

**Negotiating ideology: how members of hip hop based youth initiatives in Dakar have become street smart in a formal setting**

**ABSTRACT:** Social movements of the South are often portrayed as passive beneficiaries or as in desperate need to win the favour of actors within the international aid industry. Up till now little attention has gone to the way that these movements shape and re-shape not only the financial aid that they receive, but also the ideology that forms the basis for this aid. This thesis aims to bring a change in this by looking at the interplay between international “youth” programs and their local counterparts in Dakar, Senegal. Ideas about youth form the basis for a large number of development projects, and have made young persons the subject of a system of NGO-programs that focus on a variety of themes. With all the hopes and expectations that have come to surround it, youth can be seen as a belief system or ideology that is transferred through different organisations. This research has focussed on the way discourse is used to shape and re-shape this ideology by hip-hop based youth initiatives in their interaction with formal development institutions. These interactions are analysed in the form of a “game” of compromise and balance that is being played out in the “arena” of Dakar. Through observations of- and semi-structured interviews with a social movement, two cultural centres and the (I)NGOs that they work with, it has become clear that experience has made Dakarois youth and youth-professionals aware of their potential as a “target group”. Youth actors have become experts at interacting with international players in order to secure the resources they need. Still, through this interaction, parts of institutionalized ideas of youth seem to trickle down to Dakarois youth and influence the choices they make. Whilst negotiating the ideologies that form the basis for the aid they receive, Dakarois youth and youth-professionals have thus also come to enact parts of that same ideology.

**Key words:** Ideology, Discourse, Youth, Hip Hop, NGOs, Dakar