financial security or formal protection it can bring. However, I question what impact state surveillance has had on activists, and what level of self-surveillance has to be practiced in order to maintain the work (Foucault, 1995).

As the reality for activists and NGOs has been one of political repression and constraints for many years in Sudan under the current regime, and as members of political opposition continue to be targeted, the way that political activism is able to exist and the ways that organised movements are able to work have changed. At this moment, we are also witnessing a global trend of NGOs becoming a viable option for advocacy work, through growing means of

funding from international organisations and agencies as the development and humanitarian sector grows, and as states in the West are able to pursue their foreign policy and economic aims in the Global South through these means. NGOs are becoming a space for a sort of activism, and are increasingly becoming a space where work can be done while also providing a means of employment and there is increasing monetary and material support (Hodzic, 2014, pp. 225). However, what does that do to governments, particularly repressive ones, whose political interests are threatened by growing representation of dissenting voices which are being funded, equipped and secured within the offices of NGOs? So then how do repressive governments maintain their surveillance, keeping in mind that regulation for this sector must remain?

In Sudan, the Voluntary and Humanitarian Work Act of 2006 regulates the NGO sector, enforced by the Humanitarian Aid Commission. There are increasingly incidents of organisations not being able to register, their offices being closed, and projects being cut short (KACE and HoACS, 2017, pp. 55). The general discourse suggests that that the state views NGOs as a political threat, and so engages in these activities to counter their work. This essay examines how the state's engagement with NGOs in Sudan, through the Voluntary and Humanitarian Work Act of 2006 and the Humanitarian Aid Commission, impact the activities of NGOs and further impact the state of political activism at large. This is part of a larger issue relating to the role the state can have in the politicization of NGOs through engaging with them as political actors, and the NGOization of political opposition. I explore how the state claims to institute such a law in order to regulate humanitarian and voluntary work. It in fact uses it to practice surveillance on NGOs in which activists who are a threat to the state have found a place to do work. Further, there is a strong link between development, Human Rights advocacy, and activism which threaten the state's grip on power.

Since 1989, Sudan has had an Islamist and dictatorial government under the National Congress Party (NCP) headed by President Omar al-Bashir. The regime has instigated ongoing conflicts in Darfur and the Nuba Mountains, and overseen the secession of South Sudan in 2011 after a decades-long civil war. There is extreme poverty, at a rate of 45.6% of the population (UNDP Sudan), resulting from corruption, resource mismanagement, and foreign debt that as of July 2016 is at \$50 billion, 61% of the GDP (International Monetary Fund, 2016). Political engagement from opposition parties and movements has long been suppressed by the government. It has employed a variety of repressive tactics, including arrests of political opposition members, exile of activists, defining certain political parties as illegal, silencing of the press, meeting protests with violence, and shutting down activists' functions and offices.

Activists and political opposition members are simultaneously fighting against the humanitarian crises caused by conflict and extreme poverty, and struggling against political repression, which are interlinked. As a result, many political activists have found that they can articulate their concerns best through the creation of non-government organisations (NGOs), and conversely many NGOs have become politicized. Among other things, the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) is mandated to register, deregister, restrict funds from, and potentially shut down NGOs. Statistics on the number of NGOs that are registered, actively operating, or shut down, are difficult to obtain for public use as a result of this.

The Sudanese government is known to be hostile to international humanitarian workers, and famously expelled 10 international organisations from Sudan in 2009 following the President's International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment, as a response to the international community's involvement in the country's internal affairs (Rice and Branigan, 2010). In a similar move, in 2015, the head of United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian

Affairs (OCHA) was expelled under allegations that he is a spy (Radio Dabanga, 2016). I argue that the Darfur conflict itself, the responses to it and consequences of these responses have largely framed the relations between the state and NGOs (both national and international) in the years following. The consistent need for surveillance on members of the international community, or those seen as cooperating with them, is a direct response to the threat to sovereignty that they argue is being practiced.

1.2 Review of the literature

1.2.1 Understanding Sudanese feminism, activism, and NGOs

The history of Sudanese feminism, and in particular, its formalization and institutionalization as it relates to NGOs, political parties and the state, is significant in exploring the nature of those dynamics now. Feminist scholars, as well as many participants in this study, recognise how the foundations of feminist activism and NGOs in Sudan had led to certain dynamics today. The historical context from which these dynamics emerged also provides an understanding of the different types of NGOs and feminists activists, what makes them distinct from one another and how they view each other. Understanding how feminism and activism have worked alongside political parties is especially important in the context of authoritarianism. Opposition political parties and other groups, communities and organisations associated with them can be under surveillance by the regime, and viewed as a threat. The way that these dynamics are formalized within these structures, or alongside them, is further *complicated* when considering how NGOs, as formal institutions can also be under surveillance by the regime. There is something to say about how the state interacts with formal institutions,

whether political parties or NGOs, and how the process by which activism formalizes itself in these ways operates alongside the apparatuses of surveillance.

Sondra Hale's 1997 book *Gender Politics in Sudan: Islamism, Socialism and the State* explores the gender dynamics of leftist – namely, the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) – and Islamist politics in Sudan, based on her ethnographical fieldwork conducted between 1961 and 1988. She recounts the history of *Itihad el-Nisai*, the Sudanese Women's Union, one of the main foundational organisations of feminism in Sudan and with links to the main leftist political party, the SCP. Hale outlines a history of the Women's Union as follow:

In 1952, in response to the SCP's call for broader recruitment, including among women, a handful of women, most of them communists and some had helped form the League, founded *Itihad el-Nisai* (the Women's Union [WU]), which was, again, a group of educated women, mainly teachers, government officials, students, nurses, and the like. And again, literacy was a condition of membership. However, once it became clear that such a requisite for membership would greatly inhibit mass recruitment, the condition was dropped.

The WU, which began with five hundred middle-class women, expanded into a large mass organization with branches throughout the country. It campaigned for equal pay for equal work, longer maternity leave, and tried to resolve other problems faced by urban workers. By 1955, the WU was publishing *Sawt el-Mara* (The Women's Voice), one of the most progressive publications in Sudan's history. It was a relatively free forum for debating such issues as female circumcision and ethnic facial scarification. Fatma Ahmed Ibrahim, one of the founders of the journal, estimated the circulation by the late 1950s at 17,000, a healthy figure for any publication anywhere. (pp. 167)

Hale argues that in spite of this seemingly close link between feminism and leftist politics, “the patriarchal ideology and structure of the Marxist-Leninist SCP and the gender strategies it has followed have greatly diminished its effectiveness as an agency of any genuine socialist transformation that takes women seriously” (1997, pp. 157). Further, she argues that “the involvement of women in public political activities was an integral part of the SCP

program” (1997 pp. 171) pointing to the benefit a women’s organisation provided to the party but with little done on the party’s part for women.

There are several types of NGOs, which scholars and several participants in this study note. They are often distinguished by their political ideological leanings, their relationship to the state, and their relationship to international donors. This is useful in analyzing how state engagement and international donors have impacted feminism and activism in Sudan. The volume *Sudanese Women Profile and Pathways to Empowerment*, published in 2008 by Ahfad University for Women and edited by Sudanese feminist scholar Balghis Badri, is a collection focused on the statistical and demographic indicators of the profile of Sudanese women as of the time it was published. Badri’s historical survey of feminism and the categorization of the types of feminists is helpful to contextualize the political and social reality within which Sudanese activist NGOs function, their relationship to the state and to larger dynamics of international feminism.

Badri (2008) distinguishes four types of feminists in Sudan. Firstly, academic feminists, whose work focuses on developing new theoretical frameworks and concepts to analyse historical and current phenomena of gender relations. She argues that their goal should be to influence feminism outside of academia through producing knowledge that is interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary, and from “a woman’s view and perspective” (2008, pp. 43). Secondly, she defines feminists in civil society, which she emphasises is not a coherent group, who “represent the dynamism of a civil society”. She argues that they are “influenced by [the] political context” and defined by “solidarity, networking and complementarity” (2008, pp. 44). A third category are feminists in “formal decision-making institutions of the government, United Nations and international agencies” (2008, pp. 45). Lastly, she distinguishes the group of feminists who

engage with these issues at the personal level, who critically assess women's positions and power relations within families and address them radically (Badri, 2008).

Badri (2008) argues that civil society and NGOs, unions and other groups are categorised as pro-government Islamist or direct opposition to government. Badri (2008) recounts the polarization among Sudanese feminists in the distinction between Islamist and Secularist feminists. The Islamist groups, she argues, are made up of three categories: pro-government Islamists, conservative Islamists and Islamic feminists. The pro-government and conservative Islamists embrace the mainstream interpretations of the gender inequalities found in Islamic texts, while the Islamic feminists look toward possible reinterpretation of Islam. These NGOs are often referred to as GNGOs, which stands for Governmental-NGOs, a term also used by several participants in this study. The secularist feminists, she argues, highly regard the UN and international conventions for the protection of women's rights. Secular feminists "consider those conventions and recommendations are based on a universal heritage from all civilizations and contributions of feminists worldwide, and do not conceive of them as "western" or "alien" or consider them irrelevant to their debates" (2008, pp. 65). Badri contends that the Northern-based Secularist Feminists¹ who "engage on topics of women's rights, legal reforms, violence against women, Female Genital Mutilation, girls' education, peace-building strategies, and awareness raising at grass root levels, [and] are also active in advocacy and lobbying or networking with the international community" (2008, pp. 66).

¹ This book was published before the secession of Southern Sudan; Badri also details Southern-based Secularist Feminists, but for the purpose of this work it is not relevant as it is focused on the Republic of Sudan.

After the 1989 coup, the Sudanese government was mainly allowing NGOs which it created or supported to register, something also recounted by several participants in this study. Following the signing of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEDPA) Agreement of 2000, the Sudanese government began to regularly register a wider range of NGOs, including ones who opposed government policies. The signing of this agreement also led to the Organisation of Humanitarian and Voluntary Work Act 2006, under which Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) was formed (Badri, 2008, p. 28).

Salma A. Nageeb, a Sudanese scholar, writes in her chapter “Women’s Organisation and their Agendas in Sudan: Interfaces in Different Arenas”, in *Negotiating development in Muslim Societies: Gendered Spaces and Translocal Connections* (2008) on the differing perspectives and agendas of Sudanese women’s organisations. Nageeb’s work provides an interesting insight into Sudanese NGOs, specifically those under the banner of feminist and activist. It places them within the context of government repression and explores the impact of HAC policies on it, situating the significance of these dynamics for the work of NGOs in the country. She speaks about the contention around the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) which was created from the Organisation of Humanitarian and Voluntary Work Act 2006, the differences in local versus international women’s rights agendas, and between *munazamat elgender* (gender organisations) and *elmunazamat elisslamia* (Islamist organisations). Like Badri, she addresses the way that this categorisation is informed by the relationship to the state and to international agencies. In reference to their different approaches and frameworks, Nageeb addresses the relation of these different types of women’s organisations to the government and HAC and the obstacles when working in different places and under different political contexts and the impact that has on the kind of projects that can be done, who is able to work there and what that means for the framing

of these humanitarian, development and Human Rights issues. There is a distinct relationship between the government and *munazamat elgender* (gender NGOs), which Badri would define as the Secularist feminists of what she defines as the civil society feminists and the feminists who engage in formal institutions, like the UN. Here, she explores the impact of the relationship between certain NGOs and the government:

The adoption of the Organisation of Humanitarian and Voluntary Work Act 2006... grants an excessive regulatory power to the government over NGOs. The work of non-Islamist women's NGOs in Darfur, for example, is limited by undue restriction that hinders women from direct interaction with the different social groups here. Thus, a burning issue like the conflict in Darfur and its gendered consequences are basically discussed by gender organisations at the advocacy level. The number of women's NGOs which have accessibility to the refugee camps and the affected areas of the region in conflict are extremely limited. NGOs need government permission before they can operate, particularly in Darfur. Even if this permission is granted, the work of NGOs is treated with a security mentality... Two consequences can be highlighted in relation to this conflictual interface with the government: First, the gender NGOs constitute spaces for their activities more at the level of political advocacy than at the societal and everyday level. Second, the relation between the government and gender NGOs is leading to the latter being even more politically dependent on, or at least related to, international development agencies and NGOs to be able to approach the social field, specifically in the case of Darfur. (Nageeb, 2008, pp. 111)

In another article, "Negotiating Peace and Rights in Sudan: Networking for the Agenda of 'Violence Against Women'", Nageeb (2008) discusses the place of women in peacekeeping and conflict resolution and the ways that international funding has directed the approach taken by women activists in NGOs. She situates the experiences of women activists at the centre of the discussion to understand how different factors, such as career and political opposition, led them to do this work. Hale, writing in the 1980s, critiques the neocolonialist international agencies whose work has led to greater income inequality, though disguised as working towards women's empowerment (1997, pp. 120-122). This critique coincides with the time when the neoliberal

project through international development was taking off, and when the Sudanese state's grasp on the women's movement was changing as the 1989 coup led to repression of activism and NGOs (as recounted by Badri).

In thinking about the impact of funding agencies on women's organizing, Hale critiqued the approach to "women in development" which was becoming popular during this era of rising international development alongside neoliberalism, and thus neocolonialism. In particular, she critiques the approach to encouraging private sector, entrepreneurship, and the role of women in it. International agencies were funding projects that get women in to the wage-earning workforce and income-generating projects which rely on teaching them appropriate technologies. Hale critiques how "the Sudanese state called upon international development agencies to contain the production of the so-called 'informal sector' (to transform, for example, handicraft production into 'industries'). The entrepreneurial dynamism of the informal sector began to be seen as a frontier for development" (Hale, 1997, pp. 119). This is part of a larger critique of development as an ideology and discourse, the structures of NGOs, and the mechanisms by which international development has solidified its hold on the third world through capitalism and neocolonialism.

1.2.2 Critiquing development as an ideology

This project brings together critiques of NGOs, development and neoliberalism as they relate to feminism and activism to explore these dynamics in Sudan. Gayatri Spivak's *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999) provides a complex exploration of neoliberalism, globalization, imperialism, (capital D) Development, the financialization of feminism, and the postcolonial critique toward them. Spivak defines development through "the narrative of development" and

“the ideology of development,” emphasising the role it plays as a cultural narrative and political/economic ideology, and the ways that it reproduces itself through institutions. The capital D in Development acts to name and identify it as a narrative and ideology. This critique is also linked to the critique of the financialization of feminism which emphasises the ways that global financial and development institutions have employed feminism for capitalist gains, placing Third World women as in need of development while development benefits capitalism and Western interests the most. On the ways that feminism can engage with the problems faced in the Third World by women and marginalized groups in particular, the ways that UN-style feminism essentializes women’s interests and needs, and the criticism toward academic work for being theoretical and not something that can lead to change, Spivak says:

(Today UN-style universalist feminism simulates a women’s collectivity, unwittingly, one hopes, to use the needs of the needy in the interests of the greedy, so to speak. The gendered “postcolonial” plays rather an important rôle here.) I prefer to call this relationship complicitous (folded together) rather than symbiotic (living on/off one another). Folded together, we live on/off whatever lies on the other side, in the minute particulars of our living as in the broadest structures of policy. My own text could not have been written or read without that folding together. It is an absurd denial of history simply to ask for its prohibition. A caution, a vigilance, a persistent taking of distance always out of step with total involvement, a desire for permanent parabasis, is all that responsible academic criticism can aspire to. Any bigger claim with the academic enclosure is a trick (1999, pp. 361-362).

I read this as a description of the limits of academic criticism and a recognition of how this project intertwines itself with the topic at hand (how the state and international donors influence the work of NGOs), how this piece of academic work does not meet the demands of the participants in the study nor the demands of the critique that it lays out itself. The permanent parabasis is not something that can influence fundamental change, it is something that critiques what is seen, recognises it and knows its limits. I approach this project keeping in mind that the

relationship between this work and the topic itself is also folded together. It is not with an intention to resolve the problems brought up by participants or deploy a strategy to fundamentally change the state's policies, and in no way, intends to play that role. Rather, it is a critique, a commentary, and one that does not place itself along the work of the activists and NGO staff symbiotically. The "folding together" is part of my theoretical framework that I incorporate into the methodology and to the writing practice, as I grapple with the recognition of the limits of critique in a context of very real and practical questions and concerns (on the part of activists and NGO staff).

Throughout her book, Spivak (1999) reads and critiques the foreclosure of the native, of women, and of now marginalized groups and individuals, in the Western philosophical tradition; all but the white man who is the universal subject. In the above quote, she is pointing to the ways that UN-style feminism is universalist and thus reproduces the universal subject. Further, this style of feminism is only a simulation of women's collectivity, of building foundations and movements that benefit those who need it, as it only benefits those in power. This simulated collectivity, fake solidarity, or misplaced activism continues, then, to reproduce the same problems it claims to want to resolve. While it may be doing so unknowingly, it is harmful, regardless.

The gendered "postcolonial" is not the same as the feminist, then, or the postcolonial feminist. Spivak (1999) uses scare quotes around the word postcolonial throughout the book, signifying a critique of a certain kind of postcolonialism, which she identifies with "the elite migrants of Europe" (pp. 358) who come from the Third World and whose racialization is used by them to associate with the struggles of the Third World. "Elite "postcolonialism" seems to be as much a strategy of differentiating oneself from the racial underclass as it is to speak in its

name” (pp. 358). The gendering of the “postcolonial” is simply bringing women into the structure but is not necessarily feminist. This practice reproduces universality. Critiquing this style of feminism is significant in placing how activism can be practiced in institutions, and particularly, institutions with neocolonial and imperialist foundations which continue to perpetuate these politics. How do such structures fail “the needs of the needy in the interests of the greedy”? How knowingly or unknowingly is it taking place? What does the reproduction of universalist principles under feminism tell us about the way that feminism and activism define itself? To what extent does the gendering within these approaches actually produce feminism?

In the “Culture” chapter of the book, Spivak (1999) explores the cultural politics of development, and the ways that the “narrative of development” has been used to justify imperialism through technological advancements. This critique of colonialism and neocolonialism through the narrative or ideology of development is situated within an understanding of culture. The significance of culture is in the ways that culture is accepted, circulated, adopted, and taken up by society as a norm.

The indigenous NGOs who are selected to represent indigenous interests are actually representing the interests of the donor countries (Spivak, 1999). This complicates how we think of the interests of certain identities as representative of each other, how we consider the relationship between a specific ethnic identity and what its political interests should be. Here, Spivak points to another trend of essentializing certain identities to have certain interests and creating binaries of these interests. This calls for a more nuanced approach to the claims that activists make, what their goals are and how they talk about each other as they reflect on the interests and goals of other NGOs.

Further, Spivak warns of the “essentializing moralism of Colonizer/Colonized, White/Black,” (1999, pp. 373) in which critiques directed toward the West, colonizer, etc. are not at the third world state itself. The essentializing moralism reduces the possible critiques, and subsequent activism, to these binary categories where one is blame, one is bad, one is the source of the problems, and the other has suffered the consequences as a result. This prohibits a full engagement with the issues and politics producing the state of affairs in third world countries – poverty, conflict, status of women, and so on. In recognising the role that colonialism has played as well as the role that neocolonialism, and imperialism as Development continue to play on the part of the West, it is not a sufficient critique to only focus on those aspects without considering the role that globalization has had in the state’s relationship to its citizens and those who advocate for change (activists, NGOs). Considering this warning against essentializing all grievances as those using identities of the colonized for their interests through NGOs, the financialization of feminism and the general cultural politics which brings these issues together, I use this to guide the project. This research is not looking for a definitive flaw in the dynamics among NGOs, the state and international donors. Instead, it looks to make sense of the dynamics and the way they have acted out on the politics of Sudanese activism and feminism.

Spivak says, “the general ideology of global development is racist paternalism – the silencing of resistance and the subaltern as the rhetoric of their protest is constantly appropriated” (1999, pp. 373). Looking at the simultaneous silencing and appropriating of the resistance of people in the Third World by Western interests through the ideology of development, this project interrogates this practice and how it impacts the work of activists and NGO staff in Sudan. I recognise that the participants are not “the subaltern,” nor do they represent them (as Spivak warns of the way that indigenous NGOs are used to represent the

interests of the subaltern on the global stage, and the way that elitist “postcolonialism” functions on the part of the migrant from the Third World to Europe, essentializing identity and claiming to represent the subaltern). However, I am looking at how activists and NGO staff are still influenced, possibly silenced and appropriated through an ideology that Spivak (1999) identifies with “racist paternalism” (pp. 373). Though the activists themselves are not the subaltern or representative of them, they are Sudanese working within an ideology of development curated by Whiteness, colonialism, imperialism. The way that activists and NGO staff articulate their concerns around these issues, how they identify the ways that their projects are possibly halted (and silenced) by donor interests or how their approaches and resistance are changed and adapted (and appropriated) by funding agencies, is central to this project. Spivak’s (1999) critique of the racist paternalism is at the root of the critique of development, and as I will explore further in this chapter, it is an essential aspect of the critique of NGOs.

1.2.3 Critiquing NGOs

Islah Jad’s “The NGO-isation of Arab Women’s Movements” (2004) traces the process of NGO-isation (or NGOization) and recounts the history of the Arab women’s movement as it relates to independence, state support and state restriction, and how it adapted to the eventual neoliberal model for development. Jad (2004) critiques the process of NGOization, which is “a steady increase in the number of women’s non-governmental organisations” (pp. 34) which have impacted grassroots organising through funding and institutional structures. According to Jad, the West’s interest in democratisation and women’s oppression supports the rise of NGOs in that field. She emphasises that NGOs are distinct from social movements in their structure, purpose, size and communication. However, if NGOs were to cooperate with each other then it is possible

to form something like a social movement, though this may be unlikely so long as they are competing for funding and resources. Jad points out that governments are not reform minded, so attempts at grassroots organising for reform will not achieve those objectives within that environment. This also points to the fabricated nature of grassroots work, that is to say, that much of it is actually top-down and not bottom-up. Therefore, those at the community level are well aware that their voices and concerns will not lead to reform.

Saidia Hodzic does an effective overview and critique of different perspectives on NGOization in “Feminist Bastards: Toward a Posthumanist Critique of NGOization” in *Theorizing NGOs* (2014). She summarises the main arguments that all NGOization critiques have in common, as “critiques of development apparatus... critiques of feminist affiliations with the neoliberal and masculinist state... and critiques of institutionalization of women’s studies and the field’s concomitant failure” (Hodzic 2014, pp. 225). Hodzic argues that all such discourses are deemed valid and little critique is used to analyse them. She cites Lang’s (1997) arguments that NGOization produces a goal- and intervention-oriented nature of movements; thus, rather than activism being in the form of movements it has come in the form of projects and guidelines to be followed. She also cites Alvarez’ (1998) arguments on bureaucratisation, institutionalisation and professionalization of the women’s movements which has changed the nature of feminist activism, leading it to be practiced within office jobs as opposed to grassroots organising. Jad (2004) points out the project oriented nature of issues and concerns that disregard the economic, social and political factors at play, which is something that would not have been typical of activism, as it critically analyses the context of the work to be done. Tsikata (2009) argued that the lack of mass movements and the base for activist work produces a technocratic approach to NGOs, again unlike activist movements. Sangtin (2006) points to the

homogenisation of development discourses and the modern state, creating a unified approach to these issues instead of context specific analytical arguments. However, Hodzic argues that accepting these critiques of NGOs is based on a “nostalgic imagination” of what activism should look like (2014, pp. 226). This is especially interesting in the Sudan context because the current NGOization should not be compared to past political movements that create a false sense of powerful historical movements while discounting their flaws, the compromises they made, and conflation with the state and capitalism in various ways. Therefore, the critique of NGOization should not be dehistoricised and nostalgic, and should note the changes in time period.

INCITE!’s anthology *The Revolution will not be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* (2017) explores the non-profit industrial complex (NPIC) in the US, its emergence, and the state and financial structures that made it possible. It questions if NGOs and non-profits, and the funding model they follow, are the only way to do social justice organizing.

Dylan Rodriguez defines the NPIC as:

the set of symbiotic relationships that link together political and financial technologies of state and owning-class proctorship and surveillance over public political intercourse, including and especially emergent progressive leftist social movements, since about the mid-1970s (2017, pp. 21-22).

In this volume, Andrea Smith (2007) explores the history of the NPIC, and in particular, the relationship of social justice movements to the state and to funding. Non-profits have been used by these institutions, within the structure of the NPIC, in these ways:

- monitor and control social justice movements;
- divert public monies into private hands through foundations;
- manage and control dissent in order to make the world safe for capitalism;
- redirect activist energies into career-based modes of organizing instead of mass-based organizing capable of actually transforming society;

- allow corporations to mask their exploitative and colonial work through “philanthropic” work;
- encourage social movements to model themselves after capitalist structures rather than to challenge them (2017, pp. 3)

The history of emergence of non-profits in the US is linked to the 501(c)(3) non-profit model in which donations to charitable causes made by foundations, which are funded through corporations, are tax deductible. NGOs who are registered under this model would then face the precarity of funding dependent on foundations invested in capitalism and furthering their political interests. In particular, this model dictated a relationship between social justice organizing and the state, making the dependency on funding from politically invested foundations capable of also influencing NGOs and community organizing. This produces the ability to depoliticise social justice movements, direct their causes and concerns, and through the threat of not being funded, force them to abide by or denounce certain causes. For example, Smith recounts funding by the Ford Foundation being pulled from INCITE! because of the organisation’s support for Palestinian liberation. This exemplifies the relationship between the interests of the state (the US support toward Israeli occupation) and capitalism (through a foundation attached to a corporation whose main interests will always be profits) and imperialism. Demanding the politics to remain moderate in order to be funded and continue their work of community organising shows how the precarity of funding acts as a threat to activism and its radical potential.

While this is specific to the US, the principle of this model, and consequently how to critique it and move past it in order to continue social justice organizing, is useful in the Sudanese activist and NGO context as the state and funding agencies influence, surveil or engage with what NGOs do. More importantly, the NGOs of the Third World are in a similar web to

those in the West, especially as this is where their funding agencies are based. My interest in connecting this is not in comparing or equating the US state and the Sudanese state, but in relating how this complex is also global, made up of the state and the funding agencies in the West, complicating how these official engagements can be thought of.

1.2.4 Understanding power and the state

Michel Foucault's constructions on power, particularly what he terms as governmentality and the practice of surveillance, will frame the analysis of the relationship between Sudanese NGOs and activism and the state, through understanding the role of the state toward its population and vice versa. In particular, the ways in which activism takes the form of anti-regime politics and opposition to state; and consequently, how the state practices surveillance on the NGOs and activists, viewing them as threats, and thus leading to self-surveillance on the part of activists and staff as well.

In his 1978 lecture, "Governmentality," (1991) Foucault historicizes the lineage of the state's role and the changes in what is the art of government. He argues that the purpose and role of government changed and calls it governmentality. Governmentality is defined through three processes:

1. The ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security.
2. The tendency which, over a long period and throughout the West, has steadily led towards the pre-eminence over all other forms (sovereignty, discipline, etc.) of this type of power which may be termed government, resulting, on the one hand, in the formation of a whole series of specific governmental apparatuses, and, on the other, in the development of a whole complex of saviors.

3. The process, or rather the result of the process, through which the state of justice of the Middle Ages, transformed into the administrative state during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, gradually become 'governmentalized'. (Foucault, 1991, pp. 102-103)

What Foucault describes through these processes, in which the state is made able to govern its population administratively and whose power becomes pre-eminent above all else leads the state to be the site of all political struggle. Foucault argues that this process led to making the state the main target, "the only political issue, the only real space for political struggle and contestation" (1991, pp. 103). There is an excessive value attributed to the state, though it is not actually as important as it is thought to be, overvaluing it while seeing it in a reductionist way as well, as something that performs specific functions (development of productive forces, and reproduction of relations of production). This is a reductionist view of the state's importance but still maintains it as a target to be attacked.

The process by which the ensemble of "institutions, procedures, analyses and reflection" formulated this "very specific albeit complex form of power," in this way, thus led to an overvaluing of it. While its functions remain specific, they are deemed to be the most important. They come to encompass all aspects of a population's life that is thought to be important, thus leading to the development of a "series of specific governmental apparatuses." That is, even though the state's power is mythicized, it is still real, and the reason the state has survived. Governmentality "is at once internal and external to the state, since it is the tactics of government which make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not, the public versus the private, and so on" (Foucault, 1991, pp. 103). This explains why the dynamic of political action directed at the state exists, and why it is important to understand the role of the state toward its population and vice versa.

In the case of this project, I used Foucault to frame my understanding of the role of the state as the site for activism and resistance, as well as a site of animosity and struggle between activists and the state. Thinking through modern activism and resistance, especially in the Sudanese context and based on the works of Hale (1997), Badri (2008) and Nageeb (2008), Foucault is useful to frame understanding activism's relation to the state including the framing of NGOs as activists by the state and activists as anti-regime or anti-state. Similarly, it directs us to look at the collusion of the functions of the state all together as something that is the enemy of activism and of resistance, with policies and government bodies representing the negative attributes of the state's actions, representative of state repression, of conflict, corruption and so on.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1995) argues that surveillance is an essential aspect of power structures, ensuring that individuals' awareness of the fact that they are being watched keeps them behaving as prescribed. While NGOs and activists may not actually be consistently under surveillance, for lack of resources or mechanisms, the knowledge that they could be, and may be punished for indiscretions, is enough to ensure that they behave as if they are under watch (1995, pp. 214). Therefore, self-surveillance is practiced by those who are aware of the possibility of state surveillance. Foucault's analysis of Bentham's panopticon explains how the mechanism of surveillance "automizes and disindividualizes power" (Foucault, 1995, pp. 202). The machine of surveillance itself can be operated by anyone, or no one. So, "it does not matter who is exercising the power," (Foucault, 1995, pp. 202) but regardless, the surveillance is being practiced.

'Discipline' may be identified neither with an institution nor with an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of

instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a 'physics' or an 'anatomy' of power, a technology (Foucault, 1995, pp. 215).

The development of the police to also practice discipline and not just surveillance changes the landscape of what the apparatuses and mechanisms of surveillance and discipline are, and how state-sanctioned bodies of discipline and surveillance function together. While it may be taken up by various institutions, the formation of a disciplinary society comes from the interaction of these institutions and mechanisms together. Society is disciplined in various ways and through various means and these structures produce discipline as a form of power.

In order to be exercised, this power had to be given the instrument of permanent, exhaustive, omnipresent surveillance, capable of making all visible, as long as it could itself remain invisible (Foucault, 1995, pp. 214).

This is useful in thinking through the mechanisms and apparatuses that make up the state, understanding activism and the work of NGOs in Sudan through governmentality, alongside characterizing the relationship of the state toward activists as one of surveillance. Part of the critique of NGOs is that they are viewed as sites of resistance but can fall short (Jad 2004; Smith, 2017; Spivak 1999). Framing the relationship between NGOs and the state through a recognition of the apparatus of government that places this importance on the state is helpful to my analysis.

The next chapter will identify the methodology. I describe the research questions, the interview process and data analysis process, as well as a discussion on some of the implications of the choice in methodology. In Chapter 3, I use the findings to explain the relationship of NGOs and activists to the state and to international agencies. I look at the history of state policy, and how current laws and apparatuses of surveillance impact NGOs and activists. Chapter 4 focuses on the work inside organisations, how NGOs and activists work together, the issues that

staff face, and the possibilities of pursuing activism within institutions. In my conclusion, I explore more the state's engagement with activists and NGOs, arguing that the Sudanese state's practice of surveillance on NGOs which practice activism has long influenced their development and their current concerns, and leads activists and NGO staff to practice self-surveillance on their work. My findings show that activists and NGOs staff are more concerned with the state's policies and hostilities toward them, and it defines the categories of NGOs and the relationship with each other. I explore the implications of those concerns as opposed to being more concerned with international funding.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Research questions

The purpose of this project is to understand the nature of the dynamic of activism within NGOs in Sudan, the impact of state engagement and international funding, and how staff in NGOs navigate these dynamics. This project brings together insight on the nature of the relationship between the Sudanese state and NGOs, and the way that the Sudanese government perceives certain NGOs as activists and thus threatens. This is particularly because the Sudanese government has been shutting down NGOs, arresting staff, confiscating equipment, all alongside the view that certain NGOs are working against the regime. This project also engages with how those dynamics work alongside issues of international funding, and how the international community is able to engage with activism in Sudan through NGOs. These official engagements with activist NGOs, from the Sudanese state and the international community, also affect how activists and NGOs function within themselves, how they interact with each other, and how they define their own terms of feminism, activism, and resistance to these engagements. This project brings together critiques of development and NGOs, an understanding of surveillance, as well as insight from Sudanese activists, NGO staff and scholars, on navigating these dynamics and relationships. Specifically, I look at the SIHA Network as an example of an NGO which pursues activism, looking at how the staff navigate these dynamics and work through them. Below I outline the research questions:

Primary research question:

How has political activism been pursued through NGOs in Sudan within the context of hostile government policy and international influence?

Sub-questions:

1. What is the nature of the relationship between activist NGOs and the state? How do staff at the SIHA Network engage with this relationship?
2. How does the international community engage with activist NGOs? What role does funding play in the pursuit of activism in NGOs?
3. How have the political and historical foundations of the establishment of NGOs in Sudan manifested itself in how NGOs function, what they prioritise in projects, and how they engage with each other?
4. How is political activism pursued in the SIHA Network?

2.2 Research design

2.2.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative methodology is used to explore the dynamics of politics, NGOs, activism, the state and international influence in Sudan. The nature of the questions calls for a critical in-depth feminist approach, and ones that quantitative research cannot answer. While qualitative data is difficult to measure and analyse, it provides the level of nuance and criticality required to answer the questions at hand. The methodology for this project is based on one-on-one interviews. I conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with 10 experts and with six SIHA Network staff members. The research has two foci: looking at the particular interaction between political activism and NGOs in Sudan, and secondly, a case study of the SIHA Network.

The feminist practice of in-depth interviewing is, according to Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber, informed by the goal of gaining information on a specific topic from the interviewee, and

an interview structure which priorities the insight and knowledge of the interviewee rather than that of the interviewer (2007, pp. 125-126). Hesse-Biber emphasises the importance of being aware of power relations between the interviewer and interviewee. The role of the interviewer, their positionality and status creates an imbalance in which the interviewer is *taking* information for their interests while the interviewee's gains can be minimal. While agreeing to give the research findings back to the participants is an attempt to address this imbalance, Daphne Patai also argues that it is more a "feel good measure" rather than an intentional and intellectual awareness of the responsibility demanded during the interviewing process (cited in Hesse-Biber, 2007, pp. 147). Rather, several elements can ensure an awareness of these dynamics throughout the research process. Self-reflexivity, particularly in the ways that one's biases and positionality can impact the interview, is essential to inform and navigate the process alongside the participant.

This research prioritises a feminist critique of power and systematic structures; therefore, the feminist practice of in-depth interviews which critiques such structures within the methodology and interview process is appropriate. The content of the questions could be understood from an economic or political analysis (in terms of questions around who funds what projects, how policies have been implemented, etc.), but it is particularly important to include individuals' views and opinions on how they live these experiences. I use interviews to explore my research questions as there is a lack of literature available on the topic. I am particularly interested in seeing how policy and state engagement is interpreted, how the flow of funding and donor interests are recognised and how individuals are affected by these larger political and economic issues taking place in the country and around the world. Therefore, feminist in-depth interviews place the experiences of those working in the sector at the forefront of the political

and economic circumstances at play. Further, in-depth interviewing allows for a level of knowledge about the inner workings of institutions, particularly looking at personal relationships, such as how supervisors and employees interact, what the biggest difficulties are for NGOs, and how individuals' personal experience and the experiences of those around them shape how they approach state policy, employment and activism.

2.2.2 The interaction between politics and NGOs in Sudan

This section of the research focuses on providing the context of the structural dynamics between NGOs, the state and international funding. In particular, it looks at the politicization of NGOs, the possible NGOization of political activism, the state's engagement with NGOs historically and currently, and the ways that funding in a neoliberal context has laid groundwork for these dynamics. I conducted 10 semi-structured one-on-one interviews with experts. They were political activists, NGO workers and scholars. While I had initially intended for these interviews to be primarily with people who were not working in the NGO sector but linked to political activism and analysis, the majority of the people were in fact involved in forms of political activism, organising and NGO work.

2.2.3 Case study: SIHA Network

This research employs a case study of the SIHA Network Sudan in order to analyse the dynamics of NGOization, politicisation of NGOs and issues in funding by focusing on the goals and methods of the organisation.

The Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA) is a network of civil society organizations from Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Somaliland, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Uganda, and, most recently, the coastal area of Kenya. Established in 1995 by a coalition of women's rights activists with the aim of strengthening the capacities of women's rights organizations and addressing women's subordination and violence against women and girls in the Horn of Africa (SIHA Network).

I conducted six semi-structured one-on-one interviews with all the staff members of SIHA who work on projects, in their office in Khartoum. The interviews focused on the issues faced by NGO staff in Sudan, the specific ways that the state engages with the organisation, the staff and the beneficiaries, how the staff are able to subvert these policies, and the ways that funding influences the work they do.

My reason for selecting the SIHA Network is that, having followed some of their work and publications, they present themselves as a feminist organisation which is willing to demand social and political change through critiquing the Sudanese legal system and what they consider unjust or oppressive laws and policies. The organisation often pursues advocacy campaigns and exposes legal issues and systematic discrimination facing Sudanese women. Further, as a former intern at the organisation, I came to know the activist nature and background of many of the staff members.

2.3 Data collection

2.3.1 Recruitment

Participants for the expert interviews with political activists and analysts were recruited through personal and professional connections, and then snowball sampling was used to find further participants. I asked participants for recommendations of people I could interview. I have

had professional experience in the NGO sector, and have maintained personal connections with the activist community, so I began with personal and professional acquaintances in the field. I asked those who I interviewed for suggestions of who else to interview. This sampling technique is particularly important given the intensity of possible surveillance by the Sudanese government and the nature of the issues being researched. In particular, participants who are political activists, whose work can be considered anti-regime, especially considering the topics covered in the interviews, need to ensure that the person interviewing them is trustworthy and will not lead to any security threats. Thus, my position as someone recommended from a colleague or a friend, establishes this trust, for both me and the participant. In regard to the case study on the SIHA Network, the director of the organisation was first contacted via email for their approval to conduct the research on the SIHA Network as a case study. I explained the purpose of the project generally and the reason for SIHA's involvement. Having received their permission, I was able to interview all six staff members of the organisation who work on the projects running at the SIHA Network.

2.3.2 Interview questions

Two different sets of interview questions (see Appendix A) were prepared as a guide to the semi-structured interviews. In the first set of interviews with political activists and analysts, the purpose of the interview was to create a contextual understanding of the dynamics between NGOs and political activism and the state (see Appendix A.1). In particular, the questions were selected based on the need to fill gaps in the literature and to probe the specific interests and expertise of the interviewees. Most importantly, the questions targeted the specific opinions and perceptions of the interviewees, probing how they engage with the dynamics between NGOs, the

state and international funding, how they witness them, and how they are affected by them. The questions focus on three elements:

1. The interviewee's experience in NGOs, politics and activism;
2. The interviewee's opinions regarding the landscape and dynamics of NGOs in Sudan with reference to the state's engagement through policies;
3. The interviewee's opinions regarding the landscape and dynamics of NGOs in Sudan with reference to funding and international donors.

The order of the questions was structured in a way that first probes the interviewee's main interests and concerns. I am then able to direct the conversation along the lines that make most use of their expertise, and ask specific questions that would allow them to apply their knowledge. I am also able to get a sense of some of their political views and some of their general views regarding NGOs and organisational structures. After questions about the general situation of NGOs, state policy and critiques of the dynamic between them, the interview moves into a discussion on international agencies and funding.

The questions directed toward the SIHA Network were focused on more concrete examples of relations between one NGO, the state, and international funders. The question guide (see Appendix A.2) focused on three elements:

1. What issues affect NGOs in Sudan;
2. Their personal background and interest in both activism and NGOs;
3. How SIHA Network navigates the difficulties of security issues and funding practices.

The interview was structured so as to get information about the participants professional and political background first, and then what their experience in the SIHA Network has been like, and their understanding of the general problems faced by NGOs in Sudan. In this way, I was able to gain specific information on the SIHA Network from the participant and then connect it to wide dynamics of NGOs and activism in Sudan.

2.3.3 Ethics, formalities, and personal reflections

In order to conduct the fieldwork, approval for the study was obtained from the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) on June 20, 2017 (UBC BRED number: H17-01036). The project is categorised as minimum risk as the participants are engaging in an activity that is unlikely to bring them harm. Any risk that the participants might encounter as a result of the study – as a result of the nature of the topic, the politics, the anti-regime sentiments, etc. – they are in full knowledge of and, more importantly, regularly engage in these risks as a result of their work. The participants are individuals who are politically active, politically aware and have an understanding of the risks that can be faced when engaging in the type of work they do. In fact, much of the interview revolves around questions of surveillance, threats and security. The participants know what activities and actions can cause them harm, can lead to their possible arrest, what things are being monitored and under surveillance and, more importantly, how to navigate those dynamics and how to avoid them.

As part of approval to do research abroad, I had to complete the requirements of the Student Safety Abroad Program at UBC. Sudan is classified as “Level 3: Avoid non-essential travel” based on the Government of Canada Country Travel Reports and Advisories. As part of UBC policy on doing academic work abroad, several steps are taken to ensure the safety of

students abroad, especially students going to countries with a travel advisory. As a Sudanese national, someone who has lived in Sudan, whose family is in Sudan, and whose work in Sudan is based on personal and professional contacts, I did not feel that this approval was necessary for my research. The forms to be completed, the checklists regarding travel risks, health precautions, cultural differences and so on, assume that the individual going abroad has no relation to the place. In fact, it assumes the researcher to be White and a Westerner, establishing a dichotomy between the researcher and the research participants. It is assumed that the researcher is a foreigner and that the relationship between them and the research participant is distant, which reproduces a power dynamic between the two.

Being a graduate student at a Canadian institution, which requires of me a certain level of formality to do work in my home country, places a restriction on my work. Though it did not literally stop my work, the ways in which I had to engage in contacting individuals, fill out a form as if I am a foreigner in my country, list risks as if they could be avoidable if precaution was taken rather than seeing them as realities of the space I occupy, enforces this estrangement.

Just as I recognise the agency of research participants to know the risks they could face and how to engage with them, I recognise my lived experience in how I navigate these questions and risks while doing research. So, when I'm asked, "what are the risks?" they may be something like, "In Sudan, there's always a risk when you're talking about and working on exposing oppression and authoritarian policies." "How would you deal with that risk?" "Well, I just do. I just know how to." But that's not a formally acceptable answer. As a researcher, I felt that these institutional structures erased that in myself, my "just knowing," made me feel out of place in a context that I do have a place in.

These formalities make it necessary that countries like Sudan, whose histories and current realities of war and violence, of poverty and disease, of Islamist extremism and authoritarianism, and whose place on the Government of Canada Country Travel Reports and Advisories, are classified as such, as places to be avoided. These classifications are consistent with a Western-centric and racialized logic grounded in colonialism and neocolonialism and categorising them in this way based on narratives and perceptions of them, while also generalizing the entire country as such in spite of the conflicts being localised in certain regions, continues and pushes forward negative narratives. My work was conducted in Khartoum which is quite a safe city as it is far from the conflict regions in the country. However, Sudan as a whole is classified as dangerous. This is linked to the project itself, as I explore how international agencies representing the interests of Western states have interacted with activism and Human Rights advocacy in Sudan through NGOs. The basis of these relationships is, again, rooted in histories of colonialism that persist through neocolonialism. The role of the White researcher coming to Africa to observe and study the natives is the racialized history of research in the Third World. That legacy remains in the form of the assumption that the researcher will be in danger, that the researcher is an outsider and that there must be distance between what is studied and who is studying, because those who are studied are never the authors of studies themselves.

2.3.4 Interview process

2.3.4.1 Structure and language

The flow of the questions in the interview guide allowed for the conversation to build on one topic to another. I allowed for the interviewee to explore different topics that arose, encouraging them to give further detail on things that they felt were important. An important

aspect of this structure was that the interviews were conducted in English, Arabic or both. While I am much more fluent in English than in Arabic, and the questions were originally written in English and then were translated to Arabic, it was particularly important to be able to conduct the interviews in Arabic as well so as to ensure greater participation among a wider selection of participants. Using Arabic also enables participants to elaborate on their opinions as much as possible, exploring ideas and their nuances in their own language. I would tell interviewees at the beginning of the interview if they want to speak in English, Arabic or both. Often, they would immediately state their preference. If their preference was Arabic, I would ask them if it is all right that I asked certain questions in English or if it is all right that I insert English words into the conversation, as it is my stronger language and the language I have been reading and writing in for this research. This was not an issue with any interviewee as they would always have some knowledge of English even if Arabic was their preference. Though the interview questions were translated into Arabic as well, the semi-structured nature of the interview meant that I did not ask the questions exactly as they were written. This is especially true of the Arabic written questions as they were written in Standard Arabic and the language of conversation in Sudan is the Sudanese dialect Arabic. Thus, to state the question exactly as it is written in Arabic would not be accurate in an oral dialogue, and far too formal for the context. Further, my knowledge of Sudanese dialect Arabic surpasses that of my knowledge of Standard Arabic. This is a limitation I will continue to work on in future research.

2.3.4.2 Familiarity and discomfort in the interview process

As mentioned above, many of the people I interviewed I had some personal or professional connection with, either directly or through the people who had recommended them.

In addition, there is a familiarity in these interviews that I think the formal process of interviewing does not account for. This familiarity has been a critical part of the interview process. However, there is also a possibility of discomfort with research participants. In particular, the familiarity influences things such as the language used by me and the interviewee, the topics that can be discussed, and the level of trust between me and the interviewee. The familiarity or the discomfort also influences the significance of the trust in the interview process and how much such trust can impact the information shared in the interview.

A particular challenge was interviewing people whose political views I strongly disagreed with. I recognize that this is a factor in conducting research as an insider and a member of the community, and one in which the topics and issues discussed are of personal and political significance. In some cases, those political disagreements did not influence the interview in how I asked questions or how I responded to the research participants' answers. However, in one particular interview, the research participant's views, professional and political position made it a security risk for me to ask all the questions on the interview guide as they revealed some of my political views, and in particular, my assumption of the current regime as authoritarian and oppressive. In that interview, I made the decision to not ask all the questions as I considered it a security risk. I asked questions that were more politically neutral, such as questions on policy that did not assume a critique of the state. In comparison to interviews where I had more in common with the research participant, the flow of conversation was easier and more straightforward.

2.3.5 Limitations and problems encountered

My research methodology proposed that I would interview members of a specific NGO as a case study and also interview experts with expertise in political activism or political analysis, preferably not members of NGOs themselves. However, given the topic under study and the clear overlap in individuals who do political organising, political activism, and are also employed or have associations with NGOs, the vast majority of those in the expert category were also staff at NGOs themselves, a few had been previously employed in NGOs, or are directors of NGOs. While this was a methodological limitation, as I was specifically intending to interpret NGOs from the perspectives of those who are not staff in NGOs, it was also a typical manifestation of the way NGOs function in Sudan.

In addition, snowball sampling² brought in a lot of similar opinions as people recommended their friends and colleagues, who often had very similar political views as well as similar political and professional backgrounds. This exemplifies a key finding of this research, which is that the circle of NGOs and activists is a closed one. If I had more time and resources, and a wider circle of contacts, I may have been able to access individuals outside of these circles.

I had to conduct one interview over the phone because the participant was out of the country. This affected the level of comfort and familiarity the participant felt with me as a researcher, as with all other participants we were sitting face to face. Though the interview went well, I would have been able to direct the conversation better if it was in person. In addition,

² “Snowball sampling may be defined as a technique for gathering research subjects through the identification of an initial subject who is used to provide the names of other actors. These actors may themselves open possibilities for an expanding web of contact and inquiry.” (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Futing Liao, 2004, pp. 2)

following up with the SIHA Network was difficult and I had to reconsider their role in the study if I was not to receive confirmation from them on their involvement. Luckily, I was able to conduct interviews with all the staff members eventually over two days.

2.4 Data processing

2.4.1 Transcribing and translating

The transcribing process was essential to the data analysis as I was able to interpret and distinguish the themes that came up, while I transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews. The interviews that were in English were transcribed directly, word for word. Those in Arabic were translated by me as I transcribed. Similarly, interviews that were a mix of both English and Arabic, as most were, were also translated during the transcription process. Rather than transcribe the interviews in Arabic, word for word, and then translate the text, I chose to translate and transcribe simultaneously for several reasons. First, as a result of time constraints, it would not have been feasible to transcribe in Arabic and then translate the text into English. Second, as my knowledge of written Arabic is not as strong as my knowledge of oral Arabic, I concluded that my translation of the oral word would be more efficient than attempting to transcribe into written Arabic. Third, many of the interviews were a mix of Arabic and English, so it was a more straightforward task to transcribe the entire interview into written English, rather than a mix of written languages. As I have interpreted and translated them myself, the language and style of those translated from Arabic to English are similar.

In addition, I kept certain words and phrases in Arabic, as I decided that the connotation and the meaning they hold in Arabic could not be translated adequately into English. For those words, if they are quoted, there is also a descriptive statement to explain the meaning and the

possible connotations the word or phrase holds. In addition, there are words and phrases that are specific to the Sudanese NGO sector, terminology that may be a mix of English (being the language of professional NGOs) and Arabic. They are included in the glossary for reference.

2.4.2 Coding

I collected over 20 hours of interviews, so organised and systematic data processing was key. The transcripts were coded thematically using NVivo software. I tracked the common themes while transcribing and based the nodes on those. The codes I used fit under the large themes of:

1. Neoliberalism, neocolonialism, international influence, international politics
2. Funding, donors
3. Political history and political economy of Sudan
4. Political activism, political organising, political parties in Sudan
5. Policies, institutions and state surveillance
6. Feminism
7. Personal anecdotes, personal experiences, lived experience, lived knowledge
8. Employment, professional experiences
9. Overlap in ideas and functions of politics and NGOs
10. How NGOs talk about each other
11. NGO structure and function, NGO work and projects, NGO presence

I read over transcripts individually and chose sections which spoke to the various themes. Both sets of interviews were coded the same way as the themes were overlapping. However, in

analysis and writing the two sets of interviews were treated differently as they fit into the project differently. The themes I coded distinguished an argument around the different forms and levels of state engagement (from policies to arrests), the history of activism and NGOs and how that impacts the functioning of NGOs, and relevant concerns on donor interests and funding. The coding process allowed me to distinguish what my findings actually were as opposed to what I expected to find when I began the project. For example, I found that many participants did not give detailed answers to questions about funding and donor interests. Whereas I expected that this research question would lead to an extensive conversation, participants mainly spoke about the influence of international donors broadly. The literature on NGOs that I read to prepare for this research explored the impact of NGOs on the political sphere and so I was expecting participants to elaborate on this. However, many participants did not have distinct comments on the impact of NGOs on politics, and were much more likely to discuss the impact of the state and politics on the work of NGOs.

2.5 Quality assurance and reliability

I must take into account that the nature of the discussions does not allow for everything to be said by participants. Participants may have censored themselves actively in the interview, differentiating between what can be talked about and what can't in the context. Sometimes they would go into more detail about certain topics after the recording equipment was turned off. One participant repeatedly asked for the recording equipment to be turned off so they could say something off the record, often sharing an anecdote or a casual story that helps to contextualise the topic that was being discussed, but not to be shared publicly as it may involve individuals or

issues which are considered high security. Another participant shared a story and then asked for it to be taken off the record, recognising after it was shared that it should not be public.

These instances illustrate some significant things. First, the role of trust toward me as an interviewer. Participants felt they could share these stories with me as an individual, not as a researcher, and were able to make the distinction of my roles and ask for stories to not be included in my research, but only for my personal knowledge and for the sake of sharing. Second, it shows that participants were actively self-censoring, choosing not to share things or share them as long as they aren't made public. This makes it clear that the things said on the record were carefully crafted for the purpose of research. Participants were sharing what they think ought to be included in research on the topic, exposing and exploring the ideas that they consider of value in the context of the research. I have kept this in mind as I analyze the data. It also influences what I value as a researcher, that what people have chosen to say and share as significant for their field of work is my responsibility to explore further. Third, this also expresses the role of closeness and familiarity, and the importance of personal relationships in professional work, as one finding of the research is the close circle of staff and activists in the sector. Participants also make reference to historical and political events which may or may not be accurate. These are important to how the participant views the issues at hand regardless of their accuracy; inaccuracies are corrected in footnotes if needed. I maintain that what people say is a reflection of their experiences and so the aim is not always about factual accuracy, but a grasp of how they articulate and prioritise their concerns within those dynamics.

Chapter 3: The state, surveillance, and the international community

3.1 The state's engagement with NGOs

3.1.1 Historical and political foundations of NGOs

As discussed by Hale (1997), Badri (2008), and Nageeb (2008), there is a significant link between the political and ideological foundations of political opposition and organizing in Sudan, including political parties and feminists, and that of NGOs. The ideological foundations upon which NGOs and political activism, and the overlap between them, formed in Sudan is within a context of political opposition through party structures and feminist movements (Hale, 1997). Specific events took place throughout Sudan's history that led to a rise in the numbers of NGOs. Participants explained the rise as a response to a humanitarian crisis, or a rise in the number of unemployed professionals who were skilled in activist and humanitarian work which would then fill up that sector. These foundations, both those that are ideological and specific historical events, are of significance for how NGOs and activists function now. Those foundations manifest themselves in the structure of NGOs, the staff, the topics that are focused on, and the issues they face in regard to state engagement and funding.

The development of multiple NGOs came in the aftermath of the establishment of the current regime in 1989. One participant, a politically active scholar with professional and research experience in NGOs and humanitarian work, points to one of the main factors in the creation of NGOs, the strategy by the then newly established *Inqaz* regime called *al-salih al-'aam* which translates to the public good. The regime expelled civil servants who were not closely aligned with the regime, many of whom were active in other political parties and, of course, educated and skilled. This policy created a mass of unemployed professionals with

political visions and experience in organising, and with a particular political aim, that the regime viewed as a threat if they were to remain working in the civil service.

Ali: I think one of the main reasons also, the government policies of what we called *al-salih al-'aam* [the public good] in 1990s. The fact that they expelled thousands of civil servants at that time, which was part of what they called the *tawkeel* strategy of that time. Some of them went to the private business, some of them went to the markets, some of them also joined or formed nongovernmental organisations. So, this was also one of the factors contributing to the growth of NGOs in 1990s.

These politically conscious professionals did not create this field of humanitarian and activist professional work. It had already been established, albeit smaller and more contained. In the 1990s, Sudan was experiencing humanitarian crises to which NGOs were responding, and so the movements of people from the civil service as a result of *al-salih al-'am* planted them within these organisations. The following participant, who has been working in the non-profit field for over 30 years describes the impact of this movements of unemployed professionals and the ideology and work ethic they brought with them. He points to the Human Rights violations that were taking place at the time, with the civil war in South Sudan and the growing political repression by the new regime. He critiques the politicisation of the sector as a result of that shift in employment, as politically motivated unemployed professionals came into the field:

Amin: They left the work [activism]. Then there was a political gap, in the midst of these Human Rights violations, in the midst of an economic crisis, in the midst of the separatist politics, in the midst of the civil war flaring up. Then there was no politics, or, there were no political organisations. Then the organisations began to take up some of that role. The role, as in, they were focusing on the issue of Human Rights. They were talking about the politics linked to the economy, and so on, which made Human Rights issues become clearer, and in the view of the government, it was categorised as a form of politics... So, the politicised person brought politics in with him, into the organisations. At the same time, the people who were let go from the civil service, many of them went into organisations. They had two effects. So, a person would come in very serious, having learned and has experience in

organising and all that, and building relations. They came trained by the civil service. But they also brought with them all that negative stuff too, stuff that had to do with how work gets done generally.

In this way, the creation of NGOs and the organising of activists around them is not only in response to state sponsored humanitarian crises, political repression and so on, but rather, a direct result of a policy which left thousands of people unemployed and thus, in a way, allowed for the sector to grow. Consequently, this sector which would become politicised as a result would face harsh policies and surveillance by the state. The state's engagement with NGOs is integral from the moment of expanding the sector to the moment of attempting to restrict it. State surveillance of these politically active individuals and political activists, which led to them being let go of their positions in the civil service, not only produced a politically aware workforce to move into the NGO sector, but also one whose sense of self-surveillance would have carried over into that new sector.

Looking at what has led to the rise of NGOs also permits us to look at what kinds of NGOs formed as a result of which event. On another level of state engagement, state-sponsored (or supported) political conflicts and humanitarian crises have also led to a rise of NGOs in response. Ali elaborates on this history further, noting the development of NGOs before the *Inqaz* regime took hold in 1989:

Ali: It goes back actually way before that time. Probably late '70s with the drought induced famine in early 1980s. That was a time when Sudan also welcomed a number of international NGOs. This was the time also when the local NGOs started to somehow, to operate at that time.

Ali: The drought induced famine, for example, desertification, migration from rural areas to urban areas. Also, the conflict at that time spreading from South Sudan to Darfur to Nuba Mountains to Blue Nile to Eastern Sudan. Also, the government has aggressively pursued so-called economic liberalisation and implementation. They have ruthlessly implemented this kind of government

removing, taking off its hand, from providing certain services. So, there were plenty of reasons for agencies to step in, to fill in the gap created by the government, either government policies or government failures, or conflicts in conflict zone areas.

The rise of NGOs was in direct response to the failures of the state to provide services for its citizens as they are obligated to. These failures, as the participant suggests, are the result of the state's push toward liberalisation policies that "ruthlessly" led to less government funding on public services. In a way, this meant that the state would become dependent on NGOs to provide the services that it was obligated to provide. What is interesting is that the state may feel animosity toward NGOs for stepping in on their sphere of influence, by providing services that are otherwise publicly funded, but could also be recognising the value of the work that NGOs do. This may lead to animosity in the sense that they make work difficult for NGOs to function but they do not ban or expel them all together. This paradox can be helpful in understanding why the state is uncooperative with NGOs while also allowing them to function. Another participant, Omar distinguishes the rise of the presence of international NGOs, such as Oxfam, in the 80s as a major factor in the rise of NGOs at that time. Their presence would bring funding and normalise a structure of NGOs, projects and development to local organisations as well.

Understanding how many NGOs formed can guide an analysis of the current manifestations of the relationship between the state and NGOs. In particular, how politicised staff with an understanding and experience of state-surveillance, who are critical of the regime, organise within NGOs now. The following participant recounts this history and its aftermath, making similar points to the other participants quoted, and adding the direct links to leftist politics:

Salma: And the second tension [between government and NGOs] is, for the government, is – I think also the civil society kind of like has turned into the left, basically, in Sudan. It has turned in to the left that champions leftist causes, like for example, standing against the Public Order laws, doing things that the government is ideologically against. So, this is where they clash basically, so the government thinks that the organisations are basically fighting for stuff and they're basically spreading ideas that it's standing against. They're enlightening people on issues that it doesn't want people to know. And it's really against them. They're doing this, they're talking to international actors. Because also you find people with very strong capacities within the civil society organisations so they're able to reach different people abroad. They're able to speak to the international community. They're able to communicate the issues that are happening in Sudan. So, they see them as this threat, like spreading what's happening in Sudan abroad, and spreading leftist ideas inside Sudan. This is how I see it.

This participant, a young activist and journalist with a background in civil society organisations, points to a clear correlation between the foundations of the formations of many civil society organisations through leftist politics and the resulting tensions between government and organisations. Further, her comments are based on a critique of leftist politics, feminist politics as well as a critique of the government, presenting the nuanced space that many activists inhabit in which they oppose the government's actions as well as the formalised mechanisms through which people have organized against them.

KS: What part of civil society work, civil society organisations, do you think mirrors leftist politics?

Salma: I think the different issues they work on. Like, for example, working on women's rights. Doing things like feminist work, talking about gender. Doing things like, championing Human Rights. I think even worldwide, the different movements for civil rights and Human Rights are very leftist causes. So, in a way it appears like they're leftist organisation full of leftist people. But I personally don't think there's a left in Sudan. Because I think even the way they're campaigning for the different issues, it's very problematic. I'll give you an example: there was a discussion going within the women's groups, the women's groups fighting for women's rights, about the public order law. And some of the women were actually saying things like "lashing is part of religion, but the way they're lashed is the problem". So, they shouldn't be lashed too

harshly, they should be lashed softly. And for me, you know, this is very problematic. This is not how we're supposed to respond to this. This is not how we're supposed to, even, think about this in our mind. So, for me, I don't think there's a left in Sudan. But this is how they see themselves, basically.

This view expands what Hale described as the problem with the affiliation between women's organisations and leftist politics. Hale (1997) described the Sudanese Communist Party, in spite of its ties to women's organisations, as patriarchal and not attentive to the needs and concerns of its women members. This participant points to an inconsistency in the way that she thinks feminist activism should be approached. Considering the contentious history of Islamist and secular feminists, as categorised by Badri (2008) and Nageeb (2008), and the link between leftist politics and women's organisations that Hale points to, and recognising how leftist politics define themselves as secular and opposing to Islamist ideology, this "problematic inconsistency is important. The participant is pointing to a largely leftist sector in which individuals had been justifying violence against women using Islam. While they may not identify as Islamist, the participant is critiquing this contradiction and pointing to the fact that consistency in the approach to activism is necessary. There is another connotation in what the participant is saying. As the current regime in power is an Islamist one, this participant is critiquing the way that activists are not critical enough of the use of religion to justify violence as it has also been used by the state to justify many acts of violence. The critique needs to encompass the history of these justifications rather than use them apologetically.

The nature of the state's engagement with activist NGOs and NGOs in general is a product of this link between political opposition, political organising, activism and NGOs. With this history in mind, the state's mechanisms for monitoring could be looked at as mechanisms of surveillance. Further, the state's practice of surveillance produces self-surveillance among

activists and NGO staff in order to protect themselves and their work. I argue that while the state institutes laws such as the Voluntary and Humanitarian Work Act 2006 (to be discussed further in the next section) to monitor and regulate humanitarian and voluntary work, it in fact uses it to practice surveillance on NGOs and activists who are seen as a threat to the state.

SIHA Network is an organisation which practices advocacy for women's rights and uses a Human Rights framework. Their positions are often critical of government policy, laws and the nature of the regime's treatment of women and marginalized communities (SIHA Network). This can create a tension between the government and SIHA Network, which may be part of a larger pattern among other NGOs.

Sarah: I would say there is a tension between government and any NGO that's working, not just SIHA. Maybe, a bit more with us, given the things we work on. But generally, the situation for civil society in Sudan is very difficult. They don't want us. And we don't want them as a government. So, it's like hate-hate relationship. We have to work and they have to supervise us.

The above participant from SIHA Network describes the nature of their relationship with the government as a "hate-hate relationship," one where the work SIHA Network does is unwanted by the state, but the state's obligation and responsibility to supervise it leads to this tension, and in particular, a dislike toward NGOs. She says "we don't want them as a government," expressing the anti-regime role and approach that an NGO can have, the institutionalised (anti-state and) anti-regime rhetoric that can be found in NGOs and that the state itself supposedly fears. NGOs can desire to resolve issues structurally, through looking to their root causes and elaborating on the humanitarian and social justice issues that formed those problems. The result of that analytical work is that the state is often responsible for those problems and they are rooted in policy, laws and state-sanctioned violence or neglect of citizens.

This jeopardizes the regime's existence, manifests itself in this kind of institutionalised (anti-state and) anti-regime rhetoric. When the work of activists, many of whom are working through NGOs, relies on countering the state through critiquing conflict and oppression, they are, in a way, anti-state or anti-regime. Regardless, then, the state's perception of these NGOs as a threat is founded on this reality. However, NGOs and activists still demand that they not be persecuted for these beliefs. There is a paradox of actively working against a regime and resisting its power against you, resisting its ability to arrest, detain and shut you down. The state is justified in its practice of surveillance, not because it is ethically right, but because it is in the bounds of its power and capacity. I say *institutionalised* (anti-state and) anti-regime rhetoric though it is not necessarily formally institutionalised, as it is not stated in their publications or formal outputs. However, in conversation and in the opinions of the staff, it became clear that there is a pattern of criticizing the actions and the nature of the state.

3.1.2 The law: Apparatuses of surveillance

The Voluntary and Humanitarian Work Act of 2006 governs all humanitarian and voluntary work in Sudan. It defines humanitarian and voluntary work, outlines the principles that organisations doing that work should follow, designates how funding can be received by organisations, outlines how they are to be registered and maintains the authority to reject registration. The Act establishes the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) which overlooks all humanitarian and voluntary activities in Sudan (see Appendix B). The Act outlines its functions as a body that directs responses to humanitarian disasters, coordinates with other legal bodies as needed, initiates projects, mobilizes resources for them and coordinates with foreign bodies when needed. HAC also works to monitor the work of organisations and ensure they are following the

laws defined by the Act. Section 5 of the Act defines the principles governing humanitarian work, which thus defines the sector:

Principle governing humanitarian work

5. Voluntary and humanitarian work organizations in the Sudan shall operate in accordance with the following principles:
 - a. Non-discrimination, on ground of race, gender, ethnicity, political affiliation or religious beliefs;
 - b. Chastity, in selection of projects sites, taking into consideration the areas having greatest need;
 - c. Accountability before beneficiaries, donors and public bodies having connection, who are responsible for services in the area, and such bodies as the basic rules of the organization may specify;
 - d. Sustainability of remedial programmes, for preparation of such circumstances, as may enable local communities to depend upon themselves in the long run;
 - e. Having due regard to the desires of the local community, at all stages of the project, through participation of local communities, at all stages of implementation of the project
 - f. Non-interference of foreign voluntary organizations in the internal affairs of the Sudan, in such way, as may affect the sovereignty of the country (Voluntary and Humanitarian Work Act of 2006).

The issue of registration and the rejection of registration came up with several participants, who cited this as a main way by which the government is effectively able to shut down certain NGOs who pose a threat to the regime, or make their functioning more difficult by delaying their registration and thus slowing down projects and their work. NGOs are found in precarious positions as a result of this threat to their registration and legal status. Section 5 and 13 from the Act outline this:

Conditions of registration (9)

1. For the purposes of registration of national voluntary and charitable organizations and civil society organizations, the following conditions shall be satisfied, namely that:
 - a. The organization shall present, to the registrar, an application including a list of names and addresses of the founder members of the organization; provided that their number shall not be less than thirty members;

- b. A copy of the organization constitution, and its organization chart, shall be attached to the application;
 - c. The temporary manger, the higher executive responsible person, the board of directors or the preparatory aboard of trustees shall attach an authorized decision, from the general assembly for establishment of the organization;
 - d. The organization shall pay the fees prescribed for registration.
2. Notwithstanding the provisions of sub-section (1) the minister may approve the registration of any organization, upon an application presented by less than thirty members, with the same conditions set out in the said sub-section; on condition of setting forth the financial ability, sustainability and sources of funding the organization; intended to be registered;
3. For the purposes of registration of any foreign voluntary organization, the following conditions shall be satisfied, namely that:
- a. It shall be registered in accordance with the laws in force in the state of origin;
 - b. It shall produce a registration certificate approved by the Sudan embassy, or its diplomatic mission in the state concerned;
 - c. It shall present an application showing the type of the work, which it intends to practice the Sudan;
 - d. Its quarters or origin shall not be in any state, in state of war with the Sudan, or boycotted thereby;
 - e. It shall produce what may prove its financial and technical capabilities to practice the activity, or the work intended to be practiced in the Sudan, and the sources of such capabilities;
 - f. It shall implement its programme s in co-operation, or jointly with one national organization, or more;
 - g. It shall sign the country agreement;
 - h. Any other conditions, as the minister may lay down, from time to time (Voluntary and Humanitarian Work Act of 2006).

Rejection of registration (13)

- 1. The registrar may reject the registration of any organisation where:
 - a. The activities, which it practices are inconsistent with principles provided for in section 5;
 - b. The application includes false information, or inconsistent with the registration conditions;
 - c. The organisation fails to satisfy the registration conditions, set forth in section 9;
 - d. The activity, or work which the organisation intends to practice contravenes the law.
- 2. The registrar, upon rejecting the registration of any national, or foreign organisation, shall inform the same, in writing, of the reasons for such decision.

3. The decision of rejection of registration may be appealed to the minister, within fifteen days (Voluntary and Humanitarian Work Act of 2006).

Following how Foucault defines surveillance, it is an essential aspect of power structures and ensuring individuals' awareness of the fact that they are being watched keeps them behaving as prescribed. While people may not actually be consistently under surveillance, the knowledge that they could be, and may be punished for indiscretions, is enough to ensure that they behave as if they are under watch (1995, pp. 214). I am understanding this law and the commission which upholds it as part of the apparatus of surveillance. The state's monitoring body acts to surveil organisations to ensure they comply by the principles they have defined. While these principles aren't necessarily the problem (they seem to fit the general understanding of humanitarian and voluntary work), participants have pointed to the frustration of working under inconsistency by which HAC or the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) are able to decide arbitrarily which organisations are following the principles and which are not (Interview with Fatima). Therefore, surveillance is being practiced in the form of a monitoring commission which ensures that NGOs are abiding by the principles set forth. The threat of the rejection of their registration acts as a punishment and thus maintains discipline, leading activists and NGO staff to be cautious and practice self-surveillance.

Through the Act and the state's mechanisms for punishment and discipline, the governing regime retains the ability to coerce and intimidate NGOs and activists. It is specifically the surveillance which is of significance rather than the punishment, as some organisations, and activists in general, are still able to live, work and function but the consistent fear of possible arrest, detention, termination and threat to livelihoods keeps them from pursuing their goals to a greater extent. Organisations would find themselves having to accommodate the extent to which

they pursue projects that can be deemed a threat to the state. In the Sudanese context, when considering the role the current regime has played in issues of corruption, Human Rights abuses and conflict, many activities can be considered a threat to the state's power. Likewise, as Jad (2004) argues, these regimes are not reform minded and so reforms considered necessary by NGOs are consequently considered a threat (pp. 37). Thus, while the state's regulatory functions of all sectors also extend to the humanitarian sector, Nageeb (2008) argues that the Voluntary and Humanitarian Work Act of 2006 "grants an excessive regulatory power to the government over NGOs" (pp. 111).

In the report *Legal Frameworks Governing Non-Governmental Organizations in the Horn of Africa*, published by the Sudan based Al Khatim Adlan Center for Enlightenment and Human Development (KACE) and the Horn of Africa Civil Society Forum (HoACS) on civil society organisations (CSO) and the law, it is argued that "the legal framework has been used in a number of instances to deliberately target CSOs" (KACE and HoACS, 2017, pp. 57). They argue that these present "attacks on the legal status of CSOs" (pp. 58). The legal status of CSOs, through the possibility of organisations' registration being rejected, thus not being able to receive funds, is not only a threat to the ability of civil society to work toward improving humanitarian and political conditions for citizens and residents of Sudan, but is also a threat to livelihoods of employees working in these organisations. It was widely expressed by participants and in the discourse among members of the non-profit sector in Sudan, as by KACE and the HoACS Forum, that the organisations targeted by these surveillance mechanisms are ones that do present a level of threat to state powers. This fits alongside Badri's (2008) and Nabeeb's (2008) different but overlapping categorisations of different feminists and NGOs, as some are explicitly pro-government and Islamist while others are secular or are politically in opposition to the regime.

These types of organisations could then be viewed as not abiding by the principles set forth legally when they are a threat. And thus, as argued by KACE and HoACS, the Act has elements which are a “violation of the right to freedom of association” (2017, pp. 57).

The Act also regulates funding, in the article below:

Funding and grants rallied and received (7)

1. Grants and rally of funding for organisations programme shall be through a project instrument to be approved by the commission, as the regulations may elaborate.
2. No civil society organisation, registered in accordance with the provisions in this act shall receive funds, or grants from abroad, from an alien person internally or from any other body, save upon approval of the ministry thereof (Voluntary and Humanitarian Work Act of 2006).

Participants pointed to the use of the law to monitor the use of funding and holding the ability to stop the receipt of funding or monitor how funding is spent. This article stipulates how funding from international donors can be monitored. There is state surveillance of funds and support, from international institutions or states, to what organisation, and for what work. Consequently, following Foucault’s ideas on surveillance, the practices by NGOs and who they engage with financially and politically could be determined by the knowledge of this surveillance, thus self-surveillance. The state sees international organisations as a threat and thus expelled 13 international organisations from Sudan in 2009 in response to the ICC indictment of Omar al-Bashir and other state leaders. The state sees them as asserting foreign interests and undermining their power through the criminalization of the president and other state leaders. Thus, the surveillance of international influence through monitoring funding is an extension of this power.

Relations between the state and national NGOs, therefore, could also be affected by the relations between the state and international organisations which is seen as especially hostile. The role of the Darfur conflict, its responses, and the threat to the state's sovereignty through international interference, has led to hostile relations between the state and international organisations. This has also affected national NGOs in the form of monitoring the funding they receive from international donors. While the state's power is limited in how it can affect international organisations, it can, however, assert its power over Sudanese activists and NGOs. Therefore, the impact of the hostile relationship between international organisations and the Sudanese state comes in the form of a hostile relationship with Sudanese organisations which fit under the same banner of development, humanitarian, and so on.

An example of the crackdowns which occurs against NGOs took place in January 2013 when four CSOs, three of which can be considered NGOs and one cultural organisation focused on literature, were shut down by authorities. This event led to a demonstration a few days later by the Confederation of Civil Society Organisations who opposed the action (ACJPS). There is significance for cooperation among members of this sector, as they acknowledge a threat to one organisation to be a threat to the general work and reform they aspire toward. In fact, the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS), a center working to promote democracy in Sudan, stated in a press release after this incident that they call on the government of Sudan to allow for those organisations “to re-open and continue their *peaceful work* in support of civil society initiatives to *promote democracy and cultural diversity* in Sudan”, and suggest the government should “respect the right of Sudanese people to *peacefully protest* and fully exercise their *rights to freedom of assembly, association and expression* as recognized by the Interim National Constitution of 2005” [emphasis mine] (ACJPS, 2017). The framing of their demands expresses

the political consequences of the action to shut down CSOs. The emphasis on “cultural diversity” is in reference to the ethnic conflicts in the country. The organisations that were shut down and those who supported them in the demonstration see their function as actively working against the marginalization of certain ethnic groups or cultures and are instead calling for embracing Sudan’s cultural diversity. Further, the framing of the argument is consistently formed around the ideas of democracy and the Rule of Law, appealing to both national and international mechanisms of Human Rights and legal justice. This shows the connection that NGOs, and the strategies they use to protect themselves and each other, have to international frameworks and networks.

3.1.3 SIHA Network staff on state engagement

SIHA Network is an organisation which practices advocacy for women’s rights and uses a Human Rights framework. Their positions are often critical of government policy, laws and the nature of the regime’s treatment of women and marginalized communities (SIHA Network). I asked the staff about their experiences of the state’s engagement with the organisation, how they navigate the role of HAC and how it impacts their work. This participant shares how she defines their role in the context of surveillance, the threat of closures and the possible arrest of staff.

KS: What’s the role of HAC in these issues?

Sarah: Mastermind. HAC is actually the government body that is in charge of all the NGOs. They have the first and final word. If they decided now that they want to shut down SIHA, even if we’re not really doing anything. At the same time, it’s not only something that happens to us, it can even happen to INGOs. When I was working for ICRC, we were [our programs were] stopped for a very long time because we were suspended. So, if you’re in the good side you’re ok, but you can’t really [trust them?]. I think this is one of the big issues. But I wouldn’t put it all on HAC, I would say that it’s more of policies

from the government, maybe also from NISS as well. HAC is the thing that's apparent to us, but it can be coming from others who over-rank them as well. But they're the masterminds.

When asked if HAC impedes on SIHA's ability to function in terms of their projects, Sarah said no. Another participant, Amina, also state that HAC does not cause their organisation any direct problems and does not impede on their function. She stated that SIHA Network abide by regulation, including keeping HAC informed on funding and what projects are being conducted. She explained further what differentiates their organisation and why they don't face direct problems:

Amina: HAC doesn't limit us. Our situation is a little different. We are a network, a group of organisations that is [inaudible]. The ability to register in HAC comes to us from the fact that these people [the organisations] are themselves registered in HAC, the associations and organisations, they all register in HAC. HAC's registration of networks depends on the registration of associations and that they're abiding by their regulations. Then we go and register and we do the financial report when there is a general assembly meeting, which is the norm. Before the meeting we do the financial report and a report on all activities of the network and the organisation, and then they do the general assembly meeting.

It is worth exploring what qualifies as directly influencing or impeding the function of an organisation. While HAC was defined as a "mastermind" by Sarah, they were subsequently described as an entity with little influence on the functioning of their work by the same participant. It can be that their goals and larger objectives are being restrained by HAC and the state broadly, but the work they do directly through their projects all abide by the laws and codes imposed on them and so nothing is actively or directly impeded on as a result. The state's practice of surveillance thus makes it so that the NGOs practice self-surveillance (or self-security, a concept I will explore further) in the projects they pursue. SIHA Network is aware of

this, which was clear through interviews with several participants. Despite not necessarily coming head to head with the state through the legal issues, they actively view the state as impeding on their work in terms of their larger pursuits towards social justice, development, and the attainment of Human Rights. It is also possible that the state is actively working against what they hope to achieve, in terms of state-sanctioned corruption, Human Rights abuses, conflict, poverty, and so on. In that regard, the state is perceived as an enemy in addition to surveillance.

Below, I ask Amina to further explain the role of HAC:

KS: Can you talk a bit more detail about the role of HAC specifically in what is happening?

Amina: The role of HAC is – there are no root changes. HAC is a body, a body that demands you of certain rules that you do, certain membership, certain [inaudible], and certain laws. The problem isn't in HAC though, the problem is in the fact that there is a body higher than HAC. Talking about this topic is difficult.

KS: Yes, if there's anything you don't want to say, it's okay.

Amina: All the organisations that were shut down were not shut down by HAC. Even, Salma, Khatim Adlan Centre, TRACS, and they had court hearings and stuff. So, the thing is, you are abiding by all of HAC's regulations, you have the registration, the annual registration, you can be registered today and tomorrow be shut down.

KS: Okay, have there been any problems that happened to SIHA or any other experience you have with HAC or any government body that shut down an organisation or had a problem or something?

Amina: Salma was shut down. Khatim Adlan was shut down. TRACS was shut down. SUDIA, a while back. SIHA's office in Nyala was shut down, in 2012 or 2013.

This is complicating further what HAC is and the use of their mechanisms by the state. It is contradictory that they are an entity whose rules are to be followed and are viewed as a threat by several participants, while Amina states that they are not the actual problem. State

surveillance comes from different angles and directions and this participant is expressing the view that the issue is not with this particular government body, but rather the “body higher than HAC”. She expresses that HAC is an entity whose existence is logical within the state’s formation and goals as it is there to monitor and measure the work of NGOs and ensure productivity, good management, and so on. While many participants describe it in aggressive and repressive ways, they simultaneously, like Amina, show that HAC is simply an entity doing its “job” and is not the one centrally responsible for the shutting down of NGOs. It is, of course, linked to their surveillance. But if it’s not shutting them down directly and it’s not directly impeding on their work, then what is it doing and why is it causing such hostility toward the state? Is it viewed as a mechanism of fear only? Or is it a source upon which to place all these problems? The participant’s statement is particularly indicative of fear and surveillance:

Amina: Talking about this topic is difficult.

KS: Yes, if there’s anything you don’t want to say it’s okay.

The concern for safety and the difficulty in even speaking of the topic is clear. As discussed in Chapter 2, this concern was also incorporated into the interview structure and methodology. However, it is in particular topics that participants expressed their concerns and fear of talking. In another interview, a participant asked me to turn off the recording so he can share more anecdotes, obviously what was said cannot be shared. This act leads to other questions about the nature of the topics that prompt a participant to not share. This also leads to questions about how the methodology and interview process can influence what is said.

In regard to understanding the motivations of the state’s engagements with NGOs, this participant relates HAC to corruption:

KS: Do you think that the tensions between the government and organisations, like SIHA, that funding can have an impact on it? For example, the government would say “you’re getting funding from his donor, we’re going to get in your way”. Do you think that this has an impact on SIHA?

Elham: It happens. Even organisations which aren’t civil society organisations, but the big ones working on development and agriculture. They could be making things difficult for them in terms of their funding. Firstly, they want to take money, this is important. Like, as SIHA you go to IDP camps outside Khartoum, then you’d find HAC there asking who you are and where you’re coming from. So, they would want money. And then they want to know who you’re working with. And in that case, they either bring you to court for leaking national information to others, or they... anyway they have a way to get in your way. Like, I don’t know what information you could leak. But I’m sure that their biggest priority is to take money from these organisations.

This participant sees financial corruption in the actions of the state towards NGOs, saying that all HAC wants is money, defining their relationship toward NGOs that way. HAC’s interruption of the work that NGOs do has to do with them wanting a specific end: financial gain. However, this is not all they’re seen to be, as other participants also express the way they actively work against the work of NGOs, so it has to do with more than just money. Perhaps this participant’s statements are an attempt to rationalise HAC’s actions by associating it with a specific tangible thing: money. That is, they’re simplifying that “their biggest priority is to take money from these organisations” (Interview Elham) as a way to *materialise* their pursuits.

KS: Can you talk about the tension between government policy, government bodies, like HAC for example, and SIHA’s work?

Kamal: Yea. Well HAC is an institute that is built to monitor organisations and to actually enforce and dictate the way organisations should go about carrying their work, which is limiting the civil work space for us. So, yes, the tension is there because it’s simply forcing organisations to do certain things, according to what the regime dictates for HAC to do. So, we cannot go advocate against something and [inaudible], we’re going to advocate against this policy that you guys came up with and that the government came up with. HAC will tell us, “no, this is not within your interests, don’t do this and it doesn’t fall in line with our interests, so you guys better stop”. That’s why HAC is – that’s

essentially the point of HAC. It's actually to limit the space for civil society and NGOs working. So that's the tension that, that's the problem that everyone has with HAC. It's another body or another extension of the government.

KS: Does SIHA have any specific problems with HAC or with government policy because of that?

Kamal: We have issues with the institute as a whole, the whole idea of HAC. But, as for us, we are actually registered under HAC, because we can't function and we can't work if we don't register in HAC. We are already registered, but we have issues with HAC as in its existence but for now we don't have issues. If we had issues with HAC we won't get our licence, we won't be registered in HAC, which is going to limit our work capacity. So far, no, we don't.

Though adamantly critiquing the institution, the participant also clarifies that SIHA Network is not actively facing issues with HAC. This points to the structural disapproval of the institution, in its capacity to dictate what organisations can and cannot do, describing that the point of it is “actually to limit the space for civil society and NGOs working” (Interview with Kamal). She describes that SIHA Network is against HAC institutionally even when the organisations is not directly affected. This shows an institutional and structural resistance. It may also be a sign of solidarity between activists and organisations, that they are fundamentally against HAC for being repressive towards other organisations though not necessarily their own. Exploring further this participant's opinions of the role of HAC with NGOs in general, he explains how the ability to refuse registration and the monitoring of funding impacts NGOs:

KS: Do other NGOs face the same challenges with HAC or rather do they have the same issue with HAC as an institution but still registered. Like, is it the same dynamic?

Kamal: Yes. I can give you an example of one. For example, I used to work in Salma, which is a women's resource centre, it works in gender issues and studies. And it got closed down. And it's an organisation but it's registered as a charity company, it's a non-profit company. It's registered as a non-profit company so they didn't have to register with HAC. And we still worked on

civil society work. We were still working with the activists. So, that causes a lot of problems with HAC. HAC was trying to force us to register into HAC. And one of the things you have to remember is that, all the donations and donors' money, actually there was a lot sometimes, you just don't know so you have to go check on it. But the money actually had to go through HAC for certain projects. So, had to go pay HAC and then the money will follow through to the NGOs, it's questionable but uh, anyways yeah. Yeah, Salma, they had a lot of projects that was shut down by security and it was all because after some investigation we discovered that HAC was actually part of. Uh, then again, I know of another, a couple of other organisations, that are refuse – HAC is refusing to register them, just because they're not affiliated to the regime. Like SUDIA, for example, is one of them, and a couple of other organisations. So, yeah, a lot of NGOs in Sudan and organisations actually have a lot of problems with HAC.

Several organisations do not register with HAC and find other ways to register in order to avoid being monitored by HAC. Other participants, including Fatima, explained that NGOs would register with the Ministry of Culture as a cultural organisation, or as Kamal is stating above, they may register as a non-profit company. As Amina also stated, several of the organisations that had been shut down are not being shut down by HAC themselves, assuming because they are registered elsewhere or because they are being shut down by NISS directly. However, the narrative that Kamal is describing indicates that the monitoring functions of HAC are active regardless of whether an organisation is under their jurisdiction or not. This would mean that their surveillance of NGOs and activists in general go beyond what they are legally ascribed to do. Further, Kamal describes their role in that as specifically going after NGOs “not affiliated to the regime”. The distinction between NGOs who are affiliated with the regime and those who do not is a consistent factor in who is surveilled and punished by this body that acts to monitor anti-regime activity.

Below, Elham explores further the regime's position against NGOs doing work on Human Rights:

KS: So, as we know there are organisations whose situation and work is made uneasy by the government, like through HAC. Does SIHA have this problem?

Elham: Of course. Anyone working on something related to human rights or something that has to do with human rights cases, then the government is very [sensitive] toward them and make their work difficult. Even if they're not working on legal cases specifically or something. Like for example, there was an organisation that was working on something to do with cholera, so this is something health related and has nothing to do with human rights or anything, they're trying to provide access to health care for people that aren't given access to it by the government, NISS and the government was really making things difficult for them. Why? Because they know that they're not doing their job in these things. They're not providing good development, good healthcare and good education. And because they're not doing their job in these aspects, they counter the civil society organisations. Other than that, they also think that civil society organisations are giving information to other places [the West]. So, NISS and the government would always be impeding on their work. Also, they want money, as usual. So, these are the main reasons that I see.

This implies that work towards larger aims of social justice are considered to be a threat to the regime. They point to the frustration of attempting to tackle issues and have that be met with hostility to the point that it is shut down. Another participant, Hind, explained that the cholera crisis which was taking place in Sudan at the time of these interviews, was a real moment of contention with the government by activists. She stated that the lack of response by the state toward the crisis was a violation of their responsibility toward its citizens, thus while this is primarily a health issue and about the deaths of people so seemingly unpolitical, the view that the state's failure is responsible for the spread of the disease makes it political. This is an example of the ways that the regime's positions toward activists and NGOs comes from a response to critiques of the state's failures or state-sanctioned violence. When Elham distinguishes that any NGO working on Human Rights is deemed a threat, it is seen that the demand for Human Rights is a response to their lack, to the state-sanctioned Human Rights abuses. Therefore, the state's

mechanisms of surveillance are responding to such threats to their hold on power, and exerting the state's power in ways to protect the regime's existence.

3.1.3.1 *Ta'min* ('amin): self-surveillance and self-security

Ta'min ('amin) translates to securing oneself, it is a commonly used phrase among political activists to refer to the ways that they prevent their arrest or being caught doing something. In a way, it is a practice of self-surveillance. SIHA Network staff members discussed the legal mechanisms, HAC and others, that influenced their work and the practice of self-surveillance and self-security.

KS: Are there any problems specifically that happened to SIHA in the past little while?

Elham: In the past while, no. But we're always careful.

KS: Careful how? What do you do?

Elham: Careful, like, first of all, when someone is coming into SIHA they'll be *mi'amin rooho* [securing themselves] well, they know where they're going, they watch behind them and in front of them before they come into the office and work. They don't open the door for just anyone. All the basics of security. That's the first thing, the second thing is that even in our projects, when we're going out we know where we're going and coming from and who we're meeting, so that we're not in an unsafe position with the government. Because if the government comes and shuts down our work then that's it, it would be finished. Like we're working and we have a message that we're sharing, if it's shut down then that's it.

The practice of self-surveillance or self-security comes from a deep understanding of the political atmosphere through lived experience. People acquire knowledge of how to navigate and move through constant surveillance in order to protect themselves and their work. This experience and knowledge of how to move through a space physically and politically is brought

to the institutionalised NGO space. Individuals with political activist backgrounds, who bring their politics into this institutionalised space, also bring their expertise and knowledge of these systems. The fear of the institution being shut down and the work ending motivates self-surveillance. The foundations of NGOs, in particular the movement of unemployed skilled professionals who brought their political awareness and experience with state surveillance to NGOs, is a critical part of this narrative. It becomes a characteristic of the sector that is passed down and normalised through different staff and among activists. Elham is confident that anyone coming to their office would know how to practice *ta'min*, they would know how to be discrete and not put anyone else in danger, and that trust among activists is also a critical part of a community. Below Elham further describes *ta'min* as a tactic of other organisations:

KS: Do you think that other organisations pursue the same practices that you just said, like in terms of *ta'meen* [security] and stuff? Do they do the same things?

Elham: To a certain extent, yes. They would be doing things similar to us. Most of the civil society organisations in Sudan try to be extra careful in order to continue their work, they force the work they're doing on to HAC. From the beginning of the registration process until later. HAC and the government would have an idea about it, but to the greatest extent possible one has to find a way to not expose themselves to danger, of arrest or confiscating possessions and after they detain and release you then they shut down the organisation. So, I think they are very careful. And there's been cases of people who were detained, for example TRACS³. They were in a meeting and they came and arrested them and confiscated their computers and did some very horrible things to them. Their court cases are still going on. So, at that time all the other civil society organisations were definitely being very careful.

³ Several participants made reference to TRACS as an example of a crackdown on an NGO, it is discussed further in Chapter 4.

She emphasises the importance of the tactic while surveillance remains present. While HAC and the government continue to monitor all activities, and functioning of the organisation, the staff and activists still have to try as much as possible to maintain some discretion in order to avoid putting themselves in danger. The danger itself is well known, it is “arrest or confiscating possessions and after they detain and release you then they shut down the organisation” and, to some extent, avoidable. The awareness of the danger, and how bad it can be, is particularly important. The history of the NGO sector was developed, in part, by individuals who were fired from their jobs as a result of surveillance and the state’s hold on power. The ultimate consequences through personal experience or witnessing them occur to others within the same community gives a concrete example of how bad it can get. The punishment is definitive, and thus its avoidance is consistent.

3.2 The international community, donors, and NGOs

Part of the framing of this research revolves around a recognition of the Sudanese government’s hostility towards the international community, international humanitarian work, and the West in general. The sense is that these organisations pose a threat to the state

Ali explains some implications of that hostility:

KS: Can you tell me about the tensions between government and NGOs in Sudan? Especially considering what you’re saying about NGOs having formed a sort of alternative government.

Ali: The tension arose because people “loyalty” somehow has been won by the NGOs rather than the government. And I remember I did an evaluation study for Oxfam in Darfur and we had a questionnaire, and in one of the questionnaires we actually asked the people over there, and their answer to us was, at that time of course 1990s, if Oxfam is a political party they would vote for Oxfam and not any other political party. So that was a clear indication that, in terms of the support, in terms of the sympathy, in terms of the loyalty, etc.

the people are more aligned with the NGOs rather than the government. And for the government, this was very envious, they have now someone who is competing.

In this example, the participant explains how an international NGO, Oxfam, was preferred by Sudanese citizens as a political body to the Sudanese government. This attitude places the regime in a kind of precarity, as an international organisation is seen as more favourable than the government to its citizens. The participant describes the government's reaction as "envious," connecting it to the expulsion of 13 international NGOs by the state in 2009. While Ali does not specify if the government was aware of this study that he is citing, it represents a sentiment that the government could be aware of and "envious" of. The regime's neglect of certain marginalized populations in Darfur in providing services and security, and consequently, those populations' rejection of the regime prompts them to look to other bodies as alternatives. The frustration of those bodies being internationally funded, backed by Western political ideals and interests is linked to that envy. Further, in the context of Darfur, where fighting was taking place between insurgents and counter-insurgents, one side supporting the regime, the issue of regime support thus had larger implications (Mamdani, 2010).

While this study is not necessarily one the government would have been aware of, there was a sentiment they may be conscious of: the fact that services are provided to populations that they neglect and how those populations, which may already be rebelling against them or not supporting them as a result of their marginalization, are looking toward internationally funded and Western political backed organisations, over the interests of the government. It may be that such groups are seen as more susceptible to being supportive of something that is not government backed, and especially in the context of Darfur.

In addition, the idea of the study the participant describes is in itself interesting. It begs the question of why Oxfam was looking to know this in the first place as well. What does this say about the role that NGOs think they have for themselves? That is, does an NGO like Oxfam consider itself to be a possible political actor and see its potential as competition to the regime, if it is asking such questions? While the actual questionnaire cannot be directly referenced and thus its existence cannot be confirmed, it is still significant that the participant brought it up. It implies a genuine and regular concern on the part of NGOs and the government on whether or not NGOs can be political actors, so much so that such a questionnaire is remembered and expressed as an example of this issue.

KS: Can you also talk about—because Oxfam for example is an international NGO—so can you elaborate more on the dynamic of an international NGO being seen this way politically?

Ali: Part of it also has to do with the government's stance in the international arena. And if you want to talk about the 1990s, this was the time when Sudan was characterised as a kind of—for some states—supporting terror, a pariah state. So, seeing an international organisation like Oxfam working and gaining support, this had somewhat raised concerns about the government that they might be somehow responsible for that. And this also explains to you the expulsion of the 13 international NGOs. That was 2010 or 2011, something like that time. So, there was a clear kind of—the government was very envious of the role they were playing that time and even though this was very important for the people in those areas.

As the participant continues, he relates this Oxfam questionnaire to the 2009 expulsion of 13 international NGOs from Sudan. He makes the point that the government's hostility toward Oxfam and other international agencies could have originated from this role that Oxfam was playing. While the government's expulsion of these international NGOs did harm the beneficiaries who were receiving services from the organisation, the regime's stance against such a threat to its position as the one and only political actor is understood from this perspective.

Thinking through the state's recognition of the racist paternalism of development, in the West's involvement in their state affairs, while being critical of the state's surveillance which results, is the challenge of this project. Participants expressed the issue of their relationship with international agencies in terms of the precarity of funding. The majority of participants expressed the problem to be the precarity of their organisations' work as a result of funding. In particular, they expressed how funding themes, which change periodically by international institutions, determine the kinds of projects that can be done. For example, one year there would be calls for proposals for funding in education projects and so organisations working in other issues have a hard time finding financial support.

A particularly interesting pattern among participants was the mention of the refugee crisis as a main deterrent of funding. The current refugee crisis in Europe, in which Sudan is a migration point for refugees coming from Eastern Africa toward Libya to cross the sea to Europe, has meant that there are European efforts to stop this migration pattern by keeping them in Sudan and asking for assistance to do so.

It was somewhat surprising to me that participants largely frame their concerns around the precarity of their organisations rather than a critique of the ideology of development as neocolonial. This is not say that the latter is not their view, but it was not a topic that participants often discussed in interviews. Instead, they were more likely to discuss state efforts of surveillance and their issues among other activists and staff in the NGO sector. Spivak (1999) warns of essentializing the colonizer/colonized relationship and producing the West, international agencies, and their neocolonial strategies as the main issue or concern and to direct grievance solely to them, thus, not focusing on the violence or neglect that is sanctioned and being pushed by the state itself. Following that, I recognise that participants did not see the main

concern to be international agencies and foreign funding, and thus I prioritised how they framed and defined their concerns.

Chapter 4: Pursuing activism within NGOs

4.1 Types of NGOs

As we have seen in the previous chapter, state engagement and the influence of international agencies can impact how NGOs function and how activism can be practiced, how individuals interact with each other and how they categorise themselves according to political ideologies and proximity to the regime. In particular, I explore the overlap in activism and NGOs, the role surveillance plays in pursuing institutionalised activism and how communities develop with the professional/political sector. Participants articulated the role that state surveillance and state-sanctioned Human Rights abuses and corruption play a role in how NGOs politicise and take up a role that government fails to. The view of a politicised NGO or an NGO with political potential can be a threat to the state.

Following the categorizations made by Badri (2008) and Nageeb (2008) of different types of feminists and NGOs based on political ideology, proximity to the regime and views on international agencies, I explore how participants articulated these distinctions. A particularly interesting finding of this research is how NGO staff and activists talk about each other in a way that frames the work they do, their cooperation and solidarity, or lack thereof, and also what they see as the main concerns facing the sector. In discussing the tensions between organisations and the state, and the reasons that NGOs are shut down, one participant, whose organisation was shut down, and he and his colleagues were arrested, explained:

Akram: For me, I see that the situation for Sudanese [civil] society organisations, the government's position toward them, is a position of hostility, because, if we're talking about NGOs, nongovernmental organisations – the government made their organisations, which we in the Sudanese civil society call the GNGOs, which is governmental nongovernmental organisations, and they're everywhere. Organisations that are known to be governmental, and this is an attack on the idea of organisations. An organisation, we would call a

nongovernmental organisation, N-G-O, right? No, those are governmental ones, so they're governmental organisations, nongovernmental.

The participant is describing organisations which are created or supported by the government. While they follow the structure of an NGO, they are considered governmental because of that political affiliation. They are therefore referred to as a GNGO, meaning a governmental NGO, as opposed to many NGOs and civil society organisations which are perceived to be anti-regime or, at least, not supportive of the regime. The Arabized term GNGO is particularly interesting. In Arabic, *munazama*, which translates to organisation, is how people refer to an NGO or civil society organisation. Therefore, there's an appropriation of the English term NGO here, as the Arabic does not include the word "nongovernmental". While this participant is pointing out the irony of the term "governmental nongovernmental organisation," it is only ironic when it is broken down that way in English, as in Arabic the distinction of the word nongovernmental is not necessarily there. Similarly, Nageeb's (2008) categorization of *munazamat elgender*, which translates to gender organisations, also uses an appropriation of the English word gender. The use of English as the language of NGOs, the language of development, of funding agencies and of understanding Human Rights, speaks to this.

The sentiment that Akram is expressing is the idea that this is an attack on the nature of the work. Nongovernmental organisations are named as such because they are not affiliated with the government, and thus have the ability to conduct the work governments do not do, provide the services the state does not, and even criticise the state policies. The idea that the nature of NGO work is being attacked was a common sentiment among participants who held similar political views against the regime. Another participant, also made reference to GNGOs:

Ahmed: So, in these NGOs you'll find the leadership, the topics [that are focused on] are strongly affiliated with the ruling party and the government. Like how you find some NGOs, ONGOs maybe... it's the first time I come up with this term.

Interviewer: What is it?

Ahmed: Opposition NGOs. So just like how we have GNGOs, we have ONGOs which are opposition NGOs. And then you have the DNGOs, which are the donor NGOs. Donor created and driven NGOs, they push an agenda of the donors.

With the word opposition, a distinction within NGOs is made that mirrors the political environment. As Sudan is an authoritarian regime, though technically a multi-party democracy, the political field is full of accusations and labels by people of being pro government, not opposition, too oppositional and so on. While participants who generally did not approve of the ways that NGOs are politicized, thinking their focus should be less to do with attacks on the regime as a whole and refuting policies independent of the regime, these participants also do this kind of labelling. While their interest lies in not making the NGO field a heavily politicised space, divided along those pro and anti-regime sides, they are also mirroring the political space through their language. Ahmed has some further thoughts on the ways that NGOs and political spaces are affiliated:

Ahmed: A lot of the NGO activists, or activism, a majority of them come from a political activism background, so they've brought with them their political track of how they do things. Quite a lot are politically active or politically affiliated with a political party or entity. And they work under the umbrella of an NGO. And there they have difficulty trying to separate which half they're in in terms of decision making, positions and so forth.

Ahmed: I think the ideology and the approach of how they do things. For example, when something happens in the political sphere, we are an NGO in civil society – like for example, Sudan Call. The network will say we should publish a press statement about Sudan Call, about what the position of the Confederation [of Civil Society Organisations] toward Sudan Call is. So, what

does that have to do with this? Like I can understand, when political parties publish statements like that. Statements are more of a trait or a practice or a tool that political parties use. And they do them so they can state and document their position on issues. And so, the same thing happens with these politicised activists [activists] in NGOs who come and say, “We have to document and state our position. If you want to be up for election, you should state a position.”

A critique by Jad (2004) has been that NGOs compete against each other for funding rather than work together to form something like a social movement which can be active in creating change. In Ahmed’s words, he expresses the frustration and difficulty in building alliances and associations among NGOs, because all of them in this Confederation of Civil Society Organisations have different approaches to political questions and issues. The diversity of perspectives can be yet another barrier to building something of a social movement.

Another difficulty is how NGOs view each other when faced with political conflict. I interviewed someone from an organisation called TRACS who spent a year in prison, the NGOs offices were raided and shut down, and NISS arrested several of their staff. The organisation, which has political roots is a cultural and training centre, mainly a computer training and literacy centre, with a Human Rights angle. Their registration was rejected on grounds that they were a business centre and shouldn’t be doing Human Rights work. Since they had participants coming into their office from the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile, both areas of heavy violence and ethnic conflict, NISS claimed that the organisation was being funded by armed groups and that they are supporting insurgents. This is how he describes it:

Akram: And, you know, they arrested us in such a weird and theatrical way, they attached so many charges to us – and then in court they ruled on charges of spying, treason against the constitutional order – they have this package, you know, just like what they’re doing to Dr. Mudawi now.

The “package” he’s referring to is the set of charges, spying and treason, that are the grounds for arrest against activists. Dr. Mudawi is an activist who had been in detention under those charges for months at the time of that interview. Several participants noted his case when discussing the relationship with the state.

Akram: My experience showed me that I was arrested in Sudan because of my activism in defense of Human Rights. They arrested me and my colleagues to attack our activities, because the activities we were conducting exposes the government, exposes the violations that they practice. And this is my role in life, it’s the way I’ve chosen. And I will never give up, I’m an activist, I’ll continue even if my neck goes, along with the thing that I believe in, I’m willing to do that, I will be happy. I went through a very difficult experience, it was horrible, there was a huge amount of torture, Khaldah, psychologically and physically. If you can imagine, a year and six days, you can’t sleep properly, you can’t eat what you want to eat, your movement is limited, you’re not allowed visits.

Akram then goes on to describe the conditions of the cell he was sharing, their access to bathrooms and so on. Another participant also brought up this case in the interview:

Salma: NISS can just raid the organisation, arrest people. So, I think when you have a lot of different issues, it’s very difficult not to become political. For example, the case of TRACS, they were not doing political work. They were not really advocating for something, they were not doing political work. But then, at the end of the day, they were arrested and put in jail by the NISS. The government basically tarnished their reputation as spies, so what do you do in this case? You know, it becomes a very difficult situation for the civil society basically. And this is why, for example, a lot of civil society organisations chose to stay away from them. They chose not to go to the trial, chose to not really express solidarity. Because of this fear.

This again expresses the ways that NGOs view each other’s political stances, and in particular, the issue of solidarity. The ways that NGOs which are politically active are viewed as not to be associated with, whose work is tarnished as a result and is not supported, even at times when support is most needed. Several people I interviewed brought up this case. It was

particularly significant in light of the question of how the state engages with the threat of NGOs, and it's particularly significant in thinking about how the damage done is not just to the work of the organisation themselves or even to the individuals who are arrested and imprisoned, but to the space as a whole and to the potential for social justice work through activism which has found its home in organisations.

The potential for institutionalised activism is grounded in the foundations of the NGO sector's rise beginning with politically active professionals who had become unemployed under the new regime. However, whether it is practiced in a way that activists approve of was a point of contention among participants. Several participants critiqued it. Salma gives an account of what she views as flawed:

KS: Do you think that it [political activism] can be effectively practiced in CSOs or NGOs in Sudan?

Salma: Uh, no. No. Because, uh, because for many people right now in the civil society, umm, this for them is basically a paycheque, you know? It's not, like for many people it's not, they're not committed, to even be part of the civil society and what it means and what it entails. For them, this is like, it's an economic gain, right. So basically, they don't want to risk it, you know. So now there's a lot of fear, so people, many people are – I mean, the tougher things get politically, security wise, economically, people are, are basically less willing to take risks, you know. So right now, for some people, this for them is basically like, you come you, implement the project, you go, you get your paycheque and that's it, you know. So, no it can't. I don't think so. And the other thing is, political activism in Sudan, is deformed. Okay? I mean, you cannot have, I mean, you don't really have like, you don't, you just don't have the space to do anything, okay. So, everything becomes so deformed that, like, this wall of fear. A lot of people end up leaving the country eventually so there's a lot of like, kind of, brain drain from the political, like, circles. Umm, there's lot of like undemocratic structures and problems basically. Because also, I think, this gap that, I mean, a lot of political leaders and members had to leave, and like, in 1990, and then they only came back, basically 15 years later. This meant that they kind of like lost a lot of their constituencies, they lost touch with their bases and they even, they kind of – the normal political development of, like, a political structure never happened in Sudan. It was

always aborted, like coo coo coo [sound of destruction]. So, in a way the political structures we have are deformed. You know?

KS: Okay. Umm, do you think that there is an attempt of like CSOs to fill that gap?

Salma: Yeah.

KS: That is caused by that deformation?

Salma: Yeah. I mean it's [inaudible], initially this was like why the civil society organisations were started in the, like in the early 90s, right. But then, uh, it became unclear that this is not the case, you know. So, I think, I think it's difficult, no. I don't think it can be done basically.

A common sentiment among participants was this idealizing of how the activist space *should be* and criticising it from within (the activists and members of the community) as well as the forces on the outside (the state and international agencies). This speaks to a view of how political activism should be practiced, in its organisation and structure, and how it should be permitted to do so by the state, or even supported. I interpret this as a desire for an institutionalised activism, one that is organised and founded on common goals and not “deformed” by state surveillance or the activists and NGO staff themselves.

When asked what the biggest challenge to NGOs was, SIHA staff members described the possibility of the NGO being shut down, low wages, long hours, unpaid labour, management and the ways that upper management control everything and are part of an elite circle. Further, younger participants tended to criticise upper management more and point out these issues, while older participants did not.

4.2 SIHA Network: The overlap in development, activism, and advocacy

In exploring the thread of activism, the structure that NGOs can provide for it, and development as an ideology, I asked SIHA Network staff what they thought of that link. Here is what different people said:

KS: And for you personally, do you think there's a difference between political activism and development and human rights advocacy? What do you think the relationship is?

Elham: It's a bit mixed up. Activism work can work in any issue, and the way it wants. But NGOs determine things for you, you have to work in what exactly. Like for example, we want to work in women's issues and gender issues and we can, but outside of it we can do whatever work we want – political work for example. Because first of all, NGOs get funding for a specific thing, and secondly, the government doesn't leave NGOs alone. So, they're always cautious. But activism is without boundaries in the work it can do.

KS: And in terms of what you just described, and also development or humanitarian work?

Elham: Development work, which is done through NGOs. It's something that should also be done by activists. But the idea is that not all [regular] people can do it because they don't have the money for it. When we want to do work in development we find we have a financial problem. But an NGO would have donors that they can request from. So, they can implement their work. If I understood your question correctly?

Elham expresses frustration at the structure of NGOs, as the structure itself confines the possibility of the work to donor interests, and it also attracts issues with the government. There is a recognition of activism as something that does not have to be funded and can push boundaries with the state because it does not need the state's formal approval. However, the lack of state recognition of activism can go hand in hand with many activists' resistance of the state and their anti-regime sentiments. Activism is able to push the boundaries of the state because it is directed against the regime and its policies. Therefore, the importance of the state as a site of resistance,

as Foucault (1991) describes through the process of governmentality, and its recognition as a barrier to resistance as well, is at play here.

Sarah describes the relationship differently and with a focus on how they are linked:

Sarah: Umm, they're all related to each other. If you have a breach, for example, in human rights, which is what creates human rights activity, but at the very same time, we're in countries like the context like Sudan's, which we really need like – we can think of them like a pyramid, not a pyramid but a triangle, where each one leads to the other, especially in our context. Human rights, human rights advocacy, development activism, without activism then development is only possible through activism to do a lot of things. not just activism politically but also we can have different kinds of activism. people will get arrested and detained, because we're in Sudan. then it will come to human rights and our advocacy, we need ABCD and ask for our human rights, but we're deprived from it so we have to demand it. So, it's more of like a circle, an endless circle that we go through.

Sarah emphasises the link between the development, activism and Human Rights advocacy, insisting on their relationship to each other. This follows a view of NGOs as a site for activism as their work makes demands of institutions to attain rights. Kamal said:

KS: So, do you think that SIHA engages with activism, or political activism specifically?

Kamal: Not in a direct way. Because it's an organisation, and it's liable to being closed at any time if we grab too much attention. So, we have to be very careful about the way we conduct ourselves. We can act behind the scenes, supporting activists, other organisations, local organisations, CBOs, in terms of advocacy we help them to build campaigns, and advocacy strategies and whatnot. But we can't directly go out there and say this is SIHA organisation doing this, this and that, and demanding this, this and that, because as you know [inaudible] on civil society and any organisation that would actually act or grab too much attention would probably close down. We can't directly. We are involved, of course, we have a network. We have a network of youth, CBOs, we have a network of organisation, partner organisations. We're well informed and well imbedded in society and activism and whatnot, but we cannot quote unquote "be in the spotlight".

The articulation of those demands, as Sarah said, as Human Rights or toward the state brings together theories by Spivak and Foucault. In particular, the role of the state in the attainment of everything, the centralised importance of it as the provider of services and thus the one that can take them away, thus directing activists' energy towards the state. Keeping in my understanding of development as an ideology (Spivak, 1999), and relevant critiques of NGOs (Jad, 2004), I am exploring how an NGO may or may not be the space for activism in the climate in Sudan. Is it that the NGO can provide the sustained tools for activism through formal recognition and funds? Or does the precarity of it through shifts in funding and constant surveillance and threat of closure make it undesirable for sustained activism?

Participants provided a nuanced discussion on the potential and existence of activism with the NGO structure. While they emphasised that NGOs cannot be expected to perform activism in the way they defined it, and that institutional barriers such as state policy and funding needs, were limiting, they also connected the relationship between the advocacy work done in the SIHA Network to that of activism. Further, many of the participants that were interviewed had some activist background, which led them to their interest in working in an NGO. This expresses the findings made in Chapter 3 on the politically aware individuals who make up the NGO sector, therefore creating spaces within organisations that highlight the significance of politics and the role of the state in resistance. Participants also emphasised that the threat of closure by the state was grounded in the view that NGOs are pursuing anti-regime activism. This complicates the perception of NGOs by the state and the perception of NGOs by the staff working within them. Further, the dependency on funds could be limiting to the projects that can be conducted. However, at the SIHA Network, most participants seemed to consider funding an institutional issue rather than one they faced directly. They recognised that they rarely feel

limited by funding and saw that the funding made it possible for them to conduct projects they considered important and beneficial. The participants at SIHA Network also accounted for the critical role played by smaller organisations, particularly grassroots organisations and community-based organisations. They saw that SIHA's role was to provide structure and support to these organisations and they gained from them as well. This also brings to light the importance of solidarity between organisations in order to do the work and significance of supporting organisers at the grassroots level. In interviews with the SIHA Network staff, participants recognised the links between activism, development and advocacy, that there were limitations as well as strengths, and emphasised the way that these different forms and methods can work together through different structures and organisations.

Conclusion

In this project, I have mapped the relationships between activism, NGOs, the state, and international agencies in Sudan. I have a personal interest in this topic, as I attempt to navigate these dynamics in my activist and professional life. Therefore, my interest led me to be particularly concerned with how activists, NGO staff, and experts in the field, experience these relationships. Through interviews, I have looked at what the concerns and priorities of those in the activist and NGO sector are, how they articulate them, and how these issues can be theorized through understandings of the state, surveillance, and feminist critiques of development and NGOs.

I have explored the state's use of surveillance against activists and NGOs, viewing them as a threat to the state, and the subsequent practice of self-surveillance on the part of activists and NGO staff. I have further explored the history and potential of institutionalised activism, which refers to the practice of political activism, demanding political reform, advocating for legal and political changes, feminist organising, and connecting with the concerns of marginalized communities and advocating for them, among many other things, within institutional structures such as NGOs and other formal organisations. While this work can be done in other spaces, the increase of it taking place in NGOs throughout the Arab world (Jad, 2004) and in Sudan is a phenomenon worth exploring. Likewise, the politicisation of NGOs, as they take on more political tasks and views through politicised staff or because of a decrease in the potential for activism in other spaces, was also explored through this project. The purist of activism in different bodies and institutions, and the way that relates to the state's perception of activist NGOs, is also linked to international agencies through funding and donor interests as the formal

structure of NGOs functions through a network of international NGOs, international financial institutions, foreign policy, and the interests of the so-called international community.

Spivak (1999) provides a critique of development and the financialization of feminism. She describes the narrative of development and the ideology of development as aspects of global culture, and founded on an ideology of racialized paternalism which has led to a financialization of feminism that does not work in the interest of the subaltern but in the interest of capitalism. The colonial foundations of development, and the continuing neocolonial nature of the sector is critical to its ideology. This does not absolve the state itself of its wrongdoings. Spivak (1999) warns against essentializing the role of the colonizer to the extent that they are the cause and only target when resisting the current harsh realities of the Third World. This, in combination with critiques of NGOs, provides my theoretical framework to mapping an understanding of activism as it relates to NGOs.

Jad (2004) describes the trends in the women's movement and NGOs in the Arab world, the impact that the West's interest in democratization has had on the rise of NGOs, which has led to a lack of solidarity among women's organisations as they compete for funding, and a limited connection with the concerns of grassroots communities. Considering this critique of NGOization further, Hodzic (2014) warns of the "nostalgic imagination" (pp. 226) that idealizes past forms of women's organising and feminist activism when critiquing the structure and rise of NGOs that have been steadily rising. The concept of the non-profit industrial complex, as discussed by Rodriguez (2017), places non-profit organisations as part of a systematic structure fundamentally linked to capitalism and surveillance, and is thus a useful analytical framework for understanding NGOs. Smith (2017) links the history of non-profit industrial complex to

capitalism, philanthropic foundations that are part of corporate structures, and the constraint that these structures have on social justice organising and its potential.

Foucault's theorizing on the state and surveillance provides my theoretical framework for understanding the nature of policies and interactions between the state and activists and NGOs in Sudan. Through his theorizing on governmentality, Foucault (1991) follows the history of the development of the state into a body of the most importance in the role of citizens' lives. It is the site of all political action and thus the site of resistance as well. Foucault (1995) theorizes the mechanisms and structures of surveillance and state power, stating that citizens' knowledge of state surveillance leads them to believing they are constantly surveilled and thus practicing self-surveillance.

Building upon literature on Sudanese feminism, its foundations and history, I approached this project wanting to explore further the political and critical aspects of this topic. Hale (1997) critiques the link between the Sudanese women's movement and leftist political parties, arguing that while they have been linked in their foundations, the Sudanese Communist Party has remained a patriarchal wing to the women's movement. Badri (2008) and Nageeb (2008) both provide categories of different forms of Sudanese feminism and NGOs, based on proximity to the regime, political and religious ideology, and proximity to international agencies. Badri (2008) distinguishes between Islamist and Secularist feminists, the Islamist feminists being ones who have closer ties to the current regime and the Secularist being opposition to the regime and not abiding by Islamist ideology. Nageeb (2008) defines *munazamat elgender* (gender organisations) and *elmunazamat elisslamia* (Islamist organisations), which coincides with Badri's categories in that gender organisations adopt "gender" and Human Rights stances based

on international conventions while Islamist organisations maintain Islamist ideology, and their support of the state, as key in their approach to feminism.

These categories of Sudanese feminism led me to choose the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA Network) in Sudan as a case study. SIHA Network is a network of women's organisations in Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Somaliland, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Uganda. It upholds women's rights and Human Rights advocacy. Having been an intern in the organisation and knowing several people who had worked there, I saw it is a space attempting to practice institutionalised activism, holding advocacy as its main goal, and countering the regime and government policy in their pursuits towards women's rights and Human Rights.

I outline my methodology in Chapter 2. I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with 10 experts on the NGO sector, including activists, scholars and NGO staff, as well as six staff members at the SIHA Network to answer my research question: How has political activism been pursued through NGOs in Sudan within the context of hostile government policy and international influence? I asked participants about pursuing activism in an NGO, the history of the rise of NGOs and the foundations of the state's relationship to them, and how funding has impacted their work. I used the SIHA Network as a case study to develop a deeper understanding of how staff in one NGO view these dynamics, and the expert interviews guided this understanding with more background on understanding the NGO sector. My methodology is based on feminist in-depth interviewing, allowing the participant to guide the interview with their knowledge, expertise, and experience (Hesse-Biber, 2007). While I aspire to produce scholarly work that aligns with critical feminist ideals, I am also limited by the university's policies on ethics and research abroad which assume the role of a researcher to be White and

Westerner. I critique these formalities and assumptions as I continue to explore how this has impacted my role as a researcher, my relationship to participants, and my role as a scholar in the university.

In Chapter 3, I explore how formal institutions, the state, and international agencies have impacted activists and NGOs. State practices played a critical role in the rise of NGOs. The current regime, which came to power in 1989, led to a huge number of politically conscious civil servants being let go from their jobs and then coming to work in the NGO sector which began to steadily grow from the '90s onwards. I argue that state surveillance has played a critical role in the rise of NGOs as it was partly due to the surveillance of civil servants who were politically opposed to the regime that led to them being fired and thus contributed to a politically conscious NGO sector. I explore how elements of the Voluntary and Humanitarian Work Act of 2006 and the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) work to monitor and regulate the NGO sector. I argue that this law and HAC act as an apparatus of state surveillance. I use the SIHA Network as a case study to explore how state surveillance has led to activists and NGOs having a strong sense of *ta'min*, which translates to self-security, and corresponds to the concept of self-surveillance. I argue that the Sudanese state's constant surveillance of the NGO sector has led individuals to be highly aware of their surroundings and practice self-surveillance. State surveillance acts as a major factor in how NGOs define themselves and each other, and how they articulate their concerns and priorities. I discuss the international community's engagement with the state and with activists and NGOs. I found that participants were concerned with the precarity of funding on the whole but did not articulate strong critiques of international agencies as neocolonial projects. Participants were more interested in discussing their role among other activists and NGO staff, or with the state than they were in international funding. I understand this to be a

reflection of their own priorities and concerns, a reflection of urgency and what they consider important. While the larger implications of funded work are clear, it does not pose the same level of threat to NGOs and activists as does the state. The state determines the categorisation of NGOs, how they interact with each other and within themselves.

In Chapter 4 I explore the potential and limitations of institutionalised activism. I discuss how activists and NGO staff talk about each other, how that is informed by the relationship and proximity to the state, the nature of activism practiced in NGOs, and the threat of arrest and legal action as a result of state surveillance. Participants categorised different kinds of NGOs according to their alignment or opposition to the government, extending the arguments made in Chapter 3 that certain NGOs' staff and structure have carried over a political consciousness and interest in activism in the form of opposition to the regime. Participants also shared their experiences with HAC and the National Intelligence Security Services (NISS) or experiences of their colleagues and others in the sector, expressing a prevalent issue of activists and NGOs who are not aligned with the government face. I use SIHA Network as a case study about the relationship between activism, advocacy, Human Rights and development, finding that participants often mapped a link but defined the priorities of each differently. They expressed the strong link between them but the nuanced differences in how and where different work can be practiced. While each participant named this in a different way, the discussion generally revolved around what they see as a limitation of attempting to practice activism in an institution while also recognising the potential of having an institutional structure, consistency in funding, and legal status to achieve goals.

In mapping the relationship between activists and NGOs, the state, and international agencies, the much more pronounced and definitive one was that between the NGOs which

practice activism and the state. It defines the types of NGOs and the concepts that they felt most impact their work and pursuit of activism. If more interviews were conducted with people working with NGOs that are closely affiliated with the government (the GNGOs, as several participants called them) then these results could have been different. In that case, I speculate that the way that NGOs are defined and categorised would be according to their relationship to the West and the international community as represented by international agencies granting funding, as the Sudanese government's relationship to the international community is understood to be defined by hostility and thus organisations aligned with the regime could have similar views. This could be an area for further study.

The way that participants spoke about each other – the way they assumed specific attributes to individuals based on their place of work which thus defined their political views, their ideology, their principles, and even their ethics – speaks to NGOs being more than a workplace. They are spaces where politics are fostered and where personal and professional relationships are formed, and where politics and personal connections are informed by each other. It was clear that many participants held personal attachments to specific issues and even to people. There was disapproval at the idea of an NGO director earning a lot of money when their work has to do with exposing issues related to poverty and marginalization, and when their staff earns significantly less. There are principles and characteristics that are attributed to specific people as a result of their professional work, and thus their assumed political beliefs and how they should act on them. These principles are carried in the professional and political space, in the politicised NGO. Participants generally used the same examples of NGOs that had been shut down or faced legal issues, this expresses a unified concern among them. There is also a sense of nostalgia or idealism when discussing the current state of activism in Sudan. Participants look to

ideal examples of how things should be, how the state should not be practicing such heavy surveillance, how the impact of practicing self-surveillance has had such a negative impact on activists.

I take these patterns into account when considering how the state interacts with NGOs. Because the political consciousness, the awareness of self-surveillance, ideals of how activism should be practiced, and how NGO directors and staff should live their politics, is all part of why the state would target these organisations which represent more than advocacy campaigns and gender empowerment projects. It is a recognition of the political weight that these spaces hold, and therefore the threat they could be to the state.

Examining NGOs to be a part of the non-profit industrial complex is useful in understanding this political and cultural significance, and how state surveillance is part of viewing NGOs and their potential as threats to the state (Rodriguez, 2017). Understanding Spivak's (1999) critique of the cultural aspects of a narrative or ideology of development also provides this level of analysis. Through recognising the systematic and cultural nature of how NGOs function, I see complexity in how they function as professional and activist spaces for fostering relationships as well.

Institutionalised activism, as is pursued in some Sudanese NGOs, is a form of activism that is proportional to the state; it is at a similar administrative and policy level. Therefore, it is a direct threat toward it. The threat of institutionalised anti-regime or anti-state rhetoric found in some Sudanese NGOs, then, is one that is also proportional to the state. I see the development of institutionalised activism in Sudan, which was tracked in Chapter 3, as corresponding to the state. I follow Foucault's theorizing on governmentality, recognising the administrative role of the state and the development into the state being the site of resistance and struggle (1991).

Participants' critique of the state lies in recognising the importance of its role. The administrative and institutionalised nature of activist work within NGOs recognises the state as a site of resistance, and direct efforts at change and reform toward it, leading to a tension or animosity between the state and NGOs. Further, the main issue that NGOs face is from the state. State engagement has long influenced the formation of NGOs in Sudan, this impact has defined the relationship and dynamic between those in the activist and political sphere that formed NGOs and the state. This relationship bleeds into the current perception of them as a threat. I see the law governing NGOs and HAC as apparatus of surveillance and it acts as a real obstacle to their work. While SIHA Network participants state that HAC does not actively stop their work, they still view them with animosity or negativity, and attributed negative qualities such as corruption to them. This expresses the weakness of state institutions in actually arresting activists when they pose a threat, but their practice of surveillance still earns them a negative reputation among the participants I interviewed. I have analysed the laws governing NGOs and HAC to be apparatuses of surveillance as defined by Foucault (1995) leading to activists practicing self-surveillance. The concept of *ta'min* lends itself to self-surveillance and expresses the role it has had on the establishment of the NGO sector and the way it has maintained itself through different phases of the sector's development. While they may not be arrested or punished all the time, as expressed by participants, the fear of it maintains them to practice self-surveillance.

As a scholar, it is difficult to place one's role when the subject being studied is active and ongoing, and when the methodology involved participants who are tackling these obstacles as part of their professional and political lives. Spivak (1999) says that criticality is as far as academic work can go, because it is not going to really *change* anything. Following that recognition on the limitations of academic critique and its place in the realm of activism, NGOs,

and their interactions with feminism (Spivak, 1999), my conclusions to this research do not hope to achieve what some of the participants may aim for in terms of policy changes, recommendations on changes to NGO structures, or alternatives to funding structures. With that in mind, I can recognise and critique the fact that NGOs are enabling and upholding a racialized paternalism (Spivak, 1999), but it is not a dismissal of the value that they can still have.

The theory I engaged with emphasises the systematic ways that colonialism and capitalism work alongside each other through development and the non-profit industrial complex (Jad, 2004; Rodriguez, 2017; Smith, 2017; Spivak, 1999). I acknowledge that participants' experiences and views on funding structures, international agencies, and how the West relates to the state do not necessarily match the literature. While Development is founded on neocolonialism, neoliberalism and imperialism, and this has had great impacts on Sudan, it is not necessarily everyone's main concern. State repression has played a larger role on the impact of NGOs than international funding which begs the question, which cannot be simplified into categorising them as proximate to and supportive of the international community and the West, as could be suggested by some of Badri's (2008) categorizations. However, this does speak to the urgency of their concerns and means by which NGOs can achieve their goals, and viewing international funding and international agencies as a vehicle toward that.

This project has left me with some questions that I will continue to explore. How can we think of the critiques of NGOs and development from different geographical spaces? Given different histories of the role of colonialism and state engagement in different parts of the world, how can critiques of NGOs accommodate to different spaces and histories while abiding by the same structural critique of the non-profit industrial complex? How can we make space for criticality while not compromising the need for survival, the attainment of *right*, and the work

that NGOs do? How can we critique the role of the state while also recognising its potential and importance as the giver and taker of rights and lives?

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Appendices

Appendix A

A.1 Questions for experts

1. What is your interest or involvement in political activism or NGO work?
2. What do you think the relationship is between NGOs and political activism in Sudan?
3. What do you see as the main tensions between the government and NGOs in Sudan? Why do you think this is? Any idea how to address these tensions? Is it concerning to you? Why or why not?
4. What do you think has influenced the rise of NGOs in Sudan? For example, political repression, conflict, poverty, international involvement?
5. Do you think that NGOs have a strong presence in political activism in Sudan? If so, how?
6. In your view, what is the difference between an NGO and a political movement?
7. Would you consider this difference to be distinct to women's organisations in Sudan? Or is it more general? Why or why not?
8. Do you think this process of NGOs becoming political actors is unique to Sudan or is it happening in other countries in the region? Can you provide other examples?
9. What critiques are there of these dynamics, surrounding the relation of NGOs and political activism, in Sudan or within the region?
10. Do you think regional events like the Arab Spring played a role in the politicization of NGOs? If so, how?
11. What role do donors play in the work of NGOs in Sudan? Do you see any problems with this?

12. What role do donors play in political activism? Should we be concerned about this?
13. How have these dynamics, regarding the government and international donors, impacted political activism, engagement, opposition and dissent in Sudan? Do you see this as a problem?
14. Is there are a distinct area where the relationship between NGOs and political activism has had more influence? For example, the women's movement?
15. Do you think there is NGOization (define if needed) of political movements happening in Sudan?

أسئلة للخبراء

1. ما هو مدى و نوع اهتمامك ومشاركتك في النشاط السياسي أو العمل في المنظمات غير الحكومية؟
2. برأيك، ما هي العلاقة بين المنظمات غير الحكومية والنشاط السياسي في السودان؟
3. برأيك ما هي التوترات الرئيسية بين الحكومة والمنظمات غير الحكومية في السودان؟ ولماذا تعتبرها كذلك؟ هل لديك فكرة عن كيفية معالجة هذه التوترات؟ هل هذه التوترات مقلقة بالنسبة لك؟ ولماذا؟
4. هل تعتبر هذا الاختلاف أكثر وضوحاً في المنظمات النسائية في السودان؟ أم أنه عام؟ ولماذا؟
5. حسب رأيك ما الذي أثر في انتشار المنظمات غير الحكومية في السودان؟ على سبيل المثال، هل هو القمع السياسي أو الصراع أو الفقر أو التدخل الدولي؟
6. هل تعتقد أن هناك منظمات غير حكومية لها حضور قوي في النشاط السياسي في السودان؟ إذا كان الأمر كذلك، كيف؟
7. برأيك، ما هو الفرق بين منظمة غير حكومية وحركة سياسية؟
8. هل تعتقد أن هذا النهج للمنظمات غير الحكومية في ان تصبح فاعلة سياسياً ظاهرة فريدة من نوعها في السودان أم أنها تحدث في بلدان أخرى في المنطقة؟ هل يمكنك تقديم أمثلة أخرى؟

9. ما هي الانتقادات الموجودة لهذه الديناميكيات التي تحيط بعلاقة المنظمات غير الحكومية والنشاط السياسي في السودان أو في المنطقة؟

10. هل تعتقد أن الأحداث الإقليمية مثل الربيع العربي لعبت دوراً في تسييس المنظمات غير الحكومية؟ إذا كان الأمر كذلك، كيف؟

11. ما الدور الذي تلعبه الجهات المانحة في عمل المنظمات غير الحكومية في السودان؟ هل ترى أي مشاكل مع هذا؟

12. ما هو الدور الذي يؤديه المانحون في النشاط السياسي؟ هل ينبغي أن نشعر بالقلق إزاءه؟

13. كيف أثرت هذه الديناميكيات على النشاط السياسي والمشاركة والمعارضة في السودان فيما يتعلق بالحكومة والجهات المانحة الدولية؟ هل ترى مشكلة في هذا؟

14. هل هناك مجال أثرت فيه العلاقة بين المنظمات غير الحكومية والنشاط السياسي بشكل أكبر؟ الحركة النسوية على سبيل المثال؟

A.2 Questions for SIHA Network staff

1. How long have you been working in SIHA?
2. What is your professional, academic and political background?
3. What is your personal interest in development work?
4. Do you have a personal interest in activism? Why or why not?
5. What is the relationship between activism, development work and Human Rights advocacy for you?
6. What is the relationship between political activism and NGOs in Sudan?
7. What kind of projects does SIHA do?
8. Do you think SIHA engages in political activism? In what ways?
9. Do you think there is tension with the government over political activism? Can you provide examples?
10. What is the role of HAC in these tensions?
11. Does SIHA face problems with the government as a result? For example, have SIHA activities ever been shut down, any projects suspended, or problems in staff hiring?
12. Do other NGOs face the same challenges from the government? Can you provide examples?
13. In what ways does HAC impede SIHA's ability to function effectively?
14. What does SIHA do to counter this?
15. Do other NGOs use the same practices? Can you provide examples?
16. Where does SIHA receive its main sources of funding?
17. Do you think the projects that are undertaken by SIHA are impacted by the funding received, either in the planning or implementation phases? In what ways?

18. Do you think the sources that fund SIHA are engaged in the same political/social activist goals as SIHA? Do different goals lead to any conflicts with funders? Can you provide examples?
19. Do you think that any tensions with the government are related to SIHA's funding sources? If so, what are these tensions and how are they addressed?
20. In your opinion, what is the biggest struggle facing NGOs in Sudan right now?
21. In your opinion, what is the biggest struggle facing NGO employees in Sudan right now?
22. Do you have any thoughts about potential solutions to these challenges we have been discussing?

أسئلة لموظفي شبكة المبادرة الاستراتيجية للمرأة في القرن الأفريقي "صحة"

1. كم من الوقت كنت تعمل في المبادرة الاستراتيجية للمرأة في القرن الأفريقي؟
2. ما هي خلفيتك المهنية والأكاديمية والسياسية؟
3. ما هو اهتمامك الشخصي بالعمل التنموي؟
4. هل لديك مصلحة شخصية في النشاط السياسي؟ ولماذا؟
5. ما هي العلاقة بين النشاط السياسي والعمل التنموي و الدفاع عن حقوق الإنسان بالنسبة لك؟
6. ما العلاقة بين النشاط السياسي والمنظمات غير الحكومية في السودان؟
7. ما نوع المشاريع التي تقوم بها المبادرة الاستراتيجية للمرأة في القرن الأفريقي؟
8. هل تعتقد أن المبادرة الاستراتيجية للمرأة في القرن الأفريقي تشارك في النشاط السياسي؟ وكيف؟
9. هل تعتقد أن هناك توتر مع الحكومة حول النشاط السياسي؟ هل يمكنك تقديم أمثلة؟
10. ما هو دور مفوضية العون الإنساني في هذه التوترات؟

11. هل تواجه المبادرة الاستراتيجية للمرأة في القرن الأفريقي مشاكل مع الحكومة نتيجة لذلك؟ على سبيل المثال، هل تم إيقاف أنشطة المبادرة الاستراتيجية للمرأة في القرن الأفريقي على الإطلاق، أو تم تعليق مشاريعها أو واجهت مشاكل في التوظيف؟
12. هل تواجه المنظمات غير الحكومية الأخرى نفس التحديات من الحكومة؟ هل يمكنك تقديم أمثلة؟
13. ما هي الطرق التي تعوق بها مفوضية العون الإنساني قدرة المبادرة الاستراتيجية للمرأة في القرن الأفريقي على العمل بفعالية؟
14. ماذا تفعل المبادرة الاستراتيجية للمرأة في القرن الأفريقي لمواجهة هذا؟
15. هل تستخدم المنظمات غير الحكومية الأخرى نفس الممارسات؟ هل يمكنك تقديم أمثلة؟
16. ما هي مصادر التمويل الرئيسية للمبادرة الاستراتيجية للمرأة في القرن الأفريقي؟
17. هل تعتقد أن المشاريع التي تقوم بها المبادرة الاستراتيجية للمرأة في القرن الأفريقي تتأثر بالتمويل الذي تحصل عليه، سواء في مرحلتها التخطيطية أو التنفيذ؟ وكيف؟
18. هل تعتقد أن المصادر التي تمول المبادرة الاستراتيجية للمرأة في القرن الأفريقي تشاركها في نفس أهداف نشاطها السياسية أو الاجتماعية؟ هل تؤدي الأهداف المختلفة إلى أي تعارض مع الممولين؟ هل يمكنك تقديم أمثلة؟
19. هل تعتقد أن أي توترات مع الحكومة ترتبط بمصادر تمويل المبادرة الاستراتيجية للمرأة في القرن الأفريقي؟ وإذا كان الأمر كذلك، فما هي هذه التوترات وكيف يتم التصدي لها؟
20. برأيك، ما هو أكبر تحدي يواجه المنظمات غير الحكومية في السودان الآن؟
21. برأيك، ما هو أكبر تحدي يواجه موظفي المنظمات غير الحكومية في السودان الآن؟
22. هل لديك أي أفكار حول الحلول المحتملة لهذه التحديات التي نناقشها؟

Appendix B

B.1 The Voluntary and Humanitarian Aid Act 2006, Chapter IV

The Humanitarian Aid Commission

Establishment of the commission

18. There shall be established a commission, to be known as the," voluntary and humanitarian aid commission “, and shall exercise the functions specified in this act.

Functions of the commission

19. The commission shall have the following functions, to:
- a. Raise the degree of awareness, and entrench the accurate concept of voluntary and humanitarian work, in co-ordination with other bodies;
 - b. Train in disasters management, at all levels, in co-ordination with other bodies
 - c. Mobilize resources prepare and promote comprehensive lists in case of disasters, and arising of the need to use such resources;
 - d. Initiate projects and specify humanitarian aid needs, aimed at parrying the effects of natural and unnatural disasters, in co-ordination with the competent bodies;
 - e. Strive to provide strategic emergencies stores to meet the necessary needs; (f) Co-ordinate with foreign bodies, in cases of disasters, and facilitate the entry thereof to perform the work of the same;
 - f. Rally internal and external efforts and co-ordinate with the authorities concerned in reconstruction of the affected areas, and resettlement of the displaced;

- g. Follow-up and evaluate all programmes of voluntary and humanitarian work in the Sudan.

The commissioner general

- 20. The president of the republic of the Sudan, upon recommendation of the minister shall appoint a commissioner general for voluntary and humanitarian work, and specify his emoluments and privileges.

Functions of the commissioner

- 21. (1) The commissioner shall be responsible, before the minister, for implementation of the humanitarian work policies and plans, and shall have the following functions to:
 - a. Collect and evaluate such information and indicators, as may portend the possibility of occurrence of disaster, and notify the competent authorities of the same;
 - b. Organize and co-ordinate the operations of humanitarian assistances for the affected areas;
 - c. Conduct such studies and researches, as may aim at parrying the occurrence of emergent cases, and co-ordinate with the competent bodies having connection;
 - d. Conduct the necessary surveys, to specify priorities and needs in the field of humanitarian aid;
 - e. Rally internal and external efforts, and co-ordinate with the authorities concerned, in order to predict the disasters, prevent, or lessen the effects thereof, and reconstruct and rehabilitate the affected areas;

- f. Supervise training operations, on disaster management, at all levels;
- g. Build and manage a strategic reserve of relief materials, to meet the basic needs in cases of emergencies;
- h. Organize and co-ordinate the organizations work and plans in the geographical and sectoral frameworks, assume the responsibility controlling, evaluating and follow – up of all voluntary and humanitarian work programmes, and resolve any such disputes, as may arise between themselves, or with any other bodies;
- i. Conduct preliminary inquiries, with any organization, to ascertain the presence, or non-presence of any legal contraventions, and take the necessary legal proceedings, with respect thereof, with the competent juridical bodies, where the matter so requires;
- j. Supervise all administrative organs at the commission; (k) Perform any other tasks, as the act, or the regulations made there under may specify, or the minister may assign thereto.

(2) The commissioner general may delegate any of his functions, to any person, or committee, as he may constitute, as to such conditions and safeguards, as he may deem fit.

The registrar general

22. (1) The minister shall appoint a registrar general for voluntary and charitable organization, from those possessed of legal expertise and know how, and the decision shall specify his emoluments and privileges.

(2) The registrar shall exercise the following tasks and powers, to:

- a. Registrar voluntary and charitable organizations, and civil society organizations, and issue the registration certificate, reject, or strike the registration off, in accordance with provisions of this act;
- b. Keep the basic documents, records and reports, about voluntary and charitable organizations, and civil society organizations;
- c. Revise the records of any voluntary, or charitable organization, or civil society organization, working in the field of humanitarian aid, to ascertain that its activities are consistent with provisions of this act, or any other law;
- d. Discretionally supervise the elections of national organizations, registered under this act, to ascertain that they have been made in accordance with the constitution of the organization, and the provisions of this act;
- e. Any other tasks, as the minister may assign thereto.