'EDUCATING A GIRL MEANS EDUCATING A WHOLE NATION' GENDER MAINSTREAMING, DEVELOPMENT AND ISLAMIC RESURGENCE IN NORTH CAMEROON[†]

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Abstract: The paper is an example of 'local' reception of global terminology concerning gender in the Cameroonian context: a gender awareness training for local religious, Muslim, and political leaders is analyzed. These leaders want development that departs from Islamic 'roots', emphasizing the importance of women's education. However, a concept such as 'gender' turned out to be incongruent with local concepts for relations between human beings. Because of that, they needed not reflect on their own attitudes as male citizens. Their implicit view is, so was discovered after analysis of the workshop, that a process of Islamization would automatically lead to gender mainstreaming. Copyright © 2013 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

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To be able to disentangle the strength and weaknesses of gender mainstreaming (GM), its policy and practice has to be assessed in a contextualized way. The Council of Europe refers to GM as the reorganization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages.[1] In short, GM is a long-term strategy or systematic institutional approach for promoting/producing gender equality as a policy outcome (Woodford-Berger, 2004; Rai,

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[†]I am most indebted to my colleague Hamadou Adama, of Ngaoundéré University for his comments, to Haliedu Demba and to Souaibou Adama.
[1]Davids and van Eerdewijk refer to this definition (at the time defined in a policy paper in 1998) in their introduction, while referring to Verloo (2005: 350).

2003). Many problems surrounding the concept and its implementation have been detected but not yet resolved (Sweetman, 2012). I investigate GM in the context of North-Cameroonian society, by looking at the interface between the Islamic resurgence processes that in the last decennia took place in this predominantly Islamic community and the GM practice of development organizations. I will analyze a gender training for religious and 'traditional' political leaders that was organized to make these leaders aware of gender issues in relation to 'development'. The training took place in Maroua (a large town in a mainly Islamic region in Cameroon) and was initiated by my Cameroonian (male) colleague, who coordinated an organization (RIMABE) to promote gender issues. This organization was created by various foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the region[2] as an overall structure for their policy concerning gender issues.[3] I only participated in the training as the observing anthropologist who had worked in the area since 1986 on issues of gender and Islam.

With this contribution, I concentrate on the process at the end of the so-called 'aid-chain' of back donors, national donors, NGOs from the 'north' as well as the 'south' and community based organizations. I analyze the moment where GM as a policy process meets with political and gendered processes and changes within society. There, I followed-up the expressed need to indigenize GM by forging stronger links with local gender-concerned NGO's and research institutions (Mustafa and Schech, 2010). GM remains but an 'empty signifier' if it is not textually grounded: it requires that gender expert units, women's organizations and academics work together (Sachs and Alston, 2010). In 2012, the journal *Gender & Development* organized a meeting of such actors to discuss the achieved progress and disadvantages of GM.[4] I cannot but conclude that in the resulting special issue, the solid 'ethnographic descriptions of local (gender) ideologies' in relation to GM policy is still missing. My contribution shows that also the content of local gender concepts needs to be known.

In Africa, Islamic resurgence movements can be regarded as globalizing processes 'avant la lettre';[5] the transformations they cause require Islamic communities to reconstruct notions of Muslim identity in response to shifting boundaries. Islam's specific nature reflects the fact that the 'non-Islamic' others are always part of the construction of a Muslim self and plays a role in the way gender relations are perceived in the processes of 'glocalization' (Robertson, 1995),[6] a phenomenon that also manifested itself during the workshop.

Education was an important theme in the workshop. In general, education for girls seems to be the backbone of development efforts, a phenomenon indicated as *The Girl Effect*.[7] But my emphasis on education is also related to the high status that has always been accorded to education—for women and men—in Islamic communities in Cameroon. In former centuries, religious and secular education was given in the Arab language. Because of colonial presence, secular education is given in French. Its importance was expressed in the following quote of a religious leader: 'la nation passe par les femmes', by whom he meant that development that

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[2]The Dutch SNV, Netherlands Development Organisation. The German GTZ, Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeid, the United State's USAID, United States' Agency for International Development and so on.

[3]This colleague and I worked together in a scientific—university based—organization for Development and Environment Issues (Centre of Environment and Development, Antenne Maroua, University of Dchang), he as the gender specialist and I as co-director.

[4]This resulted in the special edition 'Beyond Mainstreaming Gender' (Gender and Development, 2012, 2013; Sweetman, 2012).

[5]Globalization is understood as a process whereby people, money, images, ideals and objects circulate with accelerated speed, volume and intensity (partly as a result of new media).

[6]Defined as the influence of global discussions and/or processes that stimulate local responses.

[7]See also Davids and van Eerdewijk in the introduction of this volume.

does not involve women is useless. In addition, the national campaign for the advance of education, which started in the 1980s, showed a picture of a writing young Cameroonian Muslim girl with the subscript, 'educating a girl is educating a whole nation'.

To situate the training in context, I will first give an account of the region in which the training took place and the existing gender relations. I will pay attention to the installation of private Islamic schools, the concept of 'gender' to thereafter focus on a description of the gender course. In the next paragraph, I will analyze the workshop and the discussions that took place as a 'text-in-context'. 'Texts' not only refer to written scripts but can also refer to daily conduct and discussions that can be analyzed in its context in which they carry meaning to uncover different layers, silences and sub-texts (Willemse, 2007). I will do so for this region in which religious and political powers have been intertwined and have exerted influence on Islamic subjects, also in receptive strategies of development activities.[8]

1   NORTH CAMEROON: TWO-UNITY OF POLITICS AND RELIGION, GENDER RELATIONS AND EDUCATION

The reason that imams, chiefs and religious teachers in the workshop were invited together is related to the history of the area: converting to Islam from the 14th century onwards, several major Islamic empires have influenced historical events. The Islamic Fulbe people played a crucial role in overpowering the regions, and after a victory, a Fulbe chief was installed in the conquered area, whereby ability in matters concerning the Qur'an—so education—was the main qualification for becoming 'chief' (Iyébi-Mandjek and Tourneux, 1994). Evidently, an imam had to play his role in these matters if not appoint a chief.

All these politically hierarchically organized provinces were occupied by the German colonizers when they marched northwards in 1900/1901. The French took over the German colonial system after the First World War and used the hierarchically organized Islamic empires to reign over local non-Islamic populations (van Santen, 1993a). After independence (1960), local rulers were able to hold on to their power.

Recently, new Islamic resurgence movements are active in Cameroon. Their presence is marked by the installation of Islamic schools with a French curriculum and by itinerant preachers, who are accompanied by preachers coming from other Islamic areas (Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Pakistan) (van Santen, fc). A new phenomenon is also in attendance—by mostly groups of women—at regular meetings where local imams preach, so the population 'can obtain a better understanding of Islam'.[9] I also observed that illiterate adults, often women who converted at a later age, have started to join groups to learn how to read and to write in Arab. Addressed in sermons are the 'ethnic stains' that contradict with Islam.

Gender relations in the area very much depend on the ethnic, the economic and the religious background of the people as well as to class. North-Cameroonian society beautifully demonstrates that gender is not an inherent aspect of biological distinction but a performance (Butler, 1990; Nencel, 1997; Connell, 2007;

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[8]During the 27 years I worked in Cameroon, I have analyzed not only the way gender gets shaped in this society—while considering that in different contexts, gender is constructed and reconstructed by people living these contexts (Davids and Willemse, 1999; van Santen and Willemse, 1999)—but also how it is used and 'mainstreamed' by various NGOs in local practical contexts, for example, van Santen (2009).
[9]This is the explanation given by the teachers themselves, see also van Santen (2012).

Willemse, 2007).[10] I understand gender as a social structure and not as an expression of biology, nor as a fixed dichotomy in human life or character, nor as mutually exclusive characters (Connell, 2002). My contribution confirms Oyewumi's claim: gender categories are not universal and timeless; for Yoruba society, she found that gender is not the social result of the difference in physical bodies of 'women' and 'men'. Gender may be a fundamental organizing principal in Western experiences and history because of the philosophical discourses about the distinctions among body, mind and soul, but this is not the case everywhere (Oyewumi, 1997). These insights have not yet reached those working on development issues. Sweetman (2012) still thinks that by asking the right question, development workers can build a picture of gender power relations 'in a particular context and implement a programme which corresponds to varying realities' (Sweetman, 2012: 14).

The mentioned Islamic Fulbe people were initially nomad cattle keepers. In a nomad society, the living spaces of spouses are highly segregated, but women are much respected not in the least for their economic occupations. In Fulfulde, a range of terms refer to femininity of which I name two: *Ndewaagu*, femininity in general (related to the essential code of Fulbe life, indicated with the term *pulaaku*), indicates a capable woman who knows how to do things, also economically, in a much respected way, and *Debbaagu*[11] means a woman who respects her husband and knows what he wants. It leads to her being held in high esteem.[12]

In everyday life, women take care of the children, prepare the food and, among groups that still own cattle, churn the milk that they sell at marketplaces. To do so, they sometimes have to walk long distances. The settled Fulbe are less related to their cattle have started to carry out agriculture, but in many villages in sedentary or half-sedentary Fulbe society, women continue to sell their milk at the market. I never saw Fulbe women till the land. Also in town, most women have their own economic occupations, but relations between the sexes become less segregated. In this society—unlike elsewhere in the Muslim world—being economically active is totally in accordance, as the participants of the workshop will tell later on, with Muslim ideology. Settled Fulbe women from aristocratic backgrounds long ago adopted a lifestyle in which they receive help in their economic activities from servants from other classes or ethnic backgrounds—formerly slaves. Islamic women in towns who cannot afford helpers at home continue to carry out their economic activities without questioning their Muslim identity, nor do their husbands or brothers do so. Most non-Fulbe citizens initially were agriculturalists.

In Cameroon, gender relations differ from group to group. Thorough analysis of one of these non-Islamic groups have proved that at an overt level women live in a patriarchal, patrilineair and virilocal structure, and they carry out much work. However, on religious and symbolic level, women have an enormous power and a high status, and for people living in this society, it is most essential that these two levels are kept in balance (van Santen, 1993a). Whenever people convert to Islam, which in the past and present happen frequently, they accept the gender relations of the settled Fulbe and their sexual division of labour. The importance of this change in gender ideology because of Islamization will come to the fore in the description of the discussions during the gender workshop.

The outcome of the workshop was that education is most essential. Education in Arabic scripture has always enjoyed a high status. For a very long time however, men and women

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[10]In people's frequent change of religion and/or economic occupation, therewith accepting a dissimilar content of gender identities, we observe that gender relations are negotiated continuously and are therefore never fixed, one-dimensional or homogeneous, but continuously in flux.
[11]Derived from the word *debbo* (woman). Women are highly respected for the occupations they carry out.
[12]The word for women [plural of woman (*debbo*)], *rewbe*, is derived from the verb *rewugo*, to follow, which, among others, refers to the virilocal residence pattern: women move after marriage to their husbands' households.

refused French secular education, which many local 'intellectuals' nowadays interpret as an act of resistance against the French colonials.[13] Even the smallest settlement in north Cameroon has a Qur'an school.[14] Only with the installation of the missions in the 1950s did French education become an issue (van Santen, 1993a: 28 a.f.), but it attracted mainly non-Islamic children from other ethnic groups.

The first private—so not state-financed—Islamic school in Maroua started in the school year 1993–1994. Many Muslim parents still object to 'modern' education because they fear that it will lead the youth to stray from the path to God.[15] There is less fear about the Islamic schools because the children receive—next to an ordinary curriculum—a religious education, and the girls are allowed to wear the headscarf, which they need to take off in public schools because of the state's laic character (van Santen, 2010).

Because of the domination of 'Western-educated' people from southern parts of Cameroon (mainly Christians) and the fact that the non-Muslim population of the north is better educated, the Muslim population realized that, if they want 'alternative development'—based on their 'Arab cultural orientation' as they expressed it—secular education may be of use after all. In addition, 'this development', so they think, ought to include women. In this view, women are equal although different, and according to them, development strategies ought to change towards a respect of this worldview.

2   GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

For a long time, women were absent from development theories. Boserup (1970) clearly pointed out the negative impact of development programs on women's situation and that women did not take part in development. During the *United Nations Decade for Women* (1976–1985), emphasis was placed on the integration of women in development (WID) programmes, which in practice often meant that women were used as a cheap labour force to stimulate general economic growth (Moser, 1989: 1799–1800, 1993; van Santen, 1993b: 1–10; van Driel and Deuss, 1997: 165). On the basis of a Western model of development, it was taken for granted that the existing relations between women and men would automatically change when women could fully participate in the development process. However, it very much concerned a *top-down* policy, and women's perspectives were hardly present in policy papers (Karl, 1995: 97; van Driel and Deuss, 1997: 166; Jacquot, 2010). So after a critical evaluation of the WID approach, in the Netherlands, the *Women and Autonomy* approach became the official policy at the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation (van Santen, 1993b). On an international level from the 1990s onwards, *Gender and Development* (GAD) became the keyword of much development cooperation, an approach whereby relations between the genders are central, and emphasis is also placed on the complexity of gender, class, race and

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[13]As discussed in van Santen (2010).
[14]Eighty-five per cent of the Islamic children that do not go to secular schools go to 'traditional' Qur'anic schools. Most children who go to secular schools also go to traditional Qur'anic schools (Iyébi-Mandjek and Tourneux, 1994). The first French schools (established in Maroua in 1918) faced much opposition, especially from the Muslim population.
[15]Issue described in Iyébi-Mandjek and Tourneux (1994): 108, as well as gathered by the author, so oral information.

ethnicity. Women are regarded as active, thinking and acting persons, whose political voice and ability to organize can play a major role in development.[16]

Since the 1995 Fourth World Conference, many governments and agencies opt for GM policies; although women groups report that in practice, little has actually changed (Sachs and Alston, 2010; Sweetman, 2012). Because most of the funding came from the 'north' (Baines, 2010), colonial relations intersected with gendered, classed and heteronormative individual and organizational relations. Often, gender analytical frameworks are designed to fit into the planning requirements of development bureaucracies and are used in 'gender awareness' exercises—as the one we will describe underneath—to marshal support for specific values and interpretations (Woodford-Berger, 2004: 68).

3 THE GENDER WORKSHOP: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION

The workshop[17] was organized by my Cameroonian male colleague on instigation of an overall organization concerning gender issues. His gender awareness was the result of his work for the Dutch Development Cooperation (Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers). The meeting was open to people with local power and great influence on the local political and social scene, so chiefs and religious leaders, women as well as men, although only one woman was present. Organizers aimed at permeation of gender consciousness in relation to the environment, identification of special questions to ameliorate the relations between women and men and of strategies to include gender awareness in the activities of the participants. The objectives were to 'make the participants aware of the questions at issue concerning gender and development, to give them the opportunity to identify the questions which are typical for their own society, and to guide them so that they would be able to integrate strategies to ameliorate gender relations and to mainstream gender in their daily (professional) occupations'. Though the writing of the various issues was in French, the language used was Fulfulde, the local lingua franca of the Fulbe people.

The methodology was based on case studies of particular issues taken from their daily life situations. Participants worked in small groups to discuss these items. In the plenary session thereafter of each group, a member came forward to tell the outcome of the discussion in his or her group. The moderator, mentioned colleague, wrote down the outcome on large sheets to thereafter discuss these plenary and to come to a general conclusion. Prayers (*do'a*) were integrated in the work schedule, and long pauses were held so that imams could conduct their prayers in their mosques. Expressing their expectations beforehand, participants hoped that their possible knowledge concerning gender, 'would lead to capacity building and reinforce relations between Muslims, as well as strengthen the collaboration between the young and the elderly'. All statements I discuss in this paragraph concern the participants' views: noted down, they became a text that only in a next paragraph will be analyzed by putting it in context.[18]

The workshop started with a gender-consciousness-raising exercise in which several statements were discussed such as the following: babies need their mothers more than their

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[16]For a critique on WID, WAD and GAD (Davids and van Driel, 2009; Davids and van Driel, 2010).
[17]Called 'Atelier de sensibilisation des leaders traditionnels et religieux musulmans du Nord Cameroun sur l'approche Genre'. It took place at the *Centre of Environment and Development Studies* in Maroua 15–17 October 2002.
[18]Only four among the many participants expressed their fear that the workshop would go against their Islamic principles. After the workshop, these four concluded that the content was in line with their religious doctrine.

fathers; because of their maternal instinct, women can better take care of education than men; men are more rational; women are more affectionate; men are more economically responsible for the home; domestic work needs to be economically valued[19]; women are more reliable than men in taking care of the community's money and a woman may become a good professional in her work, but should not neglect her duties towards her family.

In small groups, the dissimilar opinions were considered and discussed. In the concluding overall session, participants finally agreed that 'men, women, youth, and elderly people should all participate in the social activities of a society; that there are role differences between men and women; that certain roles that the society refuses to give to women do not have any relation whatsoever with religious prohibitions and that to consult women in decision-making is absolutely not forbidden within Islamic religion'. Consequently, by the end of the day, participants agreed that they had come to realize that women need to be more involved in decision-making and that attitudes are dictated by tradition and not by religion.

3.1   Difference Between Sex and Gender

The next morning, the workshop continued, and participants performed exercises to understand the difference between sex and gender and to identify different roles in discussing statements such as the following: little girls are sweet and boys are stubborn, women give breastfeeding, the majority of tradespeople are men, and the voices of men change during adolescence. They again discussed these statements and concluded that 'gender was a social construction, a fundamental principle of organization of a society, which divides roles between men and women'.

### 3.2   Division of Labour, Decisions, Access to Resources and Gender

For the mentioned subjects, three groups separately discussed and wrote down the workload and occupations of women and men for all parts of the day for the rural area during the dry season, during the rainy season and in the urban areas, respectively. In a plenary session, they concluded that 'women had much important work to do and were more involved in "reproductive" activities, while men were more active in "productive" activities; that men and women were both involved in the education of children; and that women in rural areas had more work to do than women in urban areas'.

The day before participants became aware that women in their society do not have much weight in decision-making, this day they realized that 'this is only due to "tradition" and that it thus can be changed'. They agreed that in 'community activities women dominate and that a change within reproductive activities is desirable'. It was equally concluded that 'men dominate when access to and control over resources are at issue. Even when women have access, men sequestrate and profit from it'.

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[19]On this statement, all participants reacted affirmatively; it reminded me of the 'household debates' in feminist science of the 1980s, in which it was concluded that women's work would be much more valued if it were economically recognized by being paid (van Santen, 2008).

3.3   T(h)ree-Layered Gender Concept

After this conclusion, the gender tree was presented so that participants would be able to understand the origin of unequal relations between women and men, how institutions sustain these inequalities and the diverse ways they manifest themselves.
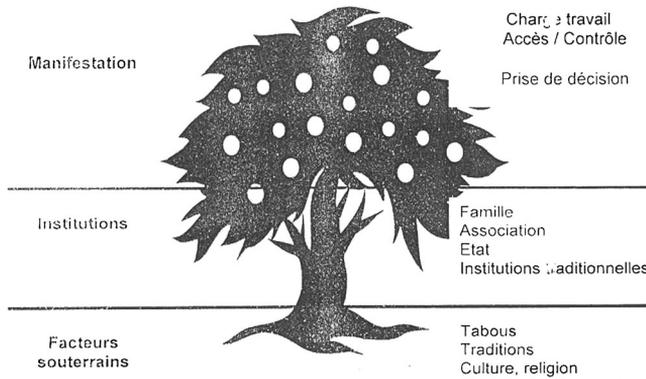
Under the soil, the roots of gender ideology are situated, only to become visible when one starts digging. The trunk of the tree represents the dominant discourses on gender, which shape the, often stereotypical, images of the ideal man or woman and the way they come to the fore: gender relations are expressed in family relations, in law, in various institutions within diverse ethnic groups and so on. To legitimize different roles, reference is made to the 'ideological' level (so the roots) within a society. Gender manifests itself in the acts of individual members of a society, represented by the smaller branches and leaves.

3.4   Islam and Gender in North Cameroon

After new brainstorming sessions dealing with existing stereotypes in the plenary sessions, participants agreed that 'women in the area are often forced to work while their heavy workload is not recognized and that young girls are too often given in marriage at a young age, without them being consulted: too often the community ignores the value that the Islamic religion places on women, and in this respect girls' education is very important'.

Discussing in subgroups the strategies to integrate gender into their own activities and how to realize an amelioration of women's position, participants told that 'both women and men needed to be made aware of women's heavy workload' (which according to them should be abolished) 'and of the meaning of *sadaqa*, the bride wealth that the Qur'an describes and which should be given directly to a girl'; equally, the status that Islam accords to women 'should be emphasized'. Women's rights to 'jouissance' (in their definition, this not only meant 'joy' or 'sensuality' but also 'satisfaction from the sexual act') 'ought to be guaranteed', as well as 'women's right to property, in conformity with Islamic law'. Again, in separate sessions, property rights were divided in 'right to bride wealth (*dot*)', 'right to inheritance', 'right to other acquired property' and 'right to do business in the manner that Islam prescribes'. In the plenary session, they concluded that all these rights, 'women did not have in most non-Islamic patriarchal communities'. They stated that the women's dignity

'ought to be restored by abolition of the exploitation of the female body, which, comes to the fore in the general public situation of women and the profession of prostitution'. They agreed that 'reflection and discussion between wives and husbands was most important'.

Awareness of a women's deplorable situation could be 'made known by seminars, workshops, educative discussions and a better education for women as well as for men'. Equally important, so they concluded, 'was preaching in the mosques during Friday prayers, during marriage ceremonies and during women's meetings at the Qur'an schools, and by legal reform to improve women's position'; 'Responsibility for carrying out these programs lay with the chiefs, imams and preachers. Various associations, cultural, social or otherwise, could also be implicated'. All activities should be aimed at the parents in the first place, extended families, various associations, diverse ethnic populations and their elites, quarters in town[20] and villages.

Finally, participants agreed that 'women and of course men, tutors and parents' needed to be approached about the importance of women's and young girls' education, and its value ought to be underlined time and time again by communication on radio and television, including the news'. At the end, a final evaluation session was held. All participants expressed their thanks for 'all the wonderful things they had learned'. The workshop ended with a final prayer (*do'a*).

4   GENDER IN THE 'FUNDAMENTALIST' DISCOURSE IN NORTH CAMEROON: AN ANALYSIS[21]

In this paragraph, I will place the 'text', the ethnographic material that the workshop offered us, in context. Firstly, the terminology of the gender sensitivity training in the original text, GAD, has been taken from the world of the NGOs; we are dealing here with a global influence. Although adapted to local circumstances, the course is on the one hand expressed in a world language that is Western/European (French), although discussed in Fulfulde.[22] On the other hand, the Muslim community in north Cameroon aims at development that distinguishes itself from the 'Western' (read American or French) way of developing, because they want to maintain their specific Muslim identity, which they consider to be distinct from that of inhabitants of the south of Cameroon.[23] This distinction and the wish to develop in a dissimilar way are now given as the main reason for denying education in former days and for founding Islamic schools nowadays.[24]

The 'moderator' of the course is a Muslim born and raised in the area but educated in the secular French school system. He has been working for a Dutch Development Agency and thus has been able to integrate the modern concepts of the NGO world in his intellectual thinking. Although based on examples from the area, the course itself is a product of modern European notions of gender and family, or (neo) colonial notions (Baines, 2010): analytically,

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[20]They had in mind that those parts in town were former non-Islamic people live.
[21]By analyzing the discourse concerning gender, as they come to the fore in the workshop, I do not mean to silence women's voices or to regard women as passive; although the workshop was open to women, only one was present.
[22]For an interrogation on the euro centrism underlying development issues, I refer to the Introduction in the volume 'Development in Place: Perspectives and Challenges' (van Santen, 2008).
[23]As said in the south, people are mainly Christians. Most Cameroonian inhabitants make this dichotomous distinction.
[24]These dissimilarities were also expressed by the four, out of many, participants who at the beginning of the course expressed their fears that the course would not be in line with Islamic principles, see also note 18.

we did not deal with multiple, different, gender regimes and orders (Connell, 2002). A fixed, essentialist model of gender was used, one in which gender is the social result of the difference in male and female bodies (Oyewumi, 1997). The idea of gender as an ever-changing performance was not related to the various local ideologies.

The moderator confronted the notion of gender with the regional circumstances while using examples from daily life. An existing text became a new text, and it was fascinating to find out that participants turned the discussion in such a direction that it suited their community: if we look at their conclusions, GM became thinking about the 'deplorable situation of women and their roles'. However, they did not have to reflect upon their own position and integrate their own attitudes towards the women around them to consequently include these reflections into the final outcome. The main reason that they did not need to do so is related to another 'context' of this text: local concepts to identify relations between the genders were not used.

In Fulfulde, there is no equivalent of gender.[25] Fulfulde has many concepts to indicate relations between people, be they between men, between women or between men and women. Like Oyewumi (1997) mentioned for Yoruba society, Fulfulde does not have separate personal pronouns for 'he' and 'she'.[26] A distinction is drawn between everyday general relations and sexual relations, and for the latter, there are various concepts: *mayakarku* indicates the relation between a man and his wife who is related to him by family,[27] *waayeegu* means a sexual relation between a man and a woman who is not his legal wife, *matjakarku* indicates the relation between a man who has taken the (divorced) wife of another man; and sexual relations between men are called *luudu*.[28]

Many concepts stand for non-sexual relations between people, be they men or women and be they married or not married to each other. *Ma'tootral* is an affectionate relation in general, a relation in which sentiments are involved and which can be applied to husband and wife. The word 'spouse' can be added (*ma'tootral debbo bee gorko*) to indicate the non-sexual sides of matrimonial relations; *gondal*[29] indicates two people living together in harmony, either within a compound (so then it can also be applied to spouses), or elsewhere. And there are various words for other relationship such as with one's mother and grandfather. *Datal* indicates a 'liaison',[30] that is logically rooted and that leads from one point to another, such as a road.[31] *Jinsu* indicates the English word 'sort', 'species'; thus *jinsu debbo* means the 'species of a female person' or *jinsu gorko* the 'species of a male person'. One can also express 'we are not of the same kind', *jinsu amin feere*.

As people themselves, distinct many more categories to indicate relations in a direct sexual[32] and a social way;[33] for participants of the workshop, gender is a new tool for reflecting about an existing phenomenon but in a much more general way. Thus, although the example situations were from local contexts, the tools to reflect on them were not. In the description of the workshop, I showed that participants made a distinction between

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[25]These insights I gathered during the long periods over the many years I did research in the area, so they were not just concluded after the observation of the workshop.

[26]Oyewumi mentioned a genderless language in her research field, that is Yoruba society in Nigeria (Oyewumi, 1997: 174). Many more languages in various regions in the world are genderless.

[27]Cross-cousin is the ideal marriage relation. *Mayaba* means attraction from two people from the opposite sex, or seduction.

[28]Or to avoid the word one says: one who seeks the backside of someone else: *warango goddo ngal baawo*.

[29]Or *n'gendal: be don n'geddi boddum*: they go along fine!

[30]Of friendship or otherwise.

[31]*Bana laawol*.

[32]As *waayeegu*, for a sexual relation between a man and a woman who are not legally married.

[33]As *ma'tootral* for an affectionate relation in general.

'tradition' or 'cultural' and religion. Many practices they considered to be to the disadvantage of women, are in their view cultural hangovers that are not in line with the prescriptions of Islam: women's workload, prohibition on girls' participation in education, giving girls 'in marriage' at an early age etc. [34] In the plenary sessions participants concluded, so I described, that women's poor situation is caused ultimately by the non-Islamic behaviour of the population.

Although the outcome of the discussions seemed to favour women in general, it may have been quite different had local concepts been used during the workshop. In the discourse of the workshop, men were ready to give women much space in the public sphere, and from our perspective, we could explain this as being in favour of GM. Whether they give this autonomy also to women who are part of their own 'relations' (one of the many kinds they distinguish) remains a question that was not answered. The content of the gender course may not have been experienced as being part of the participants' own lives: they related these intimate problematic issues to the 'other', and preferably to the 'non-Islamic other' or the 'bad Muslim', who suffered from ethnic non-Islamic residues.

The agents who are held responsible to carry out the message to better women's situation are also worthy of our attention. 'Agents' financed by the nation state, such as school teachers or modern politicians (often coming from the southern Christian parts of the country), are not mentioned. The emphasis of the spreading of the 'good tidings' (for women) by religious leaders does underline the fact that greater importance is given to religious leaders as Cameroonian citizens within the Muslim community than to national agents. This can be explained as a desirability to keep changes in society, including GM policy, under their own (Islamic) control.

In the history of Islamization, proselytes from other ethnic groups imitated Fulbe identity. Educating women is part of this picture: if they are at home—because they should not be given too heavy a workload—they can devote their time to study and to education.[35] This is, among other things, what the participants have in mind when they speak about the fact that a woman should not neglect her 'foyer', her household, when she works elsewhere.

5   CONCLUSION

This essay focused on a gender-awareness training for local religious and political leaders in northern Cameroon as a text-in-context. The outcome of the workshop, the emphasis on education for women, is not surprising. This is in line with the emphasis that the Islamic community in this part of the world places on women's right to religious and secular education. In this respect during the workshop, reference was made to the fact that 'tribal norms' (so non-Islamic) deny women access to education, whereas the participants mention that education is of great importance in Islamic society. Participants considered various unfavourable situations of women to be the result of ethnic residues from a pre-Islamic past. When a 'proper' Islamic lifestyle—as propagated by various 'resurgence' movements—finds its way within the households, this would improve; so they concluded, the situation of women, which the participants did not express as unequal relation vis-à-vis men. Local

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[34]So within the course they analyzed daily life as separate from 'religion', as if religion is not part of that same daily life. There is no space to further discuss this issue.
[35]All this I observed, researched, described and analyzed elsewhere (van Santen, 1993a; van Santen, 1998; van Santen, 2010; van Santen, 2012; van Santen, 2013; van Santen, fc, etc.).

leaders thus turned the content of the workshop to their advantage: a better Islam would automatically improve women's situation. A workshop initiated by ideas from an international community was appropriated by the religious community to underline the difference between a 'global Muslim community' and an 'ethnicized tribal community', whereby the latter is considered backward in the eyes of the local Muslim leaders. This, in the opinion of the participants, comes to the fore in the way women in non-Islamic communities are treated, are despised and have neither right to property nor to 'joie de vivre' because of a 'tribal ideology'.

However, the 'foreign' concept gender that was used during the workshop was not congruent with their own terminology: local concepts indicating relations—as I mentioned in the analysis—are not oppositional as the many terms they distinguish are not exclusively related to female and male bodies but to human beings in general.[36] Participants hardly needed to reflect on their own attitudes as male persons of their society or on their own individual treatment of 'their' women. They have discussed women's position but not the relations between women and men on various levels, let alone the fact that gender roles are not necessarily fixed. Consequently, the participants do not show resistance to GM; on the contrary, girls and women ought to be given a large role in public spaces and at all times have access to education to take part in development. This is in line with the fact that education of women has always been considered of utmost importance as also come to the fore in the slogan of the national campaign. Local religious leaders ought to spread the message on radio and television and not agents of the nation state. It was considered to be a task of the Islamic community itself to 'integrate women in development'. We can explain this wish as a way to control the process of GM, as well as distrust towards 'instigating integration of women' by state agents, who predominantly are non-Islamic.

Participants agreed on the aims of GM, but the concept gender, as they discussed it, is not congruent with local categories to indicate relations between human beings. Nevertheless, the participants of the workshop have been able to translate the concept and to integrate it in their own reality: GM, a policy instrument much debated as it does not change existing undesirable policies, contributes in our example to a simultaneous further process of Islamization. This again should make us aware that GM strategies are increasingly based on 'blueprints' and uncritically implemented in many differing and complex contexts.[37] Much more ethno-graphically based local insights are needed.

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[36]This is in line with Oyewumi's findings for Yoruba society (Oyewumi, 1997).
[37]I thank my referent for this remark.

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