UNIVERSITY OF AGDER

How cooperation between International NGOs and local youth associations influence civil society in Malawi

A case study of Plan Malawi's partnerships with youth organisations and networks.

Silje Vold

Supervisor: Ståle Angen Rye

University of Agder, 2013
Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences
Department of Development Studies

Abstract

This thesis explores how cooperation between International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) and local youth associations influence the development of civil society in Malawi. The aim is to contribute to greater understanding of how a particular historical, political and economic context shapes the way aid-funded development interventions play out.

There is a significant focus within development aid on the importance of civil society for democracy and development, and resources are channelled towards INGOs with the aim of them contributing to "strengthening" local civil society. The literature is however critical and inconclusive when it comes to the impact of such efforts (Riddell, 2007), and there is debate as to whether the idea of "civil society" is relevant in a developing country context (Whaites, 2000). Further, there is a lack of research on the role of youth within development and civil society, despite the fact that the global numbers of youth have reached its highest in history, and most of them live in developing countries (World Bank, 2006, pp. 4–5). This shows the need for more research into efforts to strengthen civil society in developing countries, and the role of youth within these efforts.

This study is applying a qualitative methodology, using Plan Malawi and a set of local youth associations they work with as a case study. The data generated through interviews and focus group discussions are analysed through a theoretically informed thematic analysis, focusing on how to understand civil society in Africa and Malawi, and civil society as an arena for participation, the promotion of accountability, and the creation of social capital.

The analysis shows that efforts to strengthen local civil society through aid may be limited or even undermined by aid itself, because of the mechanisms inherent in the aid system, and how aid influences the motivations of actors within civil society. This can be seen in four distinct ways. Firstly, aid may lead to the strengthening of particular actors within civil society according to criteria set by donors, and also reinforce their dependence on aid. Secondly, youth participation initiatives risk becoming forms of manipulation, due to the cultural, historical, political and economic context. Thirdly, efforts to enhance accountability through aid may be undermined by the overwhelming focus on accountability towards donors. Finally, competition for aid may hinder cooperation and trust within civil society, hence undermining the creation of social capital.

Acknowledgements

Preface

When I first visited Malawi in 2011, I was struck by its contrasts. A green, fertile and beautiful county with outstandingly friendly and helpful people, but at the same time stuck in desperate poverty, with a much-ignored history of severe political repression, and a young population deeply frustrated by the lack of opportunities. I left with an urge to come back, learn more about the country and its people, and also to take a deeper look at how the numerous efforts by development agencies are affecting Malawian society.

Having worked in various development and human rights organisations for the past seven years, I have often felt frustrated by the lack of opportunity to take a step back and reflect on how what we attempt to do plays out in practice. The "development profession" with well-meaning organisations and donors is full of buzzwords that go in and out of fashion, and assumptions are made about how processes work without necessarily understanding the context in which they take place. Further, I found that the evaluations and other research conducted by development actors tend to focus quite narrowly on whether the programs and projects lead to the intended results. This can lead to a "tunnel-vision", where unintended effects not directly related to the planned results are not captured, although they might have an important impact on people's lives. Here, I was inspired by Eggen's work on Malawi, which focuses on unforeseen effects of aid in terms of influencing the state in Malawi (Eggen, 2011, p. 8). Reading his research convinced me to adopt an open and exploratory approach, in an attempt to avoid the tunnel vision of aid-agencies. By exploring how aid influences the development of civil society in Malawi, this research hopes to compliment Eggen's work.

It also struck me that there seemed to be a significant gap between the academic research on development, and the approaches and practices of development organisations. Part of my motivation to conduct this research was therefore to be able to take a step back from the "profession", to explore the practices of development organisations in a particular context in light of development theory, and to do it through an open and exploratory approach, which enabled me to capture issues that are often not captured in the reports by aid agencies.

This research focuses on partnerships between youth organisations and international development organisations in Malawi, using Plan International and a set of its partners as a case study. I have worked in Plan Norway, part of the child rights and development

organisation Plan International, since 2009. Plan Norway has been very supportive throughout this process, recognizing the need for a better understanding of how cooperation with local actors aiming to "strengthen civil society" actually work in practice, and being open to recommendations on how Plan's work can be improved.

Doing research on an organisation I am a part of has led to both challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, I have had great access to information and informants within the organisation, partners and other stakeholders, and an extensive prior knowledge of the organisation. On the other hand, I have been concerned about a lack of clarity of roles and loyalty ties, which may have shaped what information was shared with me as well as the way in which I analysed it. I did however find this research a great opportunity to confront my own biases and pre-conceptions. Finally, I found it motivating to know that my research can directly inform my work afterwards, and also be read and used by the rest of the organisation - and by that hopefully contribute to development work which is more appreciative of context, and more informed by the existing academic literature.

List of Abbreviations

AYISE   Active Youth Initiative for Social Enhancement
CBO   Community-Based Organisation
CCCD   Child-Centred Community Development
CEYCA   Centre for Youth and Children's Affairs
CIDA   Canadian International Development Agency
CO   Country Office
DPP   Democratic Progressive Party
GDP   Gross Domestic Product
GNI   Gross National Income
INGO   International Non-Governmental Organisation
ILO   The International Labour Organisation
MCP   Malawi Congress Party
MOU   Memorandum of Understanding
MP   Member of Parliament
MYP   Malawi Young Pioneers
NAC   Nyasaland African Congress
NGO   Non-Governmental Organisation
OHCHR   Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights
PPP   Purchasing Power Parity
PA   Programme Area Office
UDF   United Democratic Front
UNDP   United Nations Development Programme
UN   United Nations
USAID   United States Agency for International Development
YONECO   Youth Net and Counselling

List of figures

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

 "Civil society strengthening" is a widely used term amongst development practitioners. It plays an important part in Norwegian development aid, as well as in the strategies and aims of major development actors. In particular, there is a focus on the role of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) in terms of strengthening the capacity of local organisations in developing countries, and vast amounts of funding is channelled towards this aim (Riddell, 2007, l. 4609–18). The academic literature is however critical and inconclusive when it comes to the need for as well as the effect of efforts to strengthen civil society, and there is surprisingly little evidence of their impact (Riddell, 2007, l. 4638–49)[1]. Further, there are claims that these INGOs impose western notions of a civil society which do not make sense in a developing country context (Whaites, 2000, pp. 124–127). There is therefore a need for more empirical research on how these attempts to "strengthen civil society" work in particular developing-country contexts.

It is particularly interesting to explore this with a focus on youth organisations, because they are often not seen as actors and agents within civil society in their own right, but rather as objects and targets of development interventions. This is despite the fact that the world is currently in a "youth bulge", with 1.5 billion people between 12-24, the highest number in history. Most of them, 1.3 billion, live in developing countries (World Bank, 2006, pp. 4–5). Within the development literature, children and young people are often viewed as a "source of trouble or in trouble", either excessively vulnerable or potentially causing disruption (Roche, 1996, p. 477). This comes out strongly in the research on how the current "youth bulge" is associated with violence – research shows that large groups of youth relative to the adult population increases the risk of domestic armed conflict, terrorism and violent demonstrations (Urdal, 2006, pp. 623–4). Overall, youth are often seen as a threat to, rather than a part of, civil society (Ginwright & James, 2002, pp. 27–9).

The focus on youth as actors within civil society has also been lacking from the side of donors and development agencies. For example, Norad places great importance on the value of civil society organisations, and aims to contribute to their strengthening. However, youth organisations are only mentioned once in their strategy document outlining principles for

---

[1] Riddel (2007) refers to an e-book, hence instead of page numbers it is referred to line number (l.).

support to civil society organisations (Norad, 2009, pp. 11–12). A recent study seeking to explore the "wider effects" of Norwegian support to civil society in four countries including Malawi, did not explore the role of youth organisations, and youth organisations were not part of the workshops or data collection (Aboum et al., 2012, pp. 105–109). The role of youth and the importance of youth engagement is however also an emerging theme. The World Development Report 2007 focused particularly on youth (World Bank, 2006), and a new white paper from Norway on development and inequality discusses the importance of youth participation and youth organisations within civil society throughout the paper (The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013). This shows the need for more academic research on this theme, to ensure that development interventions are guided by research and analysis as opposed to just good intentions.

Malawi is a particularly interesting history within which to explore the role of youth within civil society. As will be discussed in chapter 2, Malawi has an extremely young population, as well as a history of manipulating youth for the political advantage of adults. Further, it is an extremely poor and aid-dependent country, where economic incentives and the prospect of accessing aid play an important part of people's motivation to do anything at all, including joining groups and organisations.

The overall research question of this thesis is: *How does cooperation between International Non-Governmental Organisations and local youth associations influence the development of civil society in Malawi?* By "local youth associations", I refer to Malawian organisations or networks of various degree of formality, who aim to improve the situation of youth, and involve youth in their activities. Although "youth" as a social category is debated, it is here referred to simply as the age category 15-25, which is explained further in chapter 4 on methodology. By International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) I refer to non-profit organisations that are global in reach, and operate in a range of different countries. The fact that they are "international" does not imply that staff are "international", it refers simply to the organisation being part of a larger international entity legally as well as financially. In poor countries such as Malawi, INGOs tend to focus particularly on supporting development interventions including efforts to support the realisation of human rights, and funding is generated in other countries (usually, in more developed countries) for this purpose. Often, aid is given to INGOs with the particular aim of strengthening local organisations in developing countries (Riddell, 2007, l. 4609–18).

The research question is explored by using Plan Malawi and a set of local youth organisations and networks they work with as a case study. Plan Malawi is the Malawian branch of the international child rights and development organisation Plan International, and have clearly stated aims of strengthening civil society as well as empowering youth and children to participate in decision-making (Plan Malawi, 2012, pp. 12–13, 18–19). In order to achieve this they work cooperate with formalized "youth organisations" that tend to be quite professionalised and based in urban areas, as well as more informal and less professionalised "youth networks" that are often based in rural areas. For simplicity, the term "youth association" is used as a catch-all term to describe organisations, networks, and other types of youth groups, whereas when "organisation" or "network" is used they refer specifically to that type of association. Both are included within this case study, because this allows an exploration of different ways in which different types of youth are involved in civil society in Malawi, and how cooperation between local actors and INGOs may differ based on the level of professionalization of the local association. In chapter 5, all organisations and networks included in this case study are presented and described.

The starting point for investigating this research question was to explore on a very practical level how it influences the local youth associations to work with and receive support from Plan, as well as how Plan and the youth associations view civil society in Malawi and their role within it. This was done by using a qualitative methodology, with the primary methods of data collection being semi-structured interviews with members and staff of youth organisations and Plan Malawi, and focus group discussions with youth network members. The methodology, as well as the process of and challenges related to data collection, are discussed in chapter 4.

The initial categorization and systematization of the findings was generated from the data itself, without bringing in concepts from the theory on civil society. These empirical findings on how the partnerships with Plan influenced the youth associations, and their views on civil society and their role within it, are presented in chapter 6. In the analysis, a deductive, theoretically informed thematic analysis is applied, bringing in key themes and concepts from the literature on civil society and development (discussed in chapter 3) in order to analyse the findings from a theoretical perspective. The analysis is focusing particularly on how to understand civil society in Africa and Malawi, and civil society as an arena for participation,

the promotion of accountability, and the creation and maintenance of social capital, whilst also taking into account the particular historical and political context in Malawi. This thematic analysis serves a dual purpose. Firstly, analysing the empirical findings in the light of these concepts provides a deeper understanding of the particular case study, the cooperation between Plan Malawi and local youth associations. Secondly, relating the empirical findings to these themes and concepts from the literature allows us to suggest some analytical generalizations regarding how aid influences civil society in developing countries. This analysis is presented in chapter seven, whereas chapter 8 presents the conclusions of this thesis.

2. Study area: Malawi

This thesis is exploring how cooperation between INGOs and local youth associations influence the development of civil society in Malawi. An important starting point for this exploration is to get a better understanding of the particular context this cooperation takes place in. This chapter will therefore provide an overview of the key characteristics of Malawi today, as well as important historical and political developments in Malawi since the colonial period. Within this, there will be a focus on the role of external actors in shaping development processes including civil society in Malawi, as well as the role of youth.

2.1 Key characteristics of Malawi today

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world, with a per capita Gross National Income (GNI) of $774[2] (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2013, p. 146). Almost three quarters of the population - 73,9 % - live below the global poverty line of $1,25 per day (World Bank, 2004). The UNDP Human Development Index, which includes indicators based on education and health in addition to living standards, ranks Malawi within the 20 countries with lowest human development in the world, as nr. 170 out of 186 (UNDP, 2013, p. 146).

The economy is typically agricultural. 80% of the population live in rural areas, and 90% of export revenue is from agricultural products. Agricultural exports at present include tobacco, tea, sugar, cotton, coffee and peanuts. Other agricultural products include corn, cassava, pulses, macadamia nuts and cattle (CIA Factbook, n.d.). The country is land-locked, and the high cost of transport adds to the price of imports (Cammack, 2011, p. 4). In 2012, the most important imports were petroleum oils, chemical fertilizers and cement (Mzale, 2013, p. 10). The prices of these imports are directly related to the cost of basic necessities such as food and transport. The recent devaluation of the local currency, the kwacha, and the flotation of the currency towards the dollar has therefore dramatically increased cost of living, which led to the strike of civil servants 20th of February 2013 (The Nation, 2013a, p. 1).

As one of the most densely populated countries in Africa, Malawi has a population of more than 15 million on 118 484 square kilometres, which amounts to 130 people per square kilometre (BBC, 2013b). In addition to high population density which puts increased pressure on land, the country faces a range of challenges related to food insecurity, environmental

---

[2] Measured in 2005 Purchasing Power Parity (PPP)

degradation, unemployment and HIV/AIDS (Banik, 2010, p. 35). The country has a very young population, 65,3 % of the population is below 25 years of age (CIA Factbook, n.d.).

Malawi is also heavily aid-dependent (Banik, 2010, p. 24; Eggen, 2011, p. 21). Since 1980, official Overseas Development Aid has made up between 10% and 40% of annual GNI, usually ranging between 20-25% (World Bank, 2004). This will be discussed further in section 2.4 below.

2.2 Colonialism, Independence and Dictatorship

The first known European to venture into Malawi was David Livingstone in 1859. He established a Christian mission in the country, and was of the firm belief that the three C's of Christianity, Commerce and Colonialism could save the country from its current chaotic state of ethnic conflict fuelled by the Arab and Portuguese slave trade which dominated the continent (Briggs, 2010, p. 9). What is now called Malawi first became a British colony as part of British Central African Protectorate, which in 1907 was divided into Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and Nyasaland (now Malawi) (Briggs, 2010, p. 11).

The fight for independence from colonial rule was first coordinated by the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC), set up in 1943. In 1958, the US- and UK- educated Malawian doctor Hastings Kamuzu Banda returned to Malawi to become president of NAC. He became a figurehead for the independence movement, and initiated a series of protests and riots. By 1959 the NAC was banned, and Banda and his supporters arrested. A new party, the Malawi Congress Party was formed, with Banda as president from his release in 1960. Following a referendum, the hand-over process from the British started, and on the 6th of July 1964 Nyasaland became Malawi, a fully independent nation (Briggs, 2010, pp. 14–16).

Despite the optimism and idealism amongst the many who fought for independence, it soon became clear that Banda's form of rule was everything but democratic. Three weeks after independence he announced at the Organisation of African Unity that Malawi had "one party, one leader, one government, and no nonsense about it". Shortly after, he dismissed several of his ministers, and this became the start of 30 years of a brutal dictatorship (Briggs, 2010, p. 16). There were no elections, independent organisations were not allowed, opponents and others that were seen as threats were removed from power, put in prison or simply "accidentalized" – killed in a supposed accident (Briggs, 2010; Eidhammer, 2005; Mapanje,

2002). The well-known Malawian poet and former political prisoner Jack Mapanje describes the culture as one of "ruthlessness, repression, torture, fear, jealousy, rivalry, irresponsibility and lack of accountability" (Mapanje, 2002, p. 183). Conservative estimates suggest that 250 000 Malawians were detained without trial during the Banda era (Briggs, 2010, p. 16).

Banda built his dictatorship on what he called the four "cornerstones", which included unity, obedience, discipline and loyalty. Some claim these values are not just reflecting Banda's authoritarian orientation, but also traditional, Malawian values (Booth, Cammack, Harrigan, Kanyongolo, & Ngwira, 2006, p. 20) Others, however, challenge this and use the example of the young leaders during the fight for independence in the 1950's as an example of how Malawians are not necessarily obedient and loyal (Eidhammer, 2005, p. 15).

Youth played a central role in operationalizing Banda's dictatorship, through the Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP), an elite wing of the League of Malawi Youth, the youth division of the Malawi Congress Party. The aim at the time was to mobilise youth, especially those who had left school, to participate in the development of their country. This idea appealed to many donor countries, who provided support to setting up the organisation (Phiri, 2000). The MYP did however become another security and intelligence branch of the government, modelled after the National Service Brigade of Israel, and trained in the use of firearms, martial arts and battle tactics with the help of Israel, Taiwan and South Africa (Phiri, 2000). The MYP had spies, agents and informants in every village, reporting directly to those in power (Eidhammer, 2005, p. 80; Mapanje, 2002, p. 183).

The end to Banda's rule came in the early 1990's, as a result of a combination of domestic and international factors. When it comes to domestic factors, the self-titled "life president" Banda was getting old and fragile. It is claimed that in reality, the affairs of the country were controlled by his mistress Cecilia Kadzamira – "Mama Cecilia", her uncle John Tembo and others in her family, "the self-styled royal family", which occupied pretty much every possible position of power and privilege (Mapanje, 2002, p. 181). Although Banda had appointed Tembo as his successor, the latter lacked Banda's popular support amongst the grass roots (Briggs, 2010, p. 18). There was also growing unrest and dissatisfaction with the government, and an intensifying domestic demand for freedom from oppression (Eggen, 2011, pp. 46–47). Particularly important were the protests from the churches, most notably in the government-critical "Lenten letter" from the catholic church which was read in churches

throughout the country as well as faxed to the BBC on 3rd March 1992 (Briggs, 2010, p. 18; VonDoepp, 2002, p. 123). The churches played an important role as a mobilizer as well as a channel through which opposition could be voiced, as no other forms of independent civil society associations were allowed (Anders, 2002, p. 44; Eidhammer, 2005, pp. 38, 79). In terms of international factors, there was a marked change in the geopolitical environment as the cold war was coming to an end. Western powers who had ignored Banda's human rights abuses and happily provided aid to support his "pro-western" politics now threatened to withdraw support and goodwill (Briggs, 2010, p. 18; Mapanje, 2002, p. 184). In addition, the political changes within South-Africa, who had been an important ally for Malawi during the Apartheid-regime, lead to a further weakening of Banda's regime (Eggen, 2011, pp. 46–47).

A referendum on multi-party elections was held in 1993, in which an overwhelming majority voted for change. Multi-party election took place in 1994, where the United Democratic Front (UDF) won with their presidential candidate Bakili Muluzu, hence putting a formal end to three decades of Banda's rule. Muluzu also won in 1999, and attempted (unsuccessfully) in 2002 to change the constitution to allow for a third term. Also here, the churches played an important role in protesting against the suggested change (Briggs, 2010, pp. 19–20; Englund, 2006, pp. 17–18).

2.3 The "new" Malawi – change and continuity under multi-party democracy

The formal structures and systems put in place during the transition from Banda's authoritarian rule towards multi-party democracy formally established a political environment very different from the dictatorship. It included a constitution based on Human Rights, an independent judiciary and parliament, regular elections and various watchdog bodies (Cammack, 2011, p. 2). As pointed out by Eggen, aid donors were influential in terms of supporting as well as shaping the emerging democracy (Eggen, 2011, pp. 46–47). One important challenge was however that the understanding of what democracy means in practice, and the capacity to engage in democracy through organisations, debating and politics was limited amongst the general population in Malawi (Eidhammer, 2005, p. 88).

Importantly, no truth and reconciliation commission was established, and there was no other process of documenting the abuses and injustices that had taken place during the dictatorship. In the words of Mapanje, "it seemed that there was a general conspiracy for total silence; it

felt as if Banda and his minions had bewitched the entire country into eternal silence about how people suffered" (Mapanje, 2002, pp. 178–9). Banda, his mistress Mama Cecilia and John Tembo were put on trial for the murder of three cabinet minsters and one Member of Parliament (MP) who were allegedly "accidentalized", but were acquitted of all charges (Briggs, 2010, p. 19). This can be seen as one form of continuity from the old regime to the new – simply that those in power were not held accountable for their actions, and could continue in positions of power and privilege. For example, John Tembo was the presidential candidate of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) in the 2009 elections, backed by the then former president Muluzu (Briggs, 2010, p. 19).

Another form of continuity can bee seen in the way in which youth were used to control and frighten opponents. Although the Malawi Young Pioneers were disarmed by the army during "operation Bwenzani" in 1993 (Phiri, 2000), politicians in power have continued using youth to their political advantage. This can be seen for example in the way the UDF Young Democrats have been used for the intimidation of those who belong to other political parties or are accused of "insulting" the president, including allegedly attacking newspaper journalists and clergymen (Briggs, 2010, p. 19; Englund, 2002, p. 13). Englund argues that in both cases, youth are manipulated by elders, and "physical violence was integral to young people's political role" (Englund, 2006, p. 80).

A third type of continuity, it is argued, is the politics of patronage. Many post-colonial states in Africa have been characterized as 'neopatrimonial'. This term captures a dual or hybrid character of the state. On the one hand, the state-resources, such as positions, finances, networks and services, are being controlled by patrons, powerful individuals who use them in order to provide for particular groups and serve their interests and connections. On the other hand, the state is officially governed by formal laws and policies as well as established administrative and bureaucratic procedures (Booth et al., 2006, p. 9). This "neopatrimonial logic" represents a continuity from the Banda era, and implies the centralization of power into the hands of "big men", and a general tendency of exchanging benefits for votes (Cammack, 2011, p. 2) In this manner, politicians as well as civil servants see the state as a resource for patronage and self-enrichment, resulting in a state "unable to enforce the rule of law and to implement public policies" (Anders, 2002, p. 48).

One interesting change that was brought about with the transition to multi-party democracy,

according to Eggen, was a shift of power away from the state and towards the chiefs, traditional authority figures in the communities. This was partly due to the demand from large institutional donors such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank of reducing the state bureaucracy, which weakened the state vis-à-vis the chiefs. In addition, the donor preference for community ownership and participatory approaches lead to a more prominent role being given to chiefs, as authority figures within their communities as well as "gatekeepers" who allow access to communities and community members. Chiefs therefore became heavily involved in development interventions. The chiefs have also become an institutionalised part of the state by being given the role as "District Commissioner", but without institutionalised forms of vertical accountability such as elections. (Eggen, 2011, pp. 25, 30–31, 43–46). This has implications for how democracy and accountability functions, which will be explored further in section 3.3.4 on development and accountability in Malawi.

Another important change that was brought about with the end of the dictatorship, was that civil society started to flourish. One reason was simply that it was now allowed to start and join organisations, which it had not been during the Banda era (Anders, 2002, p. 44; Eidhammer, 2005, pp. 38, 79). Another important reason was support from donors, who emphasised the importance of civil society organisations for the consolidation of democracy (Booth et al., 2006, p. 16). The influx of funds from donors towards civil society did however lead to a number of challenges. Firstly, Englund argues that Malawian civil society became modelled on donor priorities and objectives rather than reflecting the concerns of the poor (Englund, 2006, p. 196). Secondly, local civil society organisations were overwhelmed with resources, sometimes without having representativeness or the capacity to deliver. (Booth et al., 2006, p. 16). However, there are also some positive examples of collaboration within civil society in this period. These include the umbrella organisation of the churches and faith organisations, the Public Affairs Committee, the process of opposition parties monitoring the Electoral Commission, and various initiatives to monitor development performance (Booth et al., 2006, p. 16). The development of civil society in Malawi is of particular relevance to this thesis, and is explored further in sections 3.3.1-3.3.5.

2.4 Malawi in the new Millennium – political chaos and popular frustration.

Muluzu's successor Bingu Wa Mutharika won the 2004 election as a UDF representative, but resigned from the party the year after to form his own Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) (Briggs, 2010, pp. 19–20). With this party he also won the 2009 elections, and remained

president until he passed away in April 2012, when vice president Joyce Banda took over and became Malawi's first female president (BBC, 2013b).

Joyce Banda was a rather controversial figure within the DPP, as she had previously been expelled from the party by the president, and had started her own party. Some parts of the government would rather see the late president's brother taking over, and the information minister, Ms Kailati, even held a press conference stating that Banda did not have the right to take over, despite this being clearly stated in the constitution (BBC, 2013c). In March 2013, ten people were arrested on suspicion of planning a "coup" in the wake of Bingu's death, including government ministers and Bingu's brother (BBC, 2013a).

During Bingu's rule, the country saw a rise in popular frustration combined with the government moving towards more restrictive policies and practices towards actors within civil society. (Aboum et al., 2012, p. 9; Trócaire, 2012) This came to a climax in 2011. It was sparked off by one important event in February, when a lecturer at a university used an example from the Arab Spring uprising in Tunisia in his civil rights class, and was called into questioning by the police and encouraged to take a leave of absence. This started a process of teacher boycotts, injunctions, court cases, the dismissal of professors and university union leaders and demonstrations by staff and students (Cammack, 2011, p. 8). In the months to follow, several NGO leaders experienced attacks and death threats. Local council elections, which were overdue since 2005, were postponed until 2014. The British High Commissioner was deported due to the leakage of a document in which he described the situation and stated that the president Muthiarika was "becoming ever more autocratic and intolerant of criticism" (Cammack, 2011, pp. 8–9).

The situation reached its highest level of tension when demonstrations were held in the main cities on the 20th of July. In the days leading up to the demonstrations, pickup trucks with youth carrying machetes were driving around, apparently intimidating people on behalf of the ruling DPP. The government ordered independent radio broadcasts to stop, roadblocks were set up and judges attempted to ban protests outside designated areas. A two-day clash between protestors and police ensued, where hundreds were arrested, protestors were shot by police and twenty people died (Cammack, 2011, pp. 9–10). In the months to follow, vigils planned by activists were called off in fear of further bloodshed or "deregistering" of the involved NGOs (Cammack, 2011, p. 11). Although Joyce Banda started an investigation into

the events and also sacked the Chief of Police for mishandling the situation upon her take-over, nobody has yet been charged with the responsibility for the deaths (BBC, 2013c; Sharra, 2013).

Popular frustration was also fuelled by economic despair. Although Bingu's first period of rule, 2004-2009, saw an increase in economic growth, this slowed dramatically down after 2009, and there was a severe shortage of foreign exchange, fuel and electricity (Cammack, 2011, p. 3). With Joyce Banda's take-over, she made attempts at "cleaning up" the economy by devaluating the local currency, and making the exchange rate float against the dollar. This was seen as necessary in order to restore faith in the economy and ensure support from the International Monetary Fund (BBC, 2013b). Although this might be a necessary move for the long-term stability of the economy, it made living conditions worse for most people, as it dramatically increased the price of basic necessities such as fuel and maize (The Nation, 2013b, 2013c). This increased cost of living was the motivation behind the strike on the 20th of February 2013, when 100 000 public workers demanded a 67% wage increase (The Nation, 2013a). Fuelling the public's frustration was the fact that the dominating discussion in parliament at the time was a demand from MPs to receive a monthly fuel allowance dating back to 2009, which would amount to 10 Million Kwacha per MP - approximately $25 000 (Nyasa Times, 2013).

Since the transition to multi-party democracy in 1994, donors have continued to play an important role, due to the high level of aid-dependence of the state (Eidhammer, 2005, p. 143). The aid-dependence and limited capacity of the state has led to donors "increasingly stepping into the government's shoes" in terms of making government policy, which leads to problems of lack of ownership as well as challenges due to donor inconsistencies across time and between different donors (Booth et al., 2006, pp. x–xi). Further, donors have a tendency of setting up their own project teams and recruiting skilled Malawians, which further reduces the state capacity as well as leading to parallel systems of policy-making (Eidhammer, 2005, p. 147).

2.5 Summary

This overview of the political situation and history in Malawi points out some key elements that are of particular relevance to this thesis. Firstly, the way in which youth participation has been manipulated by adults for political purposes is of crucial importance when analysing

how youth participation initiated by other actors play out. Secondly, the political chaos and confusion that has been the norm since multi-party democracy, where MPs and government ministers leave parties and start new ones, publicly go against their own constitution and seem to focus primarily on ensuring their own allowances, leads to a lack of faith in the political system. This might be compounded by the way in which political leaders have not been held accountable for repression and brutalities after the dictatorship as well as after recent events such as the July 2011 demonstrations. Combined with the changing role of chiefs vis-à-vis the elected state representatives as well as the neo-patrimonial system of governance, this has implications for how democracy and accountability is understood, and what opportunities people in Malawi have to hold those in power accountable. Thirdly, the situation of economic despair and popular frustration, and therefore the powerful role of various aid donors in shaping the state as well as Malawian civil society is crucial for understanding how civil society has developed in Malawi since multi-party democracy.

The development of civil society in Malawi as well as the opportunities of agencies within civil society to hold those with power accountable can be better understood by exploring it further in light of the theory on civil society and development in Africa, which is discussed in the literature review below.

3. Literature review and theoretical framework

The first part of this literature review will introduce the concept of "civil society", and show how it has developed in western political thought as an important component of democracy. The role of civil society will be further discussed by exploring three key themes which stand out as particularly important in the literature on civil society; namely civil society as an arena for participation, civil society and the promotion of accountability, and civil society and the creation and maintenance of social capital.

The second part of this literature review will focus on the relevance of these concepts in relation to development and aid in Africa and Malawi. This part will start by discussing the role of civil society in development, and go on to explore the applicability of the concept of "civil society" in an African context. Further, the literature on participation, accountability and social capital will be revisited, whilst focusing on the developing context, the African context, and the influence of aid on civil society.

The three key themes of participation, accountability and social capital are selected not just because of their prominence in the literature, but also because I see these as underlying assumptions when development actors such as Plan develop programs aiming to support civil society organisations – working with actors in civil society is seen as a good thing, because they believe it will contribute to greater exercise of participation, promotion of accountability, and enhanced social capital. In this thesis, these themes are explored with a particular focus on youth associations. Throughout this literature review, literature on youth engagement will therefore be referred to and included, where available.

3.1 Introducing civil society

The question of "what civil society is" can only be fully understood within a particular context, but a useful starting point is to seek a basic definition. The concept itself has deep roots within western political thought, dating back to Aristotle's concept of *"politike koinonia",* political society/community, a term referring to a "public ethical-political community of free and equal citizens under a legally defined system of rule" (Cohen & Arato, 1992, p. 84). The definition as well as the understanding of the role and function of civil society has evolved with history, and it is now generally understood as a "sphere of social interaction between economy and state". It consists of "the sphere of associations (especially voluntary associations), social movements, and forms of public communication" (Cohen &

Arato, 1992, p. ix). Bratton also adds "norms of community cooperation" to the definition of civil society (Bratton, 1994, p. 2).

A challenge when attempting to navigate through different definitions of civil society is that the way in which descriptive definitions – *what civil society is*, as a sphere or an arena for human activity – and prescriptive and normative definitions – *what civil society should do*, what role it should play – often are used interchangeably (Orvis, 2001, p. 21). Cohen & Arato's definition above defines civil society by what it is not – it is not the household, the state, political society in the sense of government institutions, or the market economy. This does not imply that civil society refers to everything else. In the words of Cohen and Arato, civil society "represents only a dimension of the sociological world of norms, roles, practices, relationships, competencies and forms of dependence or a particular angle of looking at this world from the point of view of conscious association building and associational life" (Cohen & Arato, 1992, p. x). Explained simply, civil society is about collective activity for particular purposes. As collective activity is central within the definition of civil society, academic literature often focuses on formal associations and organisations such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) (Mitlin, Hickey, & Bebbington, 2007), but small, informal groups are also an important part of civil society (Fine & Harrington, 2004).

When it comes to the role civil society does – or should – play, it has historically been seen as important for bringing about and maintaining democracy. It has been viewed as a "terrain of democratization, of democratic institution-building", especially in relation to the democratic movements of Western Europe in the 18th and 19th century, and the struggles for democracy against an authoritarian state in Eastern Europe in the late 1980's (Cohen & Arato, 1992, pp. 15–16). It has also gained significant attention from academics, aid donors and international organisations due to its role in economic and political development, which will be discussed further in section 3.3.1. There also are critical views of the role of civil society in democracies, focusing on how organisations are not necessarily democratic, and therefore do not necessarily contribute positively to democracy (Coelho & Von Lieres, 2010, pp. 3–4).

3.2 Exploring the role of civil society

The role and function of civil society in terms of promoting and maintaining democracy (or not) can be better understood by breaking down the relationship between democracy and civil society into three distinct components: the exercise of participation, the promotion of

accountability, and the creation and maintenance of social capital. As will be shown in the discussion below, these three themes are distinct, yet interlinked, and each shed different light on the role of civil society in democracies.

3.2.1 Civil society as an arena for participation

Participation is seen as important within democratic societies for two distinct reasons. Firstly it has inherent value, as the ability to participate in decisions that affect your life is a key component of all major international human rights conventions[3]. This view is further expanded by Sen's Capability Approach and Nussbaum's Human Development Approach, where freedom, engagement, affiliation – the ability to engage in social interaction and have the freedom and supportive institutions to do so – is seen as essential components of the development of any society (Nussbaum, 2011, pp. 33–34).

Participation, especially within policy-making, is also seen as important because of its instrumental value. By being members of associations within civil society, people learn to cooperate with each other for common purposes, and can participate in policy-making (Bratton, 1994, p. 11). Such participation can contribute to better policy outcomes that are more relevant to people's needs. Groups of citizens are important sources of information, when it comes to impacts of policies as well as realistic and desirable alternatives (O'Faircheallaigh, 2010). Further, it can enhance democratic governance by increasing "support, legitimacy, transparency and responsiveness of a particular policy" (Brinkerhoff & Crosby, 2002, pp. 55–56). Empirical research from Catalonia in Spain show that participatory policy processes are more effective and meaningful when organized civil society is involved throughout the process. However, it also showed that most participatory processes were only loosely connected to processes of policy-making, thereby having a limited impact on policy processes overall (Font & Galais, 2011, pp. 945–46).

A lot of the literature on participation focuses primarily on its benefits, participation within associations is seen as positive, and the main threat is apathy and lack of engagement (Chambers & Kopstein, 2001, p. 842). However, there are also challenges and limitations related to participation. Successful participation requires skills and capacity, and always

---

[3]See The Universal Decralation of Human Rights (art.18-21), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (art.12-17), the Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (art.18, 19, 21, 22), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (art. 7), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (art. 7, 9, 21, 29).

entails a cost – in terms of time, resources, effort or even risk (Brinkerhoff & Crosby, 2002, pp. 61–62). Consequently, those with resources, power and knowledge can turn participatory processes to their advantage, whereas the excluded and marginalized often are unable to do so (Young, 1989, p. 258). Further, participatory processes may favour those who are organised, as opposed to those who have weaker links to actors within civil society or the state (Coelho & Von Lieres, 2010, p. 17). It is however also claimed that the limitations and challenges related to participation are results of badly designed participatory procedures, rather than limitations of participation in itself (Ackerman, 2007, p. 41).

Literature on participation and civil society generally focus on adult society. Youth and children tend to be described in the literature as "citizens of the future" rather than as actual social actors in their own right, with "a legitimate voice and valuable perspective" (Roche, 1996, p. 479). This is often based on assumptions that they are incapable of rational, "adult" decision-making (Matthews, Limb, & Taylor, 1999, p. 136). Participation in associations or groups therefore becomes a way of training them to become part of civil society in the future, as opposed to effective vehicles for participating in society now. However, there is a process of more acceptance in western countries of how children and young people have the right to be involved in decisions that affect them (Sinclair, 2006, pp. 106–7).

Exclusion of young people from associations within civil society, and lack of collaboration between younger and older generations, can be seen as a result of the "continued cultivation of distorted, negative images of youth [which] creates a barrier to this collaboration" (Youniss et al., 2003, p. 138). This is supported by research from the US, which shows how fear of youth, as well as lack of contact between youth and adults within a community can lead to negative attitudes and misperceptions both ways, contributing to isolation of youth in the community (Jarrett, Sullivan, & Watkins, 2004, p. 42). Some research points to youth participation and violence, in particular Urdal's research which shows how large groups of youth relative to the adult population increases the risk of domestic armed conflict, terrorism and violent demonstrations, especially if youth are motivated by economic hardship (Urdal, 2006, pp. 623–4). The literature also shows some evidence of positive effects of child and youth participation within civil society. Associations such as children's councils lead to enhanced knowledge of rights and social issues, and provides policy-makers with valuable information to inform policy (Alparone & Rissotto, 2001, p. 425). In some places, it has resulted in "better services; personal development of young people; and enhanced citizenship

and social inclusion" (Sinclair, 2006, p. 115).

The concept of "citizenship" is important within the literature on participation. Within western political thought, the concept of citizenship is related to the "social contract" between citizens and the state – "a set of rights and responsibilities bestowed by a state on its citizens" (Gaventa, 2002, p. 2). New, pluralistic approaches to citizenship have shifted from such a state-centric towards a more actor-oriented approach, where "citizenship is attained through the agency of citizens themselves" (Gaventa, 2002, p. 2). Here, citizenship goes beyond legal rights and election of representatives, it implies an ability of people to participate, build coalitions and "play a watchdog role" towards the state (Coelho & Von Lieres, 2010, pp. 2–3). When citizens are mobilized and organised within civil society, they can press for enhanced state responsiveness (Coelho & Von Lieres, 2010, pp. 15–16). This brings us to the issue of accountability, which is discussed in the next section.

3.2.2 Civil society and the promotion of accountability

Civil society is an important avenue for the promotion of accountability, as people often get organised together for purposes of advocacy, awareness-raising, and trying to influence the government (Riddell, 2007, l. 4020–30). Thus, a participatory civil society is a part of the "checks and balances" of government action (Woolcock, 1998, pp. 157–8) and contributes towards more accountable policy processes (Coelho & Von Lieres, 2010, p. 18).

Accountability is generally referred to as " holding actors responsible for their actions" (Newell & Bellour, 2002, p. 1). The ability to hold political decision-makers to account is an essential part of democracy, and goes beyond simply electing representatives to make decisions. It also implies that the "policy-making process is accountable to citizens through transparent procedures that seek to incorporate public input" (Ackerman, 2007, pp. 31–32). The concept gained renewed attention with the democratization debates in the aftermath of the cold war, where "open and participative political processes are seen to be a key check on the exercise of totalitarian power" (Newell & Bellour, 2002, p. 3). Conversely, when little attention is paid to government accountability beyond the electoral process, this risks leading to popular disengagement, distrust towards state and officials, and general disillusionment with the democratic process (Ackerman, 2007, pp. 31–32).

Different types of accountability are important within democracies. Ackerman distinguishes between "policy-making accountability", which requires policy-making processes that are transparent to the public and open for participation and oversight, and "performance accountability", which refers to the more technical process of how people within the government and state apparatus are "responsible to their principals through systems of monitoring and oversight" (Ackerman, 2007, pp. 31–32). A similar distinction is made by Newell and Bellour, although with a slightly different choice of terminology. Instead of "policy-making accountability", they use the term "political accountability" to describe the obligation of officials to continuously justify their conduct to the public. And rather than "performance accountability", they refer to "managerial accountability" to describe the more technocratic procedures and systems within the state apparatus for those who have been delegated authority (Newell & Bellour, 2002, pp. 7–9).

Mechanisms to ensure accountability can be organized by decision-makers as top-down processes involving citizens, or as horizontal accountability mechanisms within the state apparatus itself. It can also involve bottom-up, vertical strategies demanded from below, often by civil society groups (Newell & Bellour, 2002, pp. 5–7). Irrespective of how the process is initiated and organised, power is central to the concept of accountability. In the words of Newell and Bellour: "the right to demand and the capacity and willingness to respond to calls for accountability assumes relations of power" (Newell & Bellour, 2002, p. 1).

The debates on accountability have in the past focused primarily on the accountability of the state towards its citizens. There is however increasing focus on the accountability of private as well as non-governmental actors, such as transnational corporations and non-governmental organisations within civil society (Newell & Bellour, 2002, pp. 3,11, 19–23). One challenge related to the role of organisations in civil society when it comes to promoting political accountability is their own representativity, as well as the mechanisms by which they are held to account (Coelho & Von Lieres, 2010, pp. 3–4).

3.2.3. Civil society and social capital.

The literature on social capital compliments the literature on participation and accountability when it comes to the function and role of civil society, as well as what positive effects this may bring to society overall. The concept itself describes attributes of human relationships which enable people to overcome collective action problems (Ostrom & Ahn, 2010, p. xiv;

Putnam, 1993, p. 37). In other words, it seeks to explain what makes people cooperate. Social capital is thus a feature of civil society, and civil society is an arena within which social capital is created and maintained.

The first systematic conceptualization of the concept was done by Coleman in 1988, who saw it as a distinct type of capital parallel to financial capital, physical capital and human capital, but "embodied in relations among persons" (Coleman, 1988, pp. 118–9). It was further developed by academics from a range of disciplines, and became widely known with Putnam's study of politics in Italy, showing how the performance of regional government and other institutions were heavily influenced by the level and history of civic engagement in the region (Ostrom & Ahn, 2010, p. xi; Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1993, p. 36).

Putnam defines social capital as the "features of social organisation, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (Putnam et al., 1993, p. 167). Ostrom & Ahn's definition is rather similar, focusing on the three components of trustworthiness, networks, and formal and informal rules and institutions. These components are believed to enhance trust, and thereby enabling collective action. Trust is here seen as an outcome of social capital, not a form of social capital in itself (Ostrom & Ahn, 2010, pp. xiv–xvi). Fukuyama, on the other hand, sees both trust and networks as being caused by social capital, and defines social capital itself simply as "an instantiated informal norm that promotes cooperation between two or more individuals" (Fukuyama, 2000, p. 3).

These differences in definition are partly due to the authors using slightly different terminology to describe the similar phenomena. For example, the way Putnam describes "norms" is very similar to how Ostrom & Ahn describes "formal and informal rules and institutions"; they both seek to describe culturally and historically developed ways of behaving towards each other in a society, focusing particularly on reciprocity. However, Ostrom's definition is wider, including also formal rules and institutions which influence behaviour such as written laws and court decisions (Ostrom & Ahn, 2010, pp. xxii–xxiv; Putnam et al., 1993, pp. 171–3). The different definitions are also due to the difficulty of separating what constitutes social capital from the outcomes of social capital, given the self-reinforcing nature of social capital. Trust, cooperation and norms are mutually reinforcing as well as self-reinforcing, and can therefore be seen both as features and outcomes of social capital (Putnam et al., 1993, pp. 170–177). Consequently, when it comes to defining the

relationship between civil society and social capital, civil society in the form of networks of engagement is a feature of social capital, but also an outcome of it, as networks, norms and trust all contribute towards a stronger and more vibrant civil society, which again reinforce the features of social capital. In the same way, weak social capital breeds a weak civil society.

The differences in definition discussed above are not of consequence to this thesis, as the aim is not to measure different components of social capital, but to use the concept of social capital in order to better understand how aid-funded cooperation between international and local actors influence the development of civil society. For the purpose of this analysis, I choose to use Putnam's definition above of social capital as "trust, norms and networks", as it combines clarity and comprehensiveness.

Putnam draws attention to how different types of networks play different roles in terms of contributing to social capital. Horizontal networks bring together people of similar levels of status and power, and are therefore seen as more effective means of facilitating cooperation, fostering norms of reciprocity and improving information flow. Vertical networks, on the other hand, bringing together people of different levels of power and status, "cannot sustain social trust and cooperation", because information flows are less reliable and norms of reciprocity are less likely to work. Patron-client relationships, characterized by high levels of dependency, are given as examples of social relationships that undermine, rather than strengthen, social capital. Putnam does however recognize that in the real world, "almost all networks are mixes of the horizontal and the vertical". (Putnam et al., 1993, pp. 173–5)

Another important point Putnam brings out is the difference between "strong ties", which link members within a particular, smaller group, and "weak ties" which cut across social cleavages by linking members from different groups and therefore are more important in order to create social capital and facilitate collective action (Putnam et al., 1993, p. 175). "Strong ties" can strengthen in-group solidarity in a way which leads to greater out-group hostility (Fukuyama, 2001, p. 8), which may for example result in stronger ethnic division (Fine & Harrington, 2004, p. 352). Strong ties within small groups may also have negative effects on society, for example in the case of criminal gangs (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000, pp. 229–30). Chambers & Kopstein take this idea further, arguing that the creation of social capital is dependent on what type of "civility" which dominates within associations, using the term "bad civil

society" to describe organisations or groups where the norms and values within the group do not apply to those outside the group (Chambers & Kopstein, 2001, pp. 838–41).

Putnam provides a strong argument for how and why an active civil society characterized by horizontal networks, trust and norms of cooperation enhances economic performance as well as strengthening democratic government. He is also clear about the direction of causality – these communities have become successful because of an active civil society with high levels of social capital, not the other way around (Putnam et al., 1993, pp. 176, 182; Putnam, 1993, p. 37). Because of these benefits, social capital becomes attractive for policy-makers. However, it is not easily created. The norms, networks and levels of trust which constitute social capital have historical roots, and cannot simply be engineered through policy (Putnam et al., 1993, pp. 181–83). There are also claims that states can have a negative impact on social capital by not providing space for people to take initiative and cooperate. In the words of Fukuyama, "if the state gets into the business of organising everything, people will become dependent on it and loose their spontaneous ability to work with one another" (Fukuyama, 2000, p. 15). Skocpol, on the other hand, claims that the policies of governments can positively influence social capital, as the features of social capital are shaped by people's experiences with government institutions and policies (Skocpol, 2008, pp. 117–18).

The concept of "synergy" also focuses on the relationship between civil society and the state, and argues that what is important for the economic and political development of a society is not merely the level of social capital within civil society, but also the ability of civil society and government to cooperate well in a virtuous cycle (Evans, 1996, pp. 1119–21). To achieve such synergy, it is important to have a clear division of labour – "complementarity" – as well as ties of trust, commitment and loyalty – "embeddedness" (Evans, 1996, p. 1120). In other words, the the features of social capital such as trust, norms and networks need to extend to public officials and decision-makers in order to result in positive outcomes for society. Ostrom takes this argument further, arguing that a divide between state and civil society is a "conceptual trap arising from overly rigid disciplinary walls surrounding the study of human institutions" Her approach to break this divide is to introduce the concept of "coproduction" , which refers to the joint production of public goods by the state and groups of citizens (Ostrom, 1996, p. 1073).

This thesis focuses particularly on youth engagement. Little academic research is done on youth and social capital, although references are made to the importance of education as a channel through which to pass on and generate social capital (Fukuyama, 2000, p. 15). The existing empirical research shows that youth engagement in groups leads to individuals having an enhanced willingness to contribute to the community, they become "morally committed to and behaviourally engaged in building civil society" (Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003, pp. 178–9). Further, youth participation in voluntary activities together with adults has been shown to have positive effects in terms of generating social capital – the youth gained information, support, and advice, levels of trust were strengthened, and youth became more integrated into the community (Jarrett et al., 2004, pp. 50–53).

3.3 Civil society and development in Africa

As discussed above, the idea of civil society as a distinct sphere of society, as well as the concepts used to explore its role such as participation, accountability and social capital, have been developed within a tradition of western political thought. This section will explore the relevance of these concepts as well as the role of civil society within a development context, with a particular focus on Africa and Malawi.

3.3.1 The role of civil society in development

The idea of "development" itself is a highly contested concept, related to ideas of progress, improvement and modernity. Historically, the focus has been primarily on the generation of wealth through industrialization and achieving mass consumption, with development measured primarily as per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Adams, 2009, pp. 8–9). The development discourse often casted doubt on the appropriateness of democracy for developing countries – it was seen as necessary to first have a period of authoritarian politics to ensure economic growth before democracy could be enjoyed (Mkandawire, 2010, pp. 1151–52), and there was little focus on the human rights system (Uvin, 2007, p. 597).

With the end of the cold war from 1990 onwards, democracy and human rights entered the development discourse, due to the shift in geopolitical interests combined with an increasing awareness of the problem of lack of government accountability and a realisation of the need for a more holistic definition of development going beyond economic growth (Mkandawire, 2010, p. 1152; Uvin, 2007, p. 597).

This broader definition of development, which includes also issues of governance, democracy

and culture, as well as a more comprehensive understanding of human well-being, is clearly pronounced with the first UNDP Human Development Report in 1990. Here, "development" was seen as a process of "enlarging people's choices". A purely income-based approach to development was deemed too narrow, and development was defined as "the expansion of people's freedoms to live long, healthy and creative lives; to advance other goals they have reason to value; and to engage actively in shaping development equitably and sustainably on a shared planet" (UNDP, 2010, p. 2) Within this definition of development, with its focus on freedom, engagement and participation, is the recognition of the need for a sphere within which such participation and freedom can be exercised, supported and nurtured – in other words, civil society. Civil society thus becomes a feature of a developed society in itself. There are also critical views on the relationship between civil society and development, arguing that the effects of civil society might be exaggerated or at least more complex, and that the "euphoria and romanticism" that has characterized the discourse on civil society and development has "clouded" the potentially negative effects civil society actors might have on development as well as democracy (Ikelegbe, 2001, p. 5).

The arguments outlined in sections 3.1 – 3.2.3 above show how civil society may play an important role in developing and sustaining democracy, in particular by being an arena for participation, the promotion of accountability, and the creation of social capital. As democracy is now seen as a component of development itself, it is useful to see how these concepts apply in the context of developing countries in Africa, and what the empirical research reveals. A useful starting point, however, is the relevance of the concepts of civil society itself in an African context.

3.3.2 African civil society?
The concept "civil society" has developed within a western context, and has focused heavily on organized, voluntary associations. It has been argued that this concept has little relevance in an African context, where there is a lack of the western-type, formalized voluntary organisations but where traditional networks play an important role (Eggen, 2011, p. 13; Orvis, 2001, pp. 19–20). Other, such as Lewis, states that "relevance" of the theoretical concept is simply not the right question to ask, as he argues that in reality, civil society is a part of societies in Africa as anywhere else, but we must be cautious in terms of how we understand the concept in different contexts (Lewis, 2002, p. 574).

Groups and associations have formed an important part of African history (Orvis, 2001, pp. 22–3). During the colonial period, rapid urbanization gave rise to the formation of new associations in urban centres (Woods, 1992, p. 86). In the struggle for independence, groups and organisations played an important part, often involving students and youth (Obadare, 2005, p. 269). In the words of Hyden, "Civil society grew and flourished because of the widespread dislike of colonialism" (Hyden, 2010, p. 250). After independence, however, independent civil society organisations were either co-opted or banned in a lot of African countries (Hyden, 2010, p. 250). Malawi is a good example, as discussed in chapter 3, where any form of independent organisation or association was banned during the 30 years of Banda's dictatorship. The civic organisations found new inspiration in the democratization wave during the 1990's (Bratton, 1994, p. 6), and there was great expectations of civil society organisations to play "transformative roles" in African states (VonDoepp, 2002, p. 123). Although the growth of independent and indigenous civil society organizations was limited by low economic growth (Moss, Pettersson, & Van de Walle, 2006, p. 18), there was a renewed interests in the role of civil society in promoting democracy and human rights from donors and aid agencies, and significant resources channelled towards civil society in emerging democracies in Africa (Mkandawire, 2010, pp. 1149–50). It is argued that donors saw civil society as allies for various purposes, including the promotion of a free market economy and improving governance (Pinkney, 2003, p. 101). This has led to civil society actors in Africa such as NGOs being highly dependent on foreign funds, which weakens the ability of civil society for autonomous action (Hyden, 2010, p. 253), and may also reverse the direction of accountability from members towards donors, and reduce the credibility of local civil society actors as authentic spokespersons (Bratton, 1994, pp. 7–8).

Where as the role of donors is an important external influence on the development of civil society in Africa, there are also crucial internal factors shaping civil society in Africa, such as traditional institutions, kinship ties, and ethnicity. Membership of such social groups is not based on voluntarism, people are born into them (Hyden, 2010, pp. 253–54). Although it is recognized that traditional social groups such as tribes, clans and village associations have shared norms which facilitate cooperation, this tends to be seen as a liability rather than an asset (Fukuyama, 2000, pp. 4–5). This is related to the "radius of trust" of social groups, and will be explored further in section 3.3.5 on social capital and development. Traditional institutions also bring with it different understandings of accountability, which is discussed in section 3.3.4 on development and accountability. Overall, there are questions related to the

role of civil society in promoting democracy in Africa, as large parts of civil society in Africa seem detached from concerns related to democracy, and may even carry out activities that are considered "uncivil" (Pinkney, 2003, pp. 100–103).

In section 3.1, civil society is defined as a "sphere of social interaction between economy and state", made up of "associations (especially voluntary associations), social movements, and forms of public communication" (Cohen & Arato, 1992, p. ix), as well as "norms of community cooperation" (Bratton, 1994, p. 2). Based on this definition, traditional social groups and values are more usefully seen as features of, rather than threats to, civil society in Africa (Orvis, 2001, p. 21). Irrespective of whether groups and values are seen as having positive or negative effects on democracy and development, they are still seen as part of civil society. To summarize, civil society is highly present and relevant in Africa, and includes a wide range of very different actors. It includes traditional social groups and religious groups, who may represent different values than what is often considered typical in "western" civil societies. They also include more "modern" non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other types of associations that are often supported through international aid, which one could argue have been 'imported' by donors and INGOs and are maintained through aid. Within the different parts of civil society, the dominant civic norms may be different to the norms generally associated with civil society in western countries, which shows the importance of analysing civil society within a particular historical and cultural context, rather than assume general benign effects on democracy and development irrespective of context. The appreciation of the context in which civil society operates must include a focus on the role of external influences in shaping civil society, such as donors and aid, and internal factors such as history and cultural characteristics. Clearly, based on these factors, there might be important differences between a typical "western" and a typical "African" civil society. On the other hand, it is important to be aware of how there are also important differences within Africa as well as within the "west", so understanding the particular country context is crucial.

When it comes to the participation of youth within civil society in Africa, youth are to a lesser extent than adults participating in community meetings and other associations, according to the Afrobarometer Survey[4] (Chikwanha & Masunungure, 2004, pp. 13–15). The survey also

---

[4] The Afrobarometer Survey is an African-led series of national public attitude surveys on democracy and governance in Africa. See http://www.afrobarometer.org/.

shows that youth in Africa have less trust in public institutions and political decision-makers at local as well as national level than adults in the same countries. Contrary to what Urdal's research on the "youth bulge" and violence referred to in section 3.3.1 suggests, youth are not found to be more likely to participate in protests than adults in Africa (Chikwanha & Masunungure, 2004, pp. 13–15).

As discussed in chapter 2, civil society organisations in Malawi started to flourish after the transition to multi-party democracy in 1994. In the previous 30 years of authoritarian rule, independent organisations and associations had not been allowed, so the only organized form of civil society who exercised pressure on the government were the churches (Anders, 2002, p. 44; Eidhammer, 2005, pp. 38, 79). In addition to the change in domestic political environment, the renewed interest from donors in the role of civil society organisations in the promotion of democracy and development led to financial support being channelled towards Malawian civil society. As a result, Malawian civil society became overwhelmed with resources, often beyond the capacity of the receiving organisations to deliver, and also leading to the creation of "briefcase NGOs" – set up with the purpose of accessing funding, but lacking legitimacy and representativeness (Booth et al., 2006, p. 16). It also led to high levels of competition for resources amongst local organisations (Banik, 2010, p. 46). Malawian NGOs are also often focusing on creating links to international organisations rather than local grassroots organisations and networks (Banik, 2010, pp. 45–46). Englund argues that the role of donors building civil society in Malawi led to a civil society modelled on donor priorities, not necessarily reflecting the concerns of the poor (Englund, 2006, p. 196).

Another challenge related to the aid-funding of civil society is that donors often fund organisations who work on human rights issues, but these issues might be perceived differently amongst the grassroots than by NGOs. It is argued that in Malawi, "human rights" is often seen by the grassroots and the poor as something that contradicts and threatens traditional culture, whereas official agencies and donor-funded Human Rights-NGOs see tradition and culture as obstacles to the realization of human rights (Banik, 2010, p. 41; Ribohn, 2002, pp. 166–67). This may also explain the lack of vertical links to the grassroots of some of the foreign-funded civil society organisations in Malawi.

3.3.3 Participation and development

As discussed in section 3.2.1, participation is a key element of democracy. This is highly relevant in a developing country context. Participation has inherent value, as a human rights principle and a component of development in itself; it is therefore relevant for development goals as well as development processes. It also has instrumental value, as it can contribute to democratic governance and better policy-making (Brinkerhoff & Crosby, 2002, pp. 55–56).

Participation received further attention due to the discourse on the Human Rights Based Approach to Development. During the early 2000s, several development agencies built further on the approach in the Human Development Reports of seeing human rights and development as intertwined processes, and introduced the Human Rights Based Approach to Development (from here on, referred to as the "rights-based approach[5]") (Banik, 2010, p. 34; Uvin, 2007, pp. 601–02). The rights-based approach also became dominant within the aid sector in Malawi, and a range of development policies as well as the constitution include clear references to human rights (Banik, 2010, pp. 35, 41–43). This approach leads to both a new way to define goals in development, based on claims, duties and mechanisms, and an increased focus on the way in which development processes in themselves respect human rights (Uvin, 2007, pp. 602–603). Participation is an important principle of the rights-based approach, as a right in itself and a means to realise other rights, and people are "recognized as key actors in their own development, rather than passive recipients of commodities and services" (Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR), 2006, pp. 36–37). In the words of Uvin, the rights-based approach implies an "absolute requirement of participation" from the side of the development agencies. In practice, this refers to information provision which is accessible to the local population, bringing a variety of groups into the process, and that they are open and transparent (Uvin, 2007, p. 604)

Some argue that participation is particularly important and beneficial in developing countries. For example, Ackerman argues that bottom-up participatory mechanisms may be very beneficial in order to strengthen democracy in poor countries with weak institutions (Ackerman, 2007, p. 44). Others, such as Englund, are more critical to the way in which

---

[5] Strictly speaking, there is an important difference between a 'Human Rights-Based Approach' and a 'rights-based approach', as the latter can cover any types of rights, where as the former is based on on "the international normative system of rights and the obligations undertaken by (most) states, which makes possible a growing international consensus on the content of the rights and the corresponding respon- sibility of the duty-holders" (Eide, 2006, p. 250). Still, the term "rights-based approach" is generally used by development practicioners and organiastions to refer to the "human rights-based approach", so this is also used in this thesis.

participation has been promoted within development, and sees it as a way of making the poor responsible for their own poverty, and shifting focus away from the power relations which cause poverty (Englund, 2006, p. 197). Either way, many of the challenges and limitations related to participation are enhanced in a developing country context. Effective participation requires capacity in terms of knowing how processes work, how to get a message across and how to identify and utilize opportunities (Brinkerhoff & Crosby, 2002, pp. 77–78). This may be more challenging in a context where people have low levels of education and literacy. Participation also requires resources from those participating, in terms of time, effort and even money, for example for transportation or in terms of lost income from employment (Brinkerhoff & Crosby, 2002, pp. 61–61). This becomes an important challenge in poor countries, and may result in those with less resources being left out of participatory processes. Pinkney argues that here, international NGOs can have a positive impact, as they can "give voice to indigenous groups that previously had little impact" (Pinkney, 2003, p. 98). However, it is also argued that aid itself is not conducive to participation, even when it aims to enhance it, because aid itself represents a decline in ownership (Moss et al., 2006, pp. 15–16).

Another challenge related to participation is related to general challenges when it comes to human rights – they tend to be talked about more than implemented (Banik, 2010, p. 39). In countries such as Malawi, this may be due to the challenges outlined above related to the requirements for capacity and resources, from the citizens as well as the government. It may also be related to the way in which the idea of human rights, including the right to participation, in itself is seen as abstracted from local realities. As discussed in section 3.3.2, it may even be seen as a threat and a contrast to culture and tradition by many Malawians (Banik, 2010, p. 41; Ribohn, 2002, pp. 166–67), despite the way in which they are included within the constitution as well as in key policy papers of the government (Banik, 2010, pp. 41–43)

3.3.4 Accountability and development

The opportunities people have to participate in decision-making are closely related to their ability to hold those with power accountable through bottom-up, vertical mechanisms as discussed in section 3.2.2. Civil society is an avenue for the promotion of accountability, as people often get organised together for purposes of advocacy, awareness-raising, and trying to influence the government (Riddell, 2007, l. 4020–30).

With the increased focus on democracy and human rights within development from the 1990s onwards, there was also an enhanced focus on the problem of lack of government accountability in developing countries (Mkandawire, 2010, p. 1152; Uvin, 2007, p. 597). A "crisis of governance", including weak accountability mechanisms, were by many seen as a major cause of Africa's developmental problems (Bräutigam & Knack, 2004, pp. 258–9). The internal factors contributing to these weak accountability mechanisms include the lack of transparency, lack of free and fair elections, and political affiliation of voters based on ethnic and geographic loyalties (Mkandawire, 2010, pp. 1149–50).

Accountability is also central within the rights-based approach to development, which became a dominant paradigm within aid agencies and development organisations from 2000 onwards (Uvin, 2007, pp. 601–602). In the words of Uvin:

> The move from needs to rights, and from charity to duties, also implies an increased focus on accountability. Indeed, at the heart of any rights-based approach to development are concerns with mechanisms of accountability, for this is precisely what distinguishes charity from claims (Uvin, 2007, p. 602).

A rights-based approach emphasises how citizens are right-holders, entitled to the realisation of human rights, whereas governments who have agreed to follow human rights conventions are the primary duty-bearers, they are obliged to protect, respect and contribute to the fulfilment of human rights (Banik, 2010, pp. 38, 39; OHCHR, 2006, pp. 15–18). Within this system, organisations and networks within civil society have an important role to play in terms of holding the government to account to fulfil their obligations. This is formalized within the United Nations system of reporting on the various human rights conventions, where civil society organisations regularly submit reports on how the state fulfils its obligations as well as direct complaints on human rights violations to the relevant treaty bodies (OHCHR, 2008, pp. 31, 153).

Against this background, aid donors often fund civil society groups with the aim of contributing to greater accountability and with it, the realisation of human rights (Jenkins, 2001, p. 3). The success of bottom-up efforts to promote accountability does however rely on the capacity of government to respond, and this is a particular challenge in a developing country context. As pointed out by Pinkney, the liberal democratic model in which civil society is assigned an important role assumes a strong state as well as a strong civil society,

which mutually reinforce each other. One important challenge in Africa is that states often are weak, with limited resources to address demands and needs (Pinkney, 2003, pp. 88–90). Whaites argues that the main problem in a lot of developing countries is in fact the relative weakness of the state compared to actors within civil society (Whaites, 2000, pp. 130–34). Further, Eggen points out how aid interventions can have the effect of weakening the state further, by focusing on how aid has strengthened the role of local chiefs vis-à-vis the state in Malawi (Eggen, 2011, pp. 43–4). In addition, relationships between the state and civil society may be quite different in developing countries. For example non-governmental organisations in Africa are required to register and be approved by the government, hence the civil society groups gain legitimacy from the state, as opposed to the other way around (Pinkney, 2003, pp. 211–212).

Although a lot of aid is channelled towards democratization and enhancing government accountability (Mkandawire, 2010, p. 1150), aid also brings with it specific challenges related to government accountability. In addition to the internal constraints on accountability mentioned above, Mkandawire argues that aid itself is a constraint upon accountability. He states that aid dependence makes states accountable to foreign states and citizens, and makes them more likely to respond to donor demands than to the demands of their own citizens. This contributes to undermining democratic accountability, and thereby undermining the aims of aid itself in terms of contributing to enhanced accountability (Mkandawire, 2010, pp. 1149–1158; Moss et al., 2006, p. 14). Further, when governments initiate consultations with the public and NGOs, this is done "not in the spirit of accountability but rather as a response to donor requirements for such meetings or to pre-empt donor's insistence on consultancy with designated portions of "civil society"" (Mkandawire, 2010, p. 1162). It is even argued that aid itself helps the government "escape" accountability from their own citizens, as donors often fund and implement projects that the government fail to undertake, thereby easing popular frustration as well as freeing up government resources (Moss et al., 2006, p. 18).

In addition to the constraints on accountability arising from aid itself, Banik argues that in Malawi, there are particular challenges related to the political environment. He finds civil society organisations limited by a "self-regulating mechanism of self-censorship", which prevent them from challenging the government due to fear (Banik, 2010, p. 46). This does not seem unlikely, considering the history of political repression in Malawi as well as the recent violence and civil unrest in 2011, as discussed in chapter 2.

There is increasing focus on the accountability of private and non-governmental actors (Newell & Bellour, 2002, pp. 3,11, 19–23). In this context, aid brings with it particular accountability challenges and limitations for foreign-funded civil society organisations. Firstly, aid contributes to a re-structuring of civil society, by influencing the culture and management style of NGOs as well as leading to the authority of NGOs being given by donor countries as opposed to being derived from an anchoring in domestic civil society. This also makes it easier for governments to dismiss claims from civil society organisations on the basis of them being "agents for foreign interest" (Newell & Bellour, 2002, pp. 15–16). Secondly, aid has led to the establishment of "briefcase NGOs", with the sole purpose of accessing funds, who lack representativity and legitimacy, and hence undermine local civil society (Mkandawire, 2010, pp. 1162–3). Thirdly, foreign aid tends to shift accountability of the organisations upwards, away from local constituents and towards donors (Bano, 2008, p. 2002; Bratton, 1994, pp. 7–8; Vakil, 1997, p. 2062). There is little incentive to build up membership and autonomy, which would enhance downwards accountability, as funding is already provided through aid (Moss et al., 2006, p. 18). And although donors often speak about the importance of downward accountability, it is argued that their main focus in reality is on narrower concepts of project evaluation, monitoring and accountancy (Edwards & Hulme, 1996, pp. 267–8; Mkandawire, 2010, p. 1156; Newell & Bellour, 2002, p. 17). INGOs and foreign-funded, large NGOs in particular are seen as having dubious accountability (Mercer, 2003, p. 755), acting as "pseudo-democratic representatives of the poor" (Mitlin et al., 2007, pp. 1708–9) without legitimacy or support (Edwards & Hulme, 1996, p. 966). Also NGOs with genuine support and legitimacy from the public will face the challenge of different directions of accountability. Whether or not the organisations emphasise accountability towards donors or local stakeholders is related to power. As the donors ultimately control the resources, following donor requirements tends to take precedence over local concerns (Newell & Bellour, 2002, p. 11).

Particularly in Africa, it is argued that dependency on foreign funding leads to reduced accountability of the government as well as the credibility of local civil society (Bratton, 1994, pp. 7–8; Moss et al., 2006, p. 15) Even if supporting civil society organisations can enhance accountability, foreign-funded advocacy groups within civil society might not desire the policies that aid agencies seek to promote (Jenkins, 2001, p. 12). If this leads to aid agencies supporting only those elements within civil society with which they agree, this leads

to further challenges with regards to the legitimacy and accountability for those organisations. It may also restrict which types of issues the groups address - as "whoever is paying your bills often has the power to silence your voice" (Ginwright & James, 2002, p. 42).

3.3.5 Social capital and development

As discussed in section 3.2.3, social capital plays an important role in maintaining democracy. As democracy is seen as an important component of development (UNDP, 2010), social capital becomes equally relevant in development processes. Social capital describes what makes people cooperate, and consists of the "features of social organisation, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (Putnam et al., 1993, p. 167). Social capital can therefore be seen as a feature of civil society, in the form of networks of engagement. Social capital is also an outcome of civil society, as networks, norms and trust all contribute towards a stronger and more vibrant civil society. The literature on "synergy" and "coproduction" sheds further light on the importance of trust and norms of cooperation not just within civil society, but also between civil society and the government, for development to be successful (Evans, 1996, pp. 1119–21; Ostrom, 1996, p. 1073).

It is also argued that social capital, as any capital, is not necessarily used for positive purposes. Organisations or groups may have norms and values that only apply to their own group, so whether or not social capital is created is not just a result of membership in associations, but also the type of "civility" which dominates within them (Chambers & Kopstein, 2001, pp. 838–41). Putnam does not focus on the type of civility, but distinguishes between "strong ties", which connect people from small, tight groups such as kinship groups, and "weak ties", which connect members from different, small groups. Weak ties are seen as more important for the creation of social capital (Putnam et al., 1993, p. 175). Strong ties, on the other hand, may lead to in-group solidarity being strengthened in a way which leads to greater out-group hostility (Fukuyama, 2001, p. 8), which can contribute to stronger ethnic divisions (Fine & Harrington, 2004, p. 352). Fukuyama explains this by introducing the concept "radius of trust". If a group has strong ties of trust, but the radius of trust does not extend beyond the group itself, the ties do not contribute positively to social capital. He further argues that most form of traditional social groups have a "narrow radius of trust" (Fukuyama, 2000, pp. 4–5).

The importance of weak ties as well as a broad radius of trust is particularly relevant when discussing civil society in Africa, because as argued in section 3.3.2, associations and groups here are often based on ethnic and kinship ties. As an example, empirical research from Nigeria shows that ethnic groups within civil society have acted violently and disruptively, in a manner "inimical to the democratic project itself" (Ikelegbe, 2001, p. 21). Putnam's research also shows that social capital is mainly created through horizontal networks, whereas vertical networks, such as for example patron-client networks, do not necessarily have a positive effect. This is because client-client relationships become characterized by competition, and the patron-client relationship by exploitation (from the side of the patron) and shirking (from the side of the client) (Putnam et al., 1993, pp. 173–75). Again, this is highly relevant in Malawi, as patron-client relationships are dominant and influence relationships to government decision-makers, state institutions as well as civil society organisations (Booth et al., 2006, pp. 9, 59).

Based on his study of the performance of regional governments in Italy, Putnam provides a strong argument for how social capital contributes to economic development as well as to the consolidation of democracy (Putnam et al., 1993). This makes social capital attractive for aid donors and policy-makers, for example western NGOs and foundations have actively tried to foster civil society and social capital in developing countries (Fukuyama, 2000, p. 16). However, as discussed in section 3.2.3– social capital cannot simply be created through policies. Norms, networks and levels of trust have important historical roots, and are therefore highly dependent on history and context (Putnam et al., 1993, pp. 181–83). It is therefore being challenged within the literature to what extent aid can contribute to the creation of social capital, because of the historical context, but also because of the problems arising from aid itself. Firstly, concerns are raised of how aid agencies support mainly local elites who are good at writing grants proposals (Fukuyama, 2001, p. 18), as well as contributing to the flourishing of the aforementioned "briefcase NGOs", designed for the enrichment of its founders (Mkandawire, 2010, pp. 1162–3). Secondly, even when NGOs are set up with genuine aims, there are concerns regarding the lack of domestic "rootedness" of foreign-funded NGOs and therefore the limited ability to sustain collective action (Hyden, 1997, p. 19). Thirdly, the imbalance of power and resources between funders and recipients is an important challenge (Mercer, 2003, p. 748), as this may influence not only the motivation to join and set up organisations, but also the strategic choices organisations make regarding what to focus on.

Little empirical research is done on the impact of aid on social capital. In one of the few pieces of empirical research on the subject, focusing on aid in Pakistan, rather negative conclusions are drawn. The study suggests a causal relationship where development aid leads to a shift towards material motivations and aspirations of the leaders of local organisations, which leads to lower performance of the organisation, and a lower ability to mobilize members (Bano, 2008, p. 2310). The study thus shows that in order to understand the processes of social capital creation and how they are influenced by development aid, we do not only need to take history, culture and context into account as suggested by Putnam and Fukuyama above, but also understand better individual behaviour and motivation to join organisations at micro-level, and how this is influenced by aid. This theme of individual behaviour and motivation is also reflected in VonDoepp's study of the role of local-level clergy as civil society activists in Malawi. He concludes that material factors such as the desire for material and social advances for themselves and their families are highly influential on the clergy's willingness to play a role in local civil society. This is relevant for any other organisations in civil society as well, as it shows how representatives of civil society have their behaviour shaped by material and social factors (VonDoepp, 2002, pp. 133–38).

3.4 Theoretical Framework

The aim of this thesis is to explore how cooperation between INGOs and local associations influence the development of civil society in Malawi. This section aims to summarize the theories and concepts from the literature that are used to analyse the empirical data.

This thesis uses a broad definition of civil society, as a "sphere of social interaction between economy and state". This sphere consists of formal and informal associations, often based on voluntarism, norms of cooperation, and different forms of public communication such as the media (Bratton, 1994, p. 2, Cohen & Arato, 1992, p. ix). Civil society is understood as an important component of democracy, although this does not imply that all elements of civil society are necessarily democratic in nature or contribute positively to democracy (Coelho & Von Lieres, 2010, pp. 3–4). As a comprehensive definition of development in line with the UNDP Human Development Report is adopted, which includes democracy (UNDP, 2010), civil society is also seen as having an important (although not necessarily always positive) role to play in development.

When it comes to the relevance of the concept "civil society" in an African context, this thesis adopts the standpoint that civil society, as a sphere of society, is as relevant in Africa as anywhere else. However, it needs to be understood based on its particular context. Cultural factors, such as traditional institutions and social groups including tribes, clans and village associations are important as they continue to be a part of civil society in Africa today (Fukuyama, 2000). Further, civil society has evolved within a historical context of colonialism, the struggles of independence, the post-colonial authoritarian states and the wave of democratization in the 1990's with the corresponding renewed interest in human rights and civil society from aid donors (Bratton, 1994, p. 94; Hyden, 2010, p. 250; Obadare, 2005, p. 269; Uvin, 2007, pp. 599–600; Woods, 1992, p. 86). Thus, civil society in Africa needs to be understood as shaped by external influences, such as the influence of aid donors, and internal influences, such as culture and tradition. This thesis will analyse the empirical data with a particularly focus on the influence of aid and aid-funded INGOs on civil society. Within this analysis, the concepts of participation, accountability and social capital will be used to better understand the different ways in which cooperation between aid-funded INGOs and local youth associations influence the development civil society in Malawi.

Civil society as an arena for participation is highly relevant in a development context. This is because participation has inherent value as a human rights principle and component of development (Nussbaum, 2011, pp. 33–34), and instrumental value as it contributes to better policy-making and can improve democratic governance (O'Faircheallaigh, 2010) (Brinkerhoff & Crosby, 2002, pp. 55–56). Participation does however have costs and limitations, as it requires capacity, time and resources, (Brinkerhoff & Crosby, 2002, pp. 61–62), and these costs and limitations may be greater in a developing country context. Further, aid itself may reduce ownership and therefore not be conducive to participation (Moss et al., 2006, pp. 15–16). Given this context, the empirical data on how INGOs facilitate participation within civil society will be analysed with a particular focus on the challenges to participation that may arise in a resource-constrained environment, as well as the challenges arising from aid itself.

The promotion of accountability is another important role civil society plays in democracy and development. A simple view of accountability as "holding actors responsible for their actions" (Newell & Bellour, 2002, p. 1) is adopted, and this thesis will focus particularly on how cooperation between INGOs and local associations facilitate and influence bottom-up,

vertical processes of citizens attempting to hold the government to account (Newell & Bellour, 2002, pp. 5–7), in other words, attempts by citizens to bring about greater political accountability (Newell & Bellour, 2002, pp. 7–9), or what Ackermann calls "policy accountability (Ackerman, 2007, pp. 31–32). The concept of accountability is also relevant in terms of the accountability of civil society organisations and INGOs (Newell & Bellour, 2002, pp. 3,11, 19–23). In this thesis, the empirical data related to how cooperation between INGOs and local youth organisations aim to enhance accountability of government actors will be analysed with a focus on accountability challenges arising from the partnership between INGOs and youth associations in Malawi in itself. Here, it is particularly important to note how aid influences representativity and legitimacy, the emphasis on accountability towards donors rather than citizens, and how aid in itself influences choice of focus as well as motivations and aspirations of those who join and set up local organisations (Bano, 2008; Bratton, 1994; Edwards & Hulme, 1996; Mitlin et al., 2007; Mkandawire, 2010).

The concept of social capital is essential for understanding of the role civil society plays in democracy as well as development. In this thesis, Putnam's definition of social capital is adopted, where social capital is defined as "features of social organisation, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (Putnam et al., 1993, p. 167). Social capital may play a positive or negative role in development, depending on whether groups are characterized by "strong ties" or "weak ties" (Putnam et al., 1993, p. 175), and whether the "radius of trust" extends to people beyond the group, or only within the group itself (Fukuyama, 2000, pp. 4–5). NGOs and foundations often aim to foster the creation of social capital, but this is problematic, both because of how social capital is dependent on historical context (Putnam et al., 1993, pp. 181–83), and because of challenges related to how aid itself influences sustainability and choices of organisations as well as the motivations for people to join and set up local organisations (Bano, 2008; Fukuyama, 2000; Hyden, 1997; Mercer, 2003; Mkandawire, 2010). The empirical data related to how the cooperation between INGOs and local youth organizations facilitate the creation of social capital will be analysed with a particular focus on how aid funding influence the motivations of people to join and set up organisations, as well as how this influences trust, related to the perceived legitimacy and credibility of local organisations.

4. Methodology

This chapter describes and justifies the methodology used in this study. It describes the choice of research strategy and research design, sampling, methods of data collection and data analysis. Finally, it will discuss issues related to my dual role as a researcher and Plan staff, as well as ethical considerations. Throughout the chapter, there will be discussions on various challenges encountered during the research process.

4.1 A qualitative research strategy with case study research design

The key purpose of this research is to explore cooperation between an INGO and youth associations, and how this influences the development of civil society in Malawi. On a practical level, this means going into depth in terms of understanding how the relationship between these actors work, and how it influences the youth organisations and networks in different ways to cooperate with an INGO. In terms of epistemology, an interpretivist standpoint is therefore adopted, because the researcher needs to adopt a research strategy and methodology which "respects the difference between people and the objects of the natural sciences" (Bryman, 2008, p. 16).

When it comes to ontology, a constructivist standpoint is adopted, which understands the social world and social entities as created by and dependent upon the actions of human beings (Bryman, 2008:18-19). As opposed to objectivism, which sees "organizations as having a reality that is external to the individuals who inhabit it", constructivism sees organizations and behaviour within them as products of social action, in a constant state of revision (Bryman, 2008:18-19).[6]

Based on these considerations, a qualitative research strategy is seen as the most appropriate. This allows for an exploration of how elements of social reality, in this case, organisations and networks, are created and interpreted by the individuals inside and outside of the entity itself.

Plan's cooperation with youth associations in Malawi is used as a case study. The case study

---

[6] Note that constructivism, when referred to within social research methods, may have two distinct meanings. The first interpretation is used here, which is that of seeing social phenomena as produced through interaction. The second interpretation is that often used by those influenced by post-modernism, where constructivism means that knowledge is viewed as indeterminate, and the research itself is viewed as a construction (Bryman, 2008, p. 19).

approach is chosen because it is a good approach to "understand complex social phenomena" (Yin, 1994, p. 3). I see it as an exploratory case study, rather than an explanatory or descriptive case study (Yin, 1994, p. 3), because the purpose is simply to explore and better understand how cooperation with INGOs influence youth organisations and networks and how they view civil society and their role within it, and by that suggest some conclusions regarding how aid channelled through INGOS influence the development of civil society in Malawi.

A concern has been raised that case studies do not allow for generalization beyond the particular case studied, considering that the purpose is to optimize the understanding of one particular case, as opposed to generalization (Stake, 2003, p. 135). Yin does however clarify how the purpose is not statistical generalization, but analytical generalization. By linking the findings of a particular case to the wider theory, one is able to make, or at least suggest, analytical generalizations based on a case study (Yin, 1994, p. 30).

4.2 Sampling

Using Plan Malawi as a starting point was an obvious choice, considering that Plan Norway, who funds several projects in Malawi through Plan Malawi, saw a need for this research and supported me to carry it out with the aim of learning more about the programs they support. It is also a highly suitable choice for this theme, as Plan Malawi's strategic plan outlines how they aim to contribute to youth empowerment and the strengthening of civil society (Plan Malawi, 2012, pp. 18, 24–25). Plan Malawi has a range of different youth associations they cooperate with, including youth clubs, youth networks and youth organisations. The *youth clubs* are informally structured, based in a particular community or school, and often set up and supported by Plan. The *youth networks* are somewhat more formal, having one or two members from different youth clubs within a particular geographical area, also being set up and supported by Plan. The *youth organisations* are formally registered NGOs, often with quite a high level of professionalization, some paid staff, and so on. Most of them have not been set up by Plan, but work on specific programmes in partnership with Plan, where they also receive funding. This research is based on data collected from youth organisations, youth networks and Plan. Particular youth clubs were not part of the data collection, but they were represented through the youth networks. The selection of which organisations and networks to focus on, as well as which individuals were interviewed within each, was based on a mixture of purposive and convenience sampling.

Together with Plan Malawi, I selected amongst their partners five large and well-established youth organisations based in different urban areas, some of which Plan were working in partnership with now, and some they had worked with previously. Within these organisations, I aimed to interview at least one person in a leadership position, and one person working directly on programme implementation. We also selected three youth networks in rural areas, all of which were supported by Plan. In addition, I identified key Plan staff responsible for the partnerships with youth, both in the local field offices (Programme Area Office, PA) and in the national coordinating office (Country Office, CO).

One challenge in terms of selecting youth organisations was that youth[7] is defined in an inconsistent manner in Malawi. Malawi's Youth Policy, which is still a draft not fully approved by Parliament, defines youth as anyone between 14-25 years of age, but recognizes that the definition is also linked to social and economic circumstances (Malawi Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, n.d.). Plan uses the age bracket 15-25 (Zuurmond, 2011, p. 7). The African Youth Charter, which is also ratified by Malawi, does however define youth as within the 15-35 age bracket (African Union, 2006, p. 3). I therefore found that a lot of organisations defined themselves as "youth organisations", despite staff, volunteers and members being in their late twenties and thirties. I decided to consider organisations as youth organisations or networks simply if they defined themselves as such, and were involving youth below the age of 25 in their work, as this was in line with the definition used by Plan.

The sampling was purposive in the sense that I tried to identify a range of different types of organisations and networks with different levels of expertise, in different geographical areas, in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of these different partnerships. The aim was not to create a representative sample, but rather, to select a sample that would give me the broadest and most comprehensive understanding. I also purposely identified which individuals within these organisations and networks could give me the most

---

[7] There is wide debate when it comes to how to define "youth" as a social category. It generally refers to the fluid transition from childhood to adulthood, from dependence to independence. At what age this takes place is highly dependent on context. For simplicity as well as statistical consistency, simple age categories are however often used to define youth, for example the UN defines youth as persons between ages of 15 and 24 years (UNESCO, n.d.). This thesis uses simply an age category, because the puprose of this thesis is not to explore in depth the role of youth in Malawi, but rather to explore one particular category of civil society organisations in Malawi who work with and for a particular age group.

relevant information. The sampling was however also based on convenience, in the sense that I aimed to maximize time spent on data collection as opposed to time spent travelling, especially considering that some of the main roads were closed due to floods. In practice, this meant that there was a certain selection bias towards the central and southern region in my data collection, and that I sometimes interviewed different people than those I had previously identified, based on availability. This might have affected the quality of my data, but based on available reports from Plan about their work in different areas of Malawi I did not have the impression that the results would be very different in the northern region.

A set of key informants outside of Plan and the youth organisations and networks were also identified and interviewed, from government and other NGOs and human rights institutions. I did not include these interviews in the data collection as such, but rather used them in order to get background information, to discuss my first findings and analysis, and to get their reflections. In this sense, these informants became more of a "reality check" on my part, to see if my interpretations of the Malawian context were misguided, and to get a better understanding of the context Plan, the organisations and networks were operating in.

4.3 Methods of data collection

The primary method of data collection was interviews and focus group discussion with youth organisations, networks and Plan staff. In addition, I reviewed a range of relevant documents, in particular evaluation reports from and annual reports from the youth organisations and Plan where available, but this was mainly for triangulation purposes, to compare the information I got from interviews and focus group discussions and see if there were misunderstandings or inconsistencies.

4.3.1 Interviews

Interviews is a widely used method of data collection in qualitative research, and has the advantage of flexibility as well as being able to combine breadth and focus (Bryman, 2008, pp. 436, 438). For this reason, I found semi-structured, one-to-one interviews a very useful method for data collection, and used this method with almost all the youth organisations and Plan staff. I had prepared a check-list with questions as a reminder to myself throughout the interview, but I found that the conversation flowed better the less structured and formal I made it. The less formal it was, the more the interviewees raised issues that were highly relevant, but that I had not previously thought to ask. The check-list was however useful in order to ensure the conversation did not go to far off track, and to make sure all conversations

covered common topics, to allow some level of comparability. At times, I found that some of my questions became too abstract, especially those regarding the role of civil society organisations. Then, I found it helpful to use Thagaard's advice of using concrete events as a starting point for discussion (Thagaard, 2003, p. 89).

Most of my interviews were one-to-one, but I also did a few group interviews, simply for purposes of convenience. The group interviews were very informative, but some were also more challenging. In two of the group interviews, the group included staff from different levels of the hierarchy of the organisation. Then, I found that people spoke less freely and were less willing to identify challenges and anything that could reflect badly on their own organisation. This was however not a problem in the group interview where people in the group came from the same level within the organisation.

All interviews were carried out in English. I had considered using a translator, but found this was not necessary, as they all spoke English well. All interviews were either transcribed on a laptop simultaneously, or written up by hand and typed up immediately after the interviews. I attempted using a sound recorder, but I quickly found that this seemed to inhibit how freely people spoke. Most interviews were carried out in their own offices, but in a separate room, as I wanted to ensure the location was one where they felt at home and comfortable, but also felt free to talk. Some interviews were however taken in a hotel or a café where that was more practical in terms of travel and time.

My main worry before the research started was whether people would feel restricted speaking to me, saying what they thought I wanted to hear, and not daring to voice criticism. The information shared in an interview is always influenced by the relation between the researcher and the informers (Thagaard, 2003, p. 98), and after all, they were aware that I was staff of Plan Norway, which fund some of their activities. In a few cases, people seemed reluctant to describe challenges or things not working so well. However, in most interviews, I found the opposite was true – both in the youth organisations and within Plan, they seemed to genuinely appreciate that somebody came to hear their views and document their responses, so that challenges might be addressed. I took great care at the start of the interview to explain the purpose of the research as well as my own personal commitment and interest in the topic. This seemed to facilitate good contact between the interviewees and myself, and made the conversation flow naturally as they could identify with my areas of interest. I also tried to

follow Thagaard's advice of having any challenging or critical questions during the middle of the interview (Thagaard, 2003, p. 94), which might also have contributed to people feeling comfortable expressing criticism, frustration and challenges.

4.3.2 Focus Group Discussions

Another key method of data collection was focus group discussion, which I used with the youth networks. Here, I would bring each network together into a 3-4 hour session, discussing their motivations, achievements and challenges as a network, as well as the "good" and "bad" things about working with Plan. I chose to have focus group discussions with the youth networks for several reasons. Firstly, for convenience reasons, both for the youth involved and myself. Most of them are based in rural areas, and I did not have enough information about them to purposefully select whom to interview, so it was simply easier for everyone to meet together. Secondly, focus groups are useful for shared reflection and analysis, a process that can also be beneficial and provide learning to the group. Based on the feedback from the groups, they seemed to appreciate this opportunity to reflect together and hear each other's views. I tried to play as passive a role as possible, simply facilitating the process by providing them with questions, dividing them into groups, explaining things if they were unclear and so on, and I found that this way of providing them with a lot of space to talk led to free and lively discussions, which often raised issues that came as a surprise to me.

Language was more of a barrier in the focus group discussions with the youth networks. Their English was good and clear, but they seemed less confident speaking it in front of a big group. This was solved by having smaller group discussions where they discussed amongst themselves in their own language, and then presented the key points to each other and me in English afterwards. The main communication challenge was the way in which we would use the same word in English, but mean different things. For example, the word "motivation" was used a lot, and it took me some time to understand that they referred to actually being given something as an incentive (money, food, etc.) in order to become motivated. I therefore made sure I asked questions in many different ways, and asked follow-up questions to encourage them to explain what they meant in very practical terms and by using concrete examples. I did not take detailed transcripts of their group discussions (which were in their own language), but transcribed the plenary discussions in English, and captured their most important points from the group discussions as well as my own observations of group interaction.

One challenge I was aware might arise was the influence of Plan staff within the focus group discussions. One member of Plan staff was present in each of them, firstly because it was a child protection requirement, and secondly in order to help me with translation if necessary. And indeed, in one case, the presence of Plan staff seemed to make people feel restricted, especially when they did not respond well to criticism being raised. This did seem very personality-dependent, however, and only became a considerable problem in one focus group discussion, where the Plan staff was very dominating and vocal, and several times interrupted the discussions and presentations in order to "explain" what the youth meant, or "clear up misunderstandings". In the two other focus group discussions, the plan staff took a very passive role, and made it clear to the youth that they wanted them to speak freely, and were interested in hearing what they had to say. Here, it did not seem as if the presence of Plan staff restricted the youth, and I did not notice any difference at the times when the Plan staff left the room. On the one hand, the Plan staff presence could be seen as a limitation of my data collection, as people might not have spoken as freely as they otherwise would. On the other hand, this can be seen as part of the data collection in itself, as focus groups are good opportunities to not only discuss issues, but also observe the interaction within the group (Bryman, 2008, p. 475). I found it particularly interesting to observe the effect the Plan staff had on the groups, and these observations also became a part of my data collection, providing more depth to my understanding of the partnerships between Plan and youth networks.

One practical challenge I faced was that it as difficult to control how many people participated in each focus group. Although I initially asked for a maximum of 10 people for each focus group, two of the discussions involved more than 20 participants. This was a challenge, simply because there was not much time for everyone to speak. In addition, the Focus Group Discussions raised the curiosity of the community; at times we had to change location to avoid noisy crowds of "audience" who made the focus group participants feel shy.

An important limitation of my data collection was that I did not have the time to do individual interviews with the youth network members who were part of the focus group discussions. Individual interviews with them would provide an interesting basis of comparison against responses from the focus groups, and would have made me able to go into more depth on particular issues.

4.3.3 Document Analysis

There is a lot of documentation both within Plan as well as the youth organisations. I focused primarily on strategy documents, annual reports and evaluations where these were available. This were mainly used in order to provide context, as well as to compare my findings from the interviews and focus group discussions to the documents for purposes of triangulation. In other words, the documents were not analysed in depth, but more used to compare specific information.

When assessing the documents, it has been important to me to keep in mind Scott's criteria for assessing the quality and usefulness of documents; namely authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning (Bryman, 2008, p. 516) The criteria of credibility is particularly important, especially when it comes to assessing documents of organisations. In my experience, organisations as well as external evaluators can have a tendency to downplay criticism and inflate positive findings, as they are eager to please their respective funders. But as pointed out by Bryman, "documents can be interesting precisely because of the biases they reveal" (2008:521).

Malawian daily newspapers were also used, I read at least one paper per day during the four weeks I was conducting the fieldwork. This was not as part of the data collection as such, but was used as background data for chapter two on Malawi.

4.4 Data Analysis

According to Goodwin, interpreting and analysing qualitative data roughly consists of three stages, the data need to be *"described, classified* and then *connected"* (Goodwin, 2006, p. 43). During the description process, I started by adding words, initial codes, describing the key themes to sections of the transcripts I found most interesting and informative. The process of coding is described by Coffey and Atkinson as "a way of relating our data out our ideas about those data" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 27), and I found this a very helpful way of systematizing my data, making them more concentrated and manageable. However, I also found, as suggested by Coffey and Atkinson, that the coding process at the same time "complicated" the data, in the sense of opening up new ways of interpreting the data, and thereby expand the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 30). After going through all the transcripts for focus group discussions as well as interviews several times and revising the

codes, I classified these codes into different categories, based on which part of my research questions I thought they would best answer. Then, I tried to narrow the data set further, by focusing on the codes and categories that were most directly relevant to my research question. Finally, I pulled out key quotes and parts of text related to each specific code and category, and explored connections and patterns.

I chose not to use the theoretical framework as a starting point for my coding and analysis, because I wanted to generate concepts based on the data itself. Naturally, the data collected is to some extent influenced by my pre-conceived ideas through the interview guides as well as how my own knowledge and experience shaped the interview setting and the focus group discussions. Still, I wanted to minimize the way my preconceptions shaped my initial approach to the data, and therefore started exploring the data collected through an inductive process inspired by grounded theory, which used data as a starting point for the development of codes, concepts and theories (Bryman, 2008, p. 541). Although often presented as a rather rigid system of analysis, Charmaz points out how simplified versions of grounded theory can provide effective tools to be used by researchers from a range of perspectives (Charmaz, 2003, p. 256). At the last stage of analysis, I shifted towards the more deductive approach of a theoretically informed thematic analysis, where I brought in key concepts and theory from the existing literature, and analysed the findings from my research through the lens of these key concept. By relating the findings from my case study to theoretical concepts, I was able to suggest some analytical generalizations beyond the particular case study of Plan Malawi's partnerships with youth organisations and networks, which contributes to our overall understanding of how aid influences civil society in developing countries.

4.5 My dual role as researcher and Plan staff

An important concern for me was how my perspectives as a Plan employee might influence both my data collection and data analysis, as I might have pre-conceived ideas of what I should look for and what I would find, and people might feel restricted talking to me. In terms of data collection, it turned out to be much less of a problem than I expected, as discussed in section 4.3.1 above. In fact, I found that being an "insider" was helpful, particularly when talking to Plan staff I got the impression that they spoke more openly to me about challenges and controversial issues than they might have done to an outsider.

Still, it is very likely that my research is shaped by my experience working for Plan, as well as

by my experience working for other organisations and my time as a youth activist. In order to help me distance myself from my "Plan-background", I explored a range of academic literature on the topic, and consciously avoided reading evaluations and reports made or funded by development organisations and donors until after the initial data collection and analysis was done. In addition, I found that an open, exploratory approach where I did not have a clear hypothesis from the start was helpful in order to avoid the research being restricted by my own perspectives as a Plan employee. I was also aware of how evaluations and research by aid organisations to tend focus on whether development interventions meet expected results, and therefore fail to capture unforeseen and unintended effects (Eggen, 2011, p. 8). Having an exploratory approach was helpful both in terms of getting away from my own biases and preconceptions, and in order to capture also unintended effects of Plan's cooperation with youth organisations and networks, which are highly relevant for understanding better how this influences the development of civil society in Malawi.

4.6 Ethical consideration

Key concerns regarding ethics in research are broken down by Diener and Crandall (1978) into harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception (Bryman, 2008, p. 118). I did not come into situations where these ethical issues arose in a significant way, however I did find it difficult to ensure that the participants were well informed in advance. This was because the information prior to my visit was given them by my contacts in Plan, and I could not control how much and what information was given. I did however take great care to inform them openly at the start of every interview and focus group discussion about the process and the purpose of the research.

Regarding harm to participants, there is always some risk involved in participating in case study research. The people sharing their views may risk "exposure and embarrassment, as well as a loss of standing, employment and self-esteem" (Stake, 2003, p. 154). This is also true in this research, considering that if very negative views were shared, this might backfire on the people sharing these views. After all, the organisations are small, and it was no secret who I interviewed within each organisation. I took care to minimize the risks by presenting the findings in a way so the specific organisation could not be identified. I shared a draft of the findings with everyone I could get in touch with over email, allowing them an opportunity to respond if they did not feel comfortable with some of the information conveyed, they way in was conveyed, or simply to clarify if there was something I had misunderstood.

Another relevant ethical concern is related to doing funded research in general, as Plan was financially supporting this research. This raises issues regarding how this might influence the research, as they have vested interests in the process (Bryman, 2008, p. 131). Also, there might be a potential conflict of ownership and publishing of the end-product, especially if the findings do not please the funder (Cheek, 2003, pp. 97–98). This did not become a problem during this research, as Plan was open to my suggestions as a researcher and willing to publish any findings with the aim of contributing to better development work.

The most important concern regarding ethics for me as a researcher was simply to do my best to ensure that I produced research that was useful and relevant to academics as well as development professionals and those engaged in civil society organisations, and that the participants found it an interesting and positive learning experience to be part of the process.

5. Overview of organisations and networks in this case study

As explained in chapter 4 above, this thesis uses a qualitative research strategy with a case study research design. This case study focuses on Plan Malawi as an INGO, and their cooperation with local youth associations. These associations include both youth organisations and youth networks. "Organisations" here refers to formalised organisations who are registered as such with the Malawi NGO board, whereas "networks[8]" refer to more informal structures of youth, made up of representatives of locally organized "youth clubs". This chapter provides some key background information about Plan as well as the youth organisations and networks involved in this case study, which is important in order to understand the context in which this research has taken place.

5.1 Plan Malawi

Plan Malawi was set up in 1994, and now implements activities directly benefiting around 29 000 children in 95 communities in Malawi (Plan International, 2013a). It is part of the international child rights and development organisation Plan International, which implements development projects in 50 countries across the world (Plan International, 2013b). In this sense, Plan Malawi is an International NGO in Malawi, because it is a part of Plan International, and all its funding is generated by fundraising offices in developing countries, such as Plan Norway, and channelled through Plan International to Plan Malawi.

Plan Malawi's current strategic plan aims to invest US$ 48,1 million in the period 2012-2016. This money is coming partly from sponsorship funds (individual sponsors in developed countries who pay a monthly fixed amount) and partly from grants from institutional donors, development agencies and corporates (Plan Malawi, 2012, p. 3). The key issues addressed in Plan Malawi's programmes include child and maternal health, water and sanitation, education, violence against children and child and youth participation (Plan Malawi, 2012, p. 3). Plan Malawi have stated aims of contributing to strengthening civil society organisations as well as empowering youth and children to participate in decision-making (Plan Malawi, 2012, pp. 18, 24, 25). Plan's definition of children is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, where children are seen as below 18 years of age, whereas the definition of "youth" is the 15-25 age category (Zuurmond, 2011, p. 7).

---

[8] The term "network" is in Malawi used to describe many different types of networks, with different degrees of formality. For examle, the Malawi Youth Human Rights Network is a network where all the members are registered youth NGOs. In this thesis, "youth networks" refer strictly to the youth networks Plan work closely with, which are quite informal, and made up of several community-level youth clubs.

Plan Malawi has one Country Office (CO), which is the national head office. Most of the programme implementation is managed from four "Programme Area Offices" (PAs), in Lilongwe, Mulanje, Kasungu and Mzuzu, apart from some national-level programmes which are managed from the CO (Plan Malawi, 2012) (for geographical location, please see map below). Despite Plan Malawi being a part of an international organisation, the vast majority of staff are Malawians.

In 2003, Plan changed its approach to development work from a needs-based approach focusing on service delivery and direct programme implementation, to a rights-based approach working through partnerships and focusing on advocacy and capacity-building in addition to service delivery in close partnership with the government (Zuurmond, 2011, p. 5). As discussed in section 3.4.3 and 3.4.4, this was a common move amongst many aid agencies and international development organisations at the time (Banik, 2010, p. 34; Uvin, 2007, pp. 601–02). Plan's right-based approach to programming is called Child-Centred Community Development (CCCD), and is based on general rights-based principles outlined by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (2006), but with an added emphasis on children, reflecting Plan's purpose as an organisation. CCCD is made up of the following principles:

- Children at the centre
- Guided by human rights principles and standards
- Responsibility and accountability
- Inclusion and non-discrimination
- Gender equality
- Participation

(Zuurmond, 2011, p. 20)

Through my data collection, I found that this shift from direct implementation and service-delivery to working through local partner organisations and having less service-delivery was very important in terms of influencing the way Plan works with partners such as youth organisations, as well as how communities view both Plan and partners. This is discussed the following chapters on findings and analysis.

5.2 Map of Malawi

Figure 1: Map of Malawi

In this map of Malawi, you can see the capitol city Lilongwe and the major cities of Zomba, Blantyre, Nkohotakota, Mzimba and Chilumba. Plan's Country Office is in Lilongwe, and you can also see the four Programme Area Offices (in this map they are referred to as Programme Units, as this is the term used in other Plan Offices).

(Plan International, 2013a)

5.3 Youth organisations

A set of youth organisations that Plan currently or previously work in partnership with were selected for this case study. As discussed in section 4.2, the inconsistent way in which youth are defined in Malawi was a challenge when selecting organisations. I therefore included organisations who saw themselves as youth organisations, and involved youth within the 15-25 age category in their work, as this is the age definition used by Plan (Zuurmond, 2011, p. 7). Below is some key information about each organisation.

5.3.1 Centre for Youth and Children's Affairs (CEYCA).

This organisation is based in the capitol Lilongwe, was set up in 1995 and registered in 1997 as a youth-oriented NGO. It's mission is to "promote the rights and active participation of children and young people through advocacy, facilitation, networking, research, education, and documentation" (Centre for Youth and Children's Affairs (CEYCA), 2011, p. 8).

According to the information revealed in the interviews, the organization currently has 19 paid members of staff, in addition to a range of community volunteers. CEYCA has worked

with Plan since 2007 and as a formalized partner since 2008, and funding from Plan amounts to about 1/3 of their total funding. In particular, Plan funds the activities related to child and youth participation, protection and community-based monitoring. They also receive some funding from Action Aid, HIVOS, Ipas, and Stop Aids Now (CEYCA, 2011).

5.3.2 Active Youth Initiative for Social Enhancement (AYISE).

AYISE was founded in 1995, and officially registered in 1997. It is based in the southern city of Blantyre, Malawi's second largest city, and is a voluntary member organisation as well as a professional NGO with employed staff (Active Youth Initiative for Social Enhancement (AYISE), 2013). During the interview, I was told they had 27 paid, full-time staff, including support staff such as guards at their youth centre.

The organisation aims to "encourage and enable Malawian youth to contribute positively to the social, economic and political development of their country". It works on a wide range of different issues, including HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation, human rights and democracy, youth participation, environment, peace-building and conflict resolution, and promotion of livelihood security. The organisation also focuses on talent promotion and career guidance, promotion of volunteerism and philanthropy, and facilitates youth exchanges (AYISE, 2013).

AYISE has been and still is supported by a wide range of donors. This includes institutional donors such as USAID and CIDA, international agencies such as UNICEF and ILO, and a range of other organisations and institutions within human rights and development. AYISE is currently not working in partnership with Plan, but they were previously one of Plan's partners for child protection and child participation work. Unfortunately, I was not able to get their annual reports or strategic plan, and did not get responses to my follow-up questions via email about the size of the organisation and their funding levels from different donors.

5.3.3 Eye of the Child

Eye of the Child was established in Blantyre in 1995 and registered in 1998 as a human rights organisation with the aim of "promoting the respect and protection of children rights in Malawi" (Eye of the Child, 2012, p. 3). In order to fulfil this aim, the organisation carries out research and develops resources; provides training and capacity building to children, community members, police and other stakeholders; and advocate on various child rights and child protection issues. It also engages in litigation and law reform. Key prioritised issues

include child labour, child trafficking and child marriages (Eye of the Child, 2012).

Based on the information revealed in the interview, the organisation currently has 14 staff, two of which are funded directly by Plan Malawi, and Plan Malawi accounts for about 15% of their funding. Plan started cooperating with Eye of the Child in 2010. Other funders include range of INGOs and charity foundations in addition to Plan, including Firelight Foundation, the Tides Foundation, Norwegian Church Aid and Action Aid (Eye of the Child, 2012, p. 35).

5.3.4 Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO)

YONECO was formed in Zomba, a relatively large city in the south and Malawi's first capitol. It was set up in 1997, and registered in 1999 as an NGO addressing social justice and reproductive health issues affecting youth, women and children. They do this by promoting life skills, leadership and entrepreneurship development, conducting civic education on a range of issues, encouraging participation in democratic and socio-economic processes, and providing social and economic support to those who experience violence and abuse or living with HIV/AIDS (Youth Net and Councelling (YONECO), 2013).

At the time of interview in March 2013, YONECO had about 92 paid staff, but this was set to increase to 102 the following month. The organisation is working across Malawi, and is funded by a range of donors, including a range of United Nations (UN) agencies, international organisations such as Save the Children, Interact Worldwide, Norwegian Church Aid and Family Health International, as well as some national bodies such as the National Aids Commission and the NGO Gender Coordination Network (YONECO, 2012, p. 28). According to information from the interview and email, Plan contributed to just above 15% of YONECO's annual budget in 2012. They wave worked with Plan for five years.

5.3.5 Timveni Child and Youth Media Organisation

"Timveni", which means "hear us out", was initially set up by Plan Malawi in 2006, as a child and youth radio station. It is based in Lilongwe. The reporters as well as the audience are youth and children, and according to what I was told in the interview, the programs have a wide following. In the programs, various issues are raised that are of concern to children and youth, and often controversial issues are discussed such as child abuse, child marriage and HIV and AIDS.

In 2011, Timveni became an independent organisation with the aim of engaging with children and youth through programs and activities, in order to promote and facilitate their active participation. They do this by having children and youth as their reporters, actively contributing by developing and running the programs. Timveni also aims to raise awareness on issues affecting children and youth amongst the general public, including exposing particular violations of the rights of children and youth. For this purpose, they also use social media such as Facebook actively to promote their shows as well as the issues they raise, as can be seen in the screenshot shown in figure 2 (Timveni Meida, n.d.). Through their operations, they hope to help children and youth develop their talents and skills, particularly related to media (Timveni Child and Youth Media Organisation, 2012, p. 9). The organisation has recently been granted a TV licence (eufrika.org, 2012).

Figure 2: Screenshot from Timveni Media's Facebook page, 23rd of May 2013

At the time of the interview, the organisation was still heavily dependent on Plan financially. They have small funding from other sources, but most of the funding is from Plan Malawi, who fund all their 13 paid staff as well as their rent. With a newly developed business plan and the TV licence, they hope to generate income by also producing commercial programmes and including advertising (Timveni Child and Youth Media Organisation, 2012).

Timveni was an interesting organisation to include in this research, as they are a hybrid organisation that is both doing media production for radio and TV as well as activities at community-level related to child and youth participation. As emphasised in chapter 3, media organisations are an important part of civil society, as a form of public communication (Cohen & Arato, 1992, p. ix). In Malawi, public and community radio are particularly important parts of civil society, as they have a broad reach including the rural poor (Booth et al., 2006, p. 16).

5.4 Youth Networks

Three *youth networks* were focused on for this research. As explained in section 4.2, they are *networks* in the sense that they have members from a range of smaller, more informal *youth clubs* within a specific geographical area. The youth clubs as well as the youth networks focus on various issues the youth are concerned about, as well as specific activities they may be supported by Plan to carry out. One network, the National Network on Climate Change, was the only one focusing on one particular issue, and also the only one based in Lilongwe. The other two, in the rural areas of Mulanje and Kasungu, were focusing on a range of different issues affecting youth.

According to what I was told in the interviews , all three networks have been set up at the initiative of and with the support of Plan, and all relatively recently. Depending on the area, Plan's support of youth networks started some time between 2009 and 2011. Plan's main aim is to empower the youth to participate in local governance and decision-making, as well as enhancing their livelihood opportunities. The type of support received is however quite different to that of the youth organisations above. Plan is more actively involved in the activities, and funding is only provided in small amounts for specific activities, not for larger projects. As will be discussed in chapter 6, this is also because the youth networks are not formally registered and are not seen as having capacity to handle larger amounts of funding or more complex projects.

6. Presentation of findings

In this chapter, the key findings are presented and discussed. As explained in section 4.4, at the initial stage of analysis I was using an inductive approach inspired by grounded theory, where I distanced myself from the literature and did not use the theoretical framework. This was because I wanted to approach and systematize the empirical data without having too many pre-conceived ideas of what I would find. The findings are here presented according to the main codes and categories that came out of this process, whereas the theory is brought in to the analysis in chapter seven. The first part of the findings is related to how cooperating with Plan influences the youth associations, whereas the second part is focusing on the views on civil society, and how Plan and the youth associations see their role within it.

6.1 How cooperating with Plan influences youth organisations and networks.

A lot of the empirical data was centred on how cooperating with Plan influenced the youth organisations and networks. Here, I found that the influence took five distinct forms, which include the selection and implementation of goals and activities, organisational capacity, sustainability and continuity, motivation, and relationships with stakeholders. This first part of the findings is presented according to these five ways in which youth organisations were influenced by their cooperation with Plan.

6.1.1 Selection and implementation of goals and activities

The common goal of the youth organisations as well as the youth networks was to promote the participation of youth – in local decision-making and governance, within schools, and at national level. As expressed by the staff of one organisation: "We help them to start participating actively in decision making, in activities that have meaning to their lives". Therefore, there was a focus on creating spaces for this participation to take place, both in a physical sense by setting up youth centres and other places to meet, and in a political sense by opening avenues for youth participation within existing decision-making structures. One of the youth networks explained: "We have managed to negotiate with the chiefs that we should be included in development planning activities. Youth are now participating in decision making activities in development such as Village Development Councils and Area Development Councils".

In addition, the youth organisations had aims of human rights monitoring, ensuring

government accountability, strengthening local child protection systems and providing various services of relevance to youth such as vocational training and health services. The youth networks, on the other hand, were more focused on their own empowerment as groups, how they could improve their own situation through being part of a group, and taking a more active part in the development of as well as the decision-making within their communities. They were also focusing on improving livelihoods, as one youth group explained: "We have been trained in different vocational skills, for example tin smithing, tailoring, carpentry and HIV testing and counselling. Many have jobs or are self-employed. Through youth clubs we also have been doing piggery farming".

When asked about the partnership with Plan, the initial response was that the partnership helped them to achieve what they aim to achieve – "it helps us achieve our vision", and also, that "they [Plan] do not promote their own role, they support others". This was also confirmed by Plan staff, who said they were "trying to find out from them what could be their choice. What is it that they want to do – how do they want to see their youth group tomorrow. We are supporting them to come up with ideas". As our discussions continued, it was however expressed a concern that Plan have their own agenda, both in terms of which themes to support and what geographical areas to work within. One of the youth networks stated:

> We only receive support from Plan to work in Plan's areas. Plan should allow its partners to work independently. We would like to work on many issues – child protection, HIV/AIDS, and youth empowerment (…) but Plan only funds the activities already in their plans. They are strict to their catchment areas.

This was expressed as a challenge by all the organisations and networks, stating that there was "favouritism" in selecting geographical focus areas where activities were supported. Several of the formal organisations also expressed great frustrations with what they called "micro-management" from Plan's side, that they did not feel trusted to implement activities as they saw best, but had to submit extremely detailed plans and log frames[9] for approval every three months in order to get the agreed-upon funding for activities. One of the organisations felt that Plan staff were "not in good faith, Plan wants to be our bosses, to be in control".

---

[9] "Logframes" are short for Logical Framworks, which is a much used tool in development planning. It focuses particularly on the on the intervention logic - the relationship between planned activities, results and measurement of progress. The logical framework matrix (the logframe) is essentially a grid in which this logic is presented, showing how planned activities deliver outputs, which lead to outcomes, that ultimately contribute towards an overarching goal, and also showing how each stage will be measured and verified. The approach is also often criticized on the grounds that it fails to capture unintended and unforeseen effects and consequences (Hummelbrunner, 2010, pp. 1–7) .

These challenges were to some extent recognized by Plan staff as well. Although some insisted that Plan merely helps the youth associations achieve their own agendas and objectives, others shared the concerns raised: "It is hard for us [Plan] to give them [youth organisations and networks] money to implement their own plans. Most of the time, it is us giving them the money and asking them to implement the plans we have". Some Plan staff also claimed that the youth organisations and networks understood this this situation, and therefore attempted to be "masters of everything" in order to be able to shift their focus and "do activities based on what Plan will support". Here, however, it must be mentioned that some of the youth organisations expressed their commitment to their own vision, and stated that they would rather have less funding from Plan than change their activities based on Plan's priorities. Some Plan staff also recognized the problem of micro-management, saying that "sometimes our Community Development Facilitators feel they should manage the money, they should tell them [youth organisations and networks] what to do. Our coordinators need to understand how to work in partnership".

Further, Plan staff also mentioned being frustrated by how they would get grants funding only for certain activities, and therefore could not always support the youth in what they thought was more important. Plan does have some flexibility through the sponsorship funds, and in all three Programme Areas visited, Plan was using these funds to support youth networks, often after grants had ended, or whilst supporting them to apply for grants related to their focus area. One Plan staff explained:

> Formerly – there was a youth network which was under a governance project. That project was funded by UKNO [Plan's office in the UK] – when the project phased out, we did not have the money for the programme. It was thought – we needed to continue. It is now funded by sponsorship funds.

Some Plan staff were concerned that NGOs in Malawi had a tendency of bringing youth together for the purposes of particular projects, but not really doing this "in tandem with the needs of youth". In relation to this, it was expressed how it was much easier for organisations to reach out to youth when they are organised in groups. Many Plan staff at local level mentioned how "useful" it was to work with the youth networks, saying that "the youth will assist us in implementing various programmes". This was particularly mentioned in relation to Plan's sponsorship activities. One local Plan staff said: "They are the ones who support us

on sponsorship activities, [the youth] are becoming very useful to Plan. Really, really!". In these activities, youth assist with the administration such as collecting photos of children and distributing letters and information. Officially, this is done through volunteering, but in reality, the allowance provided becomes a significant source of income for the youth.

This section has presented the findings related to how cooperating with Plan influences the aims and activities of youth organisations. Overall, the youth organisations and networks aim to promote the participation of youth, enhance democratic governance and influence the decision-makers on important issues, contribute positively to their communities by providing services within health and protection, and improve the livelihood opportunities of youth. Cooperating with Plan is influencing them by shaping what issues they work on, as well as in which geographical areas they do so, as Plan is thematically and geographically restricted, especially when interventions are being funded through grants. This was seen as a challenge by youth organisations, networks as well as Plan staff. Plan does try to meet this challenge by using funds from sponsorship, which are restricted by geographic area but not by theme, to support the youth organisations to work on the issues they find most important.

6.1.2 Organisational capacity

"Capacity-building" is a major buzz-word of development agencies, and this to some extent influenced our discussion on this theme. The words "capacity" and "capacity-building" were used extensively by the youth organisations, networks and Plan staff, and it was consistently mentioned with reference to the organisations and networks lacking or needing capacity, and Plan having a role in terms of enhancing their capacity. One Plan staff explained:

> We are not just giving resources, but raising capacity on finance, on project implementation (…) Those skills are used not just for implementing our projects, but also to work with others. We are looking at the different capacities of different organisations (…) What YONECO is lacking might not be the same as CEYCA. We develop tailor-made programs that can suit the gaps in capacities of each individual organisation.

A challenge here was that "capacity" was used as a catch-phrase to mean anything from administration staff, buildings, motorbikes, leadership skills, financial management skills, ability to generate resources, and so on. Through our discussions, I attempted to make them break it down to explain exactly what kind of capacity they were referring to, and what

specifically Plan was doing to enhance it. The three main types of capacity they focused on can be classified as material resources, skills and experience, and the ability to meet donor requirements.

Material resources

Consistently, the first type of capacity that was mentioned by the youth organisations and networks was always that of material resources – in terms of material resources they had, resources they lacked, and what they thought Plan should provide for them.

Within this, mobility was a recurring theme, it was mentioned how it is difficult to get around without cars, motorbikes or bicycles, that it was difficult for staff to go places or for youth to come and meet up. For all organisations and groups, Plan had provided some support for this, whether it was through actual means of transport or by providing transport allowances for meetings and activities. The youth organisations explained: "They provided us with transport – a motorbike", and "They refund our transportation whenever we are having a meeting with them". Yet, they all mentioned that there was a need for more support to enhance their mobility. One youth group, which had previously been granted some bicycles, explained that these were no longer available or in good condition, so they requested new ones.

Having a space to carry out their activities was also seen as an important part of their capacity as an organisation: "They should provide us with materials such as construction of youth offices, entertainments centres, they should provide transport and allowances as we are working. During rainy season, the places for meeting are leaking". Most organisations and youth networks were using rented spaces, often fully or partly paid for by Plan, and expressed the need to be given funding for their own building. One youth organisation and one youth club (who were members of one of the youth networks) had been supported to own buildings, where they could also rent out rooms and generate income. Based on my observations from visiting the buildings and discussing with the youth involved, I got the impression that the organisation was managing this well and used it to ensure long-term sustainability, whereas the youth club was unable to manage this resource and left the building deteriorating.

The youth network in particular mentioned their lack of places to meet, as well as lack of other types of material resources, such as computers, stationary, information material, games and sports equipment. They also mentioned equipment needed for various livelihood activities

such as pig farming and agriculture, reflecting their main focus of economically empowering their own members. After some discussion, it also came out that Plan had previously supported various livelihood activities such as a piggery, but the youth club had not maintained these well so the project was not continued.

One challenge pointed out by all youth organisations and Plan staff was that even when Plan has agreed to provide financial support for specific activities, the money is often disbursed much later than what was planned for: "The main problem is late disbursements, which causes delays". This was seen as partly related to delays from donors, but primarily because of Plan's own system of liquidations, where they require specific documentation, approval at different levels of the organisational hierarchy, and the involvement of the national-level accountant in the Plan office. One Plan staff explained:

> We have the delayed disbursements of funds. Every organisation presents it (…) I agree – seriously. That is because of the liquidation processes. Money should be given in January. In March they are not there yet – have to wait for our accountant to go to each organisations and do the liquidation. It is a whole massive system, involving the program coordinator, the manager, the writing of reports, and so on. There are many hiccups along the way (…) When there are different projects funded from different countries, all projects need to do liquidations separately.

There was agreement that these systems cause delays, which severely compromise effective implementation of activities, because even when money is disbursed late, it still has to be spent by the same date. According to youth organisations as well as Plan staff, this leads to "crash implementation", with a focus on spending a lot of money within a short space of time, rather than on the quality and effectiveness of the activities implemented. This was by the youth organisations seen as undermining their aims to empower the youth: "It is a challenge with INGOs - if the financial year is closing, and you have not spent, you just have to throw money around (…) this is the opposite of empowerment!".

Skills and experience of staff, volunteers and members

One type of capacity mentioned was the knowledge and experience of the staff, members and volunteers connected to the organisations and networks. The organisations all complained that they did not have enough paid staff, and wanted Plan to provide more support for administration: "We lack skilled staff in key positions, We are too few in numbers, have to be all over". One organisation explained that in the present situation, it was "difficult to be

effective, it becomes rushed and very hectic". Further, they stated that good work requires good people, and if Plan is not willing to pay for that, staff will either have to do their Plan-supported work from other budgets, or they will not have sufficient staff to implement well: "you need good people to provide good services - and that costs money (…) People are doing Plan's work on from other budgets". Several organisations solved this by working with community volunteers: "We have community-level volunteers. (…) They are engaged and trained to implement programmes (…) then we do not need so much staff to implement. It lessens labour". One organisation had even developed a database of volunteers with specific skills they could use for particular purposes.

The youth networks were expressing frustration with the low capacity of their members, they would like to know more about pretty much everything: "We want to learn about various types of organisational management – fundraising, finance management, mobilization, communication, and so on". They also wanted to learn more about how to write proposals, and how to engage with government at local level. Some youth networks were concerned that Plan only allowed some of their members to attend such trainings, and wish they were provided for everyone.

When Plan staff discussed capacity and capacity gaps of the organisations and networks, they were focusing heavily on the level of professionalization of the organisation. It was discussed how Plan is trying to support the youth networks to become more formalised organisations, "standalone organisations", who are registered with the NGO board, have policies in place, have a board to make important decisions, have bank accounts, and so on. Once the networks or groups are formalized in this sense, it was explained how they can submit their own proposals and seek funding from other agencies:

> We train the youth network member – so at the end of the day, they become local NGOs – they will be doing the employment of other people, they will monitor the activities in the area. As a local NGO – they might have ways of soliciting funds from different organisations.

Plan also explained how they provide training to the youth networks on basic organisational skills such as leadership, facilitation and conflict resolution. For the youth organisation, they try to develop more specific, "tailor-made programs that can suit the gaps and capacities of each organisation".

Ability to meet donor requirements

Another important component of capacity, which a lot of my discussion with the youth organisations and Plan staff focused on, was the ability to meet donor requirements. By "donor requirements", they referred to any conditions from various agencies and organisations from which they received funds, including Plan, related to reporting, accounting and so on. The youth networks were less concerned with this, naturally, as they receive much smaller amounts of funding and therefore are not required to report in the same way.

Irrespectively of how well projects are implemented, Plan staff emphasized that the most important requirement from donors is to receive well-written reports in the expected format: "They [youth organisations] have to provide quality report. If they are not, we cannot subgrant them again. Some partners are not documenting enough (…) we need to have evidence when there is improved performance". A concern was expressed by youth organisations as well as Plan staff that those organisations writing good reports are not necessarily the best at project implementation, and vice versa: "Sometimes, people have implemented a project so well, but can not write a report reflecting what they have done. Donors think money is wasted". Especially, I was told that the volunteers involved may do a great job in the community, but do not always know which data to collect and how to document their activities and achievements sufficiently. Related to donor requirements, there was also a concern with capacity on financial reporting and accounting. The youth organisations do not always have dedicated full-time staff for this purpose, and said that staff were not skilled enough to meet the requirements from donors: "We are failing to match the demands of the institutions. We need more professionalised staff".

Plan staff pointed to donor requirements to as the main reason for not supporting youth networks to a greater extent. Although they saw great potential for scaling up the activities of the networks and working with them on a larger projects, they felt restricted by their lack of capacity to meet donor requirements: "We have not had the courage to support youth groups directly to see how they will manage. It could lead to problems for us with our donors. It might backfire because money will not be well managed". Prior to engaging in partnership with any organisation, Plan goes through a due diligence check, in order to check their capacity to implement projects and meet donor requirements for reporting and financial management. Several youth organisations and Plan staff identified this process as a hindrance to real capacity building of youth organisations, because it makes Plan engage in partnerships

with more professionalized organisations who already have high capacity and other donors, and in practice excluding the smaller organisations who may be less professional and may benefit more from support and capacity-building. As one youth organisation said: "Plan's due diligence system – some organisations have been dropped as a result of that process. The question is – who will build their capacity?". Plan staff also recognized this challenge:

> Most of the NGOs we work with have some capacity. But we need to target those who do not have it. (…) Plan should have more funds to build capacity of existing partners, and support those we are not working with. Through due diligence, we are excluding some partners.

Smaller organisations may also be more in touch with the needs and concerns of youth in their communities. Plan staff mentioned that the professionalised youth organisations that receive funding are based in the big cities, whereas most of the youth live in the rural areas, and this is also where most of the activities in the partnerships are being implemented. This was also recognized by the youth networks: "Plan should change their approach to partnership - not only work with established partners who are far away [in the city], they should work with the youth organisations who are there [in the rural areas]".

Summary of findings related to organisational capacity

This section has presented the findings related to how cooperating with Plan influences the organisational capacity of youth organisations. Enhancing the capacity of local organisations was seen as an important aim of the partnership itself from Plan's side. Three key themes dominated the discussions on organisational capacity: material resources, the skills and experience of staff and members, and the ability to meet donor requirements.

It was clear from the organisations that working with Plan enhanced their capacity in terms of material resources; they received funding for equipment, office rent, salaries and transport. All the youth organisations and networks did however also complain that the funding was not sufficient, that they needed more funding in order to implement their activities well. An important challenge that was mentioned was also the systems by which Plan provides funding; it was seen both by youth organisations and Plan staff as causing unnecessary delays, which made implementation difficult. When it came to the capacity of staff and members, it was recognized by the youth organisations that Plan provided them important support such as trainings to enhance the capacity of staff. But also here, the organisations and networks claimed the support was not sufficient, they needed more. The organisations further claimed

that they did not receive enough funding to have skilled staff to implement the projects where they cooperate with Plan. An important focus for Plan was with regards to the professionalization of the organisation, which was seen as one important step for them to become more independent of Plan and being able to raise resources themselves. Finally, the ability to meet donor requirements was seen as an important element of organisational capacity, by Plan as well as youth organisations. The youth organisations need to be able to report and document according to the requirements of the donors from where Plan Malawi generates its grants-based funding. This leads to a selection of youth organisations to cooperate with that already have quite a high level of capacity, because working with organisations with low capacity involves a risk that they might not be able to meet the requirements. This results in a lot of Plan's capacity building efforts being focused on youth organisations who are already quite strong, and who are based in the urban areas, although smaller and weaker organisations based in rural areas might be more representative of the concerns of youth.

6.1.3 Sustainability and continuity

One major concern for the organisations as well as the networks was the high turnover of staff and/or members. The organisations reported that they would continue to recruit and train new staff, who were then "poached" by INGOs and donors who can offer much higher salaries. Several youth organisations saw this as an important challenge: "Finance officers we do not have for much more than a year. We recruit them, train them, then they leave after they are qualified". Another organisation said: "we have lost two key members of staff, they are with international NGOs".

The youth networks, on the other hand, were concerned with how those who were trained and had coordinating roles in the networks were leaving to pursue further studies and employment, without passing on the necessary skills to the rest of the group. This was also mentioned by Plan staff:

> There are challenges. One of the leaders of the youth network was selected for future studies. So no leadership – it becomes a problem. Hard for members to come up and do activities. It was the same with the president of the network during the governance project. He was selected to the university - everything went back to square one. All the key people left. Picked up good jobs, went to universities, did some other courses. If more could be trained, it could be more sustainable.

One Plan staff working in a different area, expressed a similar challenge:

> Youth are vibrant and they have a lot of aspirations and ambitions in life. You find
> sometimes, you work with a group of youth, they are doing fine, you have trained
> them and invested in them – but because of their ambition they will feel they want to
> go to school elsewhere. Or they have picked another job. It is a challenge as opposed
> to adult structures. Youth are always looking for greener pastures.

Neither of these sustainability challenges are surprising – youth organisations and networks
are likely to have much higher turnover than other organisations purely because people
naturally grow out of being youth, and young staff often leave their first job to pursue better
opportunities and further challenges. Interestingly, the opposite problem was also expressed
by the youth organisations and Plan staff – that the founders of youth organisations often
would refuse to leave, and would carry on being the executive director for decades, despite
being further and further removed from the youth they are supposed to represent. One Plan
staff explained:

> You have the "founders syndrome" – an individual takes the initial initiative,
> mobilizes board members, brings people together. Later, they become executive
> secretary or director – and try to own the institution. They can try to impose certain
> directions. (…) You can find the same within youth groups.

In four of the youth organisations I interviewed, the founder still held a key leadership
position, almost two decades after the organisation was set up. Another Plan staff elaborated
on this challenge: "The founder facilitated the establishment 18 years ago – he is still
executive director. Can nobody take over? That is where you need to empower others to take
the leading role. It is affecting the growth and sustainability of the organisation".

Youth organisations and Plan staff also expressed a concern with the sustainability of funding.
One organisation had Plan as their only funder, whereas others had a range of different
donors. It was an important element of Plan's capacity-building efforts to support
organisations to expand and diversify their funding base to make them less dependent on
Plan. As expressed by one Plan staff:

> A local NGO – might have ways of soliciting funds from different organisations. They
> might be working with Plan in one area, but might also be interested in using funds for
> something else. Should have skills to write proposals, so they can use other
> opportunities as well, not only depending on Plan

The youth networks expressed a wish to also get this type of support, and also to get more funding from Plan, so they could have money to do various things: "We wish for longer-term funding to support not only different activities but the network itself. Then we could also work on many other different things". Most of the discussions on funding were focused on accessing funds through donors, or sometimes government. Although it was mentioned, few focused on opportunities for local generation of resources. Some had tried to have membership fees as a source of income, but this was discontinued because people simply did not have money to pay.

Plan staff explained how they aim for the youth networks to become financially sustainable and independent: "We will support them for 6 months – through sponsorship funds – in the transition. After, the youth clubs should contribute money towards the youth network". I did not meet the different youth clubs, only their representatives through the youth networks. But Plan staff were concerned that the youth clubs were only active when Plan could provide funding, and afterwards, they simply would stop their activities: "When money is taken out of the equation – the likelihood of them coming is low. After the money ends, the group dies". This casts some doubt on whether the youth clubs and youth networks will manage to sustain their activities without financial support from Plan. However, Plan staff explained that some youth clubs who had been supported to carry out livelihood and income generation activities tended to go on for some time after funding stopped. This reflects the motivations of group members, which will be discussed in section 6.1.4 below.

This section has presented the findings related to how working with Plan influences the sustainability and continuity of the youth organisations and networks. Some of the most important sustainability challenges were related to high turnover of staff and key members, which is natural considering that these organisations are for young people. A particular challenge raised by the youth organisations was how staff who were trained, for example through Plan, would move on very quickly, often being "poached" by larger NGOs, INGOs or donor agencies. Youth organisations seemed to become a training- and recruitment ground for the aid industry in Malawi, which is an important challenge for the sustainability and continuity of local organisations. A problem opposite to high staff turnover was also mentioned, with founders who cling on to "their" organisations and stay in a powerful position for decades.

In order to enhance the sustainability and continuity of the organisations, Plan supports to seek funding from other sources, primarily from donors and INGOs. The youth networks also wanted such support, and would like to become less financially dependent on Plan. Plan also aims for the youth networks to be sustainable and to be self-financed by generating their own resources through the youth clubs, but this did not seem realistic based on the situation the youth networks as well as Plan staff described, where the youth clubs and networks were highly dependent on financial support from Plan to do anything at all.

6.1.4 Motivation

Some of my most interesting findings were related to people's motivation to be involved with youth groups and youth organisations, and how these motivations were affected by the funding and support from Plan.

Some of the organisations and youth networks members expressed their strong commitment to working for youth, in particular those who are excluded and vulnerable, they explained that they wanted to "work for the poor", and "speak for the most excluded persons". Some also spoke about passion for particular issues: "We wanted to learn more about climate change, to do something about climate change", or that they cared particularly about youth being given a voice: "young people do not know where to say their problems". Some members had a more vague idea of "wanting to do something useful". One of the staff of the youth organisations said that: "we were never created because of the money – we were created because of the cause". Plan staff also mentioned how important conviction of a joint cause was: "What makes groups stick together is the need or the right that they want to address (…) If you don't perceive that as an issue, you do not join. Most of the time, it appears they have common issues".

Another common reason, particularly for the youth network members, was the fact that they had very little else to do and few safe places to meet, so they joined in order to get friends and socialise. Consequently, if they have other activities to occupy them, they are less likely to continue attending: "people sometimes join volunteering because they have nothing better to do, they are idle. When they get something else to do, they stop coming". Some also said they joined the groups in order to avoid ending up in a bad situation – for example, to "avoid doing things that can make our lives miserable", "refrain from bad behaviour", and "avoid prostitution". I did however get the impression that this might have been said in order to

convince the Plan staff and myself that they were well-behaved youth, rather than because it was an important part of their actual motivation to join the group.

Skills development and individual progress also came across as one important motivating factor for the youth involved in organisations and networks. As one staff of a youth organisation said: "they already see the need to develop their skills and competencies (…) They seek opportunities for progress as individuals". Through being involved, they learn new things, develop new skills and competencies, and can show these in their communities and to their friends. The members of the youth networks said: "we can develop our minds", "we attain life and vocational skills", and "we can learn new skills, expose talent and skills to fellow friends". Some might even get the opportunity to travel to other cities or countries by being part of a youth group linked with an international organisation such as Plan. A few of the members of networks and organisations had clear ambitions of working in in development- or human rights organisations, and were encouraged by the fact that they could see other previously trained youth being employed by organisations. As expressed by one of the youth organisations: "Almost all youth trained have now moved up the ladder." Plan staff confirmed this, saying that it "motivates them that others there have a job". Some of the organisations and youth networks also had vocational training, business training and other types of livelihood activities as part of their activities.

The most dominant reason for youth to become engaged, according to youth network member, youth organisations and Plan staff, was economic motivations. As discussed in chapter 2, most people in Malawi are extremely poor. Based on the interviews and focus group discussions, it became clear that being involved in activities with an INGO pretty much always involved some access to resources. One youth organisation saw this as a problem, saying that some members were motivated by money: "they see young people, maybe 21, riding in cars. What motivates them is purely from money angle". The youth in the networks were open and direct about seeing their involvement in the youth clubs and network as a possible source of livelihood. For example, one member of a youth network explained: "if we become a proper organisation, we can create our own jobs. (…) We can apply for funding, so we have some money for allowances. It will not be like a formal job, but we can still manage". Other members of the youth networks expressed similar sentiments: "We can be linked to other organisations and institutions who can support us", "I saw some other people benefiting from the activities and wanted to join", and "Some people also come because they

hope they will get some money for the activities". People may even attend trainings in order to get the lunch and transport allowances provided, which they can use to contribute to their daily needs. Plan staff said that "people need a certain motivation – if we cannot give this, it limits quality of intervention. It can be something small – some airtime, transport allowance, refreshments". Another Plan staff explained that many attend trainings thinking: "if I get something, I will get money to buy some soap". Even if they are not given money, the refreshments provided during meetings is a bit of a luxury, especially in the villages. For example, I heard one local government officer say to one of the youth networks as they discussed what further support they needed: "remember, you have been given so many things, snacks, many bottles of coke, you have drunk and drunk".

It became clear from interviews with youth organisations and Plan as well as my interviews with key informants in the government and other organisations that the habit of providing allowances is entrenched throughout the Malawian political system, and is common in government as well as in various organisations. Plan staff explained it as something that arrived with multi-party democracy in the mid-90's: "The allowances syndrome - it becomes a challenge. With the emerging of democracy – government gave chiefs and village heads salaries and a little something. Many times people will want to get an allowance". Most people I spoke to referred to this "allowance syndrome" as a great challenge, as it was seen as more or less impossible to get youth to meet without being able to provide some sort of financial motivation. One Plan staff explained:

> When you have a training you have to give people allowances. Partners are also giving allowances. When we work with government, we have to give them allowance. (…) Government have their own rates, Plan has their own, other organisations have their own rates (…) Meetings, review meetings, also qualify for allowance (…) for you to have that minister, it will cost you quite a lot. It goes down, down. Has to be addressed from the top level. We have to find a way to cope – (…) cannot provide allowances all the time. Cannot manage it in the projects.

Some Plan staff did however see allowances also as an opportunity to support youth in need:

> If there are any incentives within the programmes, the youth should benefit. How can they survive? If we have some incentives – we give it to the youth. That way they are more likely to participate. You know, the little motivation you give, the more you cope (…) the time they come here, they get transport allowance, meal allowance (…) For those who are poor – the little they get, they make use of it. They can buy notebooks,

or other school supplies.

The flip-side of money being such an important motivation, is that if the youth have other ways of earning money, such as small businesses or employment, they are less likely to engage with the youth clubs and organisations. One of the youth networks saw it as a challenge that "some youth value their petty business more than the group". One youth organisation also mentioned how they found it more difficult to get members now, as people are aware that they have quite a lot of funding. Previously, people wanted to become members because they wanted to volunteer, but now, they said, "some people also come because they hope they will get some money for the activities" and they lose interest if they did not "get something".

Money is an important motivating factor for group membership, and I was also told that it is an important reason for why youth clubs, networks and organisations are set up in the first place. Through discussions with Plan staff and key informants in other NGOs and government, I was told that a wide range of youth groups, networks and organisations were set up in the early 2000's, when the Global Fund gave a large grant to the National Aids Commission for awareness on HIV and AIDS amongst youth. A lot of youth associations were formed in order to access these funds, and many of them still exist and engage with other NGOs and donors. This was seen as a challenge by the youth organisations, stating that "If you are a good writer, you can write and argue your case. That has killed youth work – gives youth a bad reputation. It becomes a livelihood option". This was also confirmed by Plan staff:

> Projects are associated with some sort of income – some young people have that mind. People understand that when you are affiliated to a group, the chances are that you might get connected to other stuff. [They think] 'If I attach myself to a group – the chance I will get something is very high'. Most young people who set up CBOs [community-based organisations] – have that mentality. It is for survival. Generating resources for themselves.

This section has presented the findings related to how cooperating with Plan influences the motivations of youth to join and set up organisations and networks. The youth join organisations for a variety of reasons, including commitment to specific causes, an urge to contribute to their communities, wanting to learn new skills that can enhance their

employment opportunities, or simply wanting something to do. The most important motivation, however, was improving economic prospects. Being connected to an organisation or a network that is cooperating with INGOs with access to aid funds such as Plan, becomes a livelihood option, a way of accessing and generating resources (or attempting to). The money given as transport and food allowances for meetings, for example, becomes an important source of income when the youth are very poor. The "allowance syndrome" was described as entrenched within Malawi's society, and common also amongst politicians at all levels; and this was seen as an important challenge. Further, many organisations are set up with the purpose of accessing aid, and this was seen as reducing the credibility and legitimacy of local civil society overall.

6.1.5 Relationships with stakeholders

The youth organisations and networks explained how they implement all projects and activities in close cooperation with local government. One youth organisation said that they had a "very good working relationship with government – we cannot go into the communities without the government". In general, the local government officials were seen as supportive when it came to organisations helping with the delivery of services, and it was mentioned especially that the social welfare departments were very positive towards them.

The communities in which programmes were implemented were also generally positive to the organisations and networks, according to the youth networks: "We get a positive response from the communities – they have seen what we do (…) the interventions that we use - they realise it benefits them". One organisation reported that they had received negative responses from communities after they had exposed cases of sexual abuse involving the head-teacher of the school: "One experience in xxx [the name of the town], a girl spoke out about how a head-teacher was approaching her for sexual favours. The school felt targeted, we received a negative welcome when we came back". The same organisation also said that they had similar experiences in other areas:

> Sometimes when we travel, people fear that we will expose illicit behaviour (…)
> people try and avoid giving us the rights information (…) They can scare the children,
> and say to them 'if you speak to these cameramen, they will not be here forever.
> Afterwards, you will be with us'.

Members of the youth networks further explained how traditional leaders and other important members of the community could feel threatened by the youth, worried that they might lose

positions or status if they provide space for the youth: "The youth want to achieve positions, community members feel threatened, fear they will lose status".

The relationship between the community and the youth organisations and networks is also influences by the relationship between Plan and the communities, as well as Plan and the partner organisations. Here, one relevant issue that came up throughout the discussions was the transition made by Plan to rights-based programming, which involved a marked shift from service delivery to advocacy and capacity building, and from direct implementation to working in partnership with local organisations and networks (see section 5.1 about Plan's transition, and sections 3.4.3 and 3.4.4 about the rights-based approach). Both Plan staff and youth organisations explained how this has created challenges in terms of expectations in the communities, and can lead to communities having less faith in Plan. One Plan staff explained:

> When implementing demand-driven programs, people saw Plan as very reliable, very caring, passionate about the welfare of their communities (…) with the transition to the rights-based approach, there is less service delivery, Plan is seen as less dependable. Sometimes they say that they think we channel resources to ourselves, that we take money from sponsored children. They do not see the resources trickling down directly.

Plan's change in approach, with different types of activities than before, and often implementing through other organisations instead of directly, was also seen as very confusing to the communities, especially where Plan had been working for a long time:

> In the sponsorship areas - much as we tell them about our approach, they expect a lot from us, they expect more from us (…) when working with a local NGO who is familiar with the area, have done different interventions, they go there in partnership with Plan – it creates two different worlds. It confuses them. People do not know what to expect (…) For example, maybe the organisation used to provide service delivery before. Now they are not doing it anymore. They are changing their approach. Shift from hardware to software, from buildings to empowerment. The community are not happy, and tell them 'you people used to construct bridges, you used to provide school fees for our children'.

In other words, when Plan then changed their approach, people in the communities were confused. The tangible benefits from Plan's work they could observe in the past were now replaced with interventions where they could not so easily observe the benefits to themselves and the community in the short run. Some Plan staff also mentioned how this was not true in

all communities:

> Families in the past were used to direct benefits. Now, the strategy has been changed (…). We do advocacy on rights. Some communities are following, and are able to appreciate. It is our role as an organisation to say why we are changing, what is our focus.

Several Plan staff explained how they thought the main problem was how this transition happened too quickly, staff were not fully on board, so it was perceived as forced upon them:

> Local staff – do not understand why we have CCCD and rights based approach, instead of giving things. Before, we used to do a lot of hand-outs. Some communities do not feel good. It is the way we introduced it – it was just forced upon them. We did not do a proper shift into community-based focused from family-based focus.

Others, both Plan staff and youth organisations, claimed that the problem was due to many local-level Plan staff having been in the organisation for a long time, and were not convinced by and committed to this new way of working in the communities. Having been used to directly implementing programmes with quick, visible impact, they were not satisfied with having to work with partner organisations, and especially not on more long-term programmes with less direct, visible results. One youth organisation said: "The transition from implementation to partnership may not be so well received by all staff. They used to do infrastructure, now they are doing advocacy, where the impact is not always seen so quickly". Another youth organisation confirmed this: "the officers (in Plan) at local level assure us that they have a heart of partnership. But before, they used to implement and manage resources".

There seemed to be important differences between how the youth organisations perceived cooperation with staff in the local level offices (PAs) and the country level office (CO). The youth organisations explained that they often found the Plan staff in the PAs difficult to work with, they did not feel trusted to implement project and activities, and felt "micro-managed". One youth organisations said: "We have to provide a log frame with venue, date, and other details every three months. It is micro-management - no trust. (…) they are not in good faith, want to be our bosses, to be in control". With national level staff, they did not express such challenges: "We do not have issues with the CO – but with the PA".

Another problem mentioned was lack of coherence between information given from Plan staff at different levels. One youth organisation explained:

Individuals based in Plan say different things. For example, how much to give out for allowances. The conditions are different when we work with the CO and PAs (…) If we work at the CO level, we enjoy the partnership. But individuals in PAs cause delay, frustrate the process. The problem can be about individuals as well as levels. The attitudes as well as the policies differ.

Other youth organisations also claimed that the main challenge at the PA level was related to individuals: "We have these problems within international NGOs – programme directors are too far removed. The local staff develop mini-policies of who they should work with, and how. It is mini-policies of individuals - it is different at national and local level".

These incoherencies in terms of how Plan staff relate to the youth organisations at different levels was seen by the youth organisations as influencing their relationship with the community, because processes get delayed or changed without sufficient information, and as a result, community members get sceptical and lose faith in the organisation.

This section has summarised the relationships between the youth organisations and networks and various stakeholders, and how this is influenced by their cooperation with Plan. The organisations and networks overall reported good cooperation with government institutions. The relationships with the communities in which they were doing activities were also generally positive, especially when the community members saw benefits from their work. In some cases where controversial issues such as abuse of children had been raised, the relationship was more difficult. It was also found that the relationship to the community was heavily influenced by the community's view of Plan. The transition in Plan to rights-based programming had in many communities led to confusion and a loss of faith in Plan as well as the youth organisations. This is because the communities, especially in those areas where Plan has sponsorship-funded activities, were used to seeing tangible benefits of Plan's efforts, and found it difficult to see benefits of longer-term efforts to enhance capacity and influence the government. The challenges were related to how the transition was managed, as well as a lack of commitment from some Plan staff to this new way of working, especially in the PA level. The youth organisations and networks reported how they found this confusion in the communities, as well as the lack of commitment to real partnership from some Plan staff, significant challenges to the implementation of their work, and also influencing their relationships to the communities.

6.2 Views on Malawian civil society, youth organisations and INGOs

Another important theme that arose from the empirical data was how youth organisations and Plan Malawi view civil society in Malawi in general, including their respective roles as local organisations or INGOs. An important element within this theme was also the attitudes towards youth in Malawi, as this was affecting the ability of the youth associations to fulfil their roles. This part of the findings is presented by sections describing each of these themes in turn: the role of local civil society organisations, the attitudes towards youth, the relationship between NGOs and government, and the role and perception of INGOs.

6.2.1 Views on the role of youth organisations and local civil society organisations

As discussed in section 6.1.1, all the youth organisations had as one of their aims to promote the participation of youth in decision-making at all levels, including enhancing the role of youth within civil society itself. All the youth organisations interviewed saw themselves as an important part of civil society in Malawi, as organisations speaking on behalf of "general people" and in particular youth, attempting to hold the government to account, raising awareness and contributing to development. One of the staff of the youth organisations however changed his mind during the interview – first, he did not see youth as part of civil society, but then as he was explaining why, he found that they could be:

> Youth groups – are they part of civil society? I may not straight away say so. They are, in a way, because they are affected and they have issues. They may be seen as the groups that civil society speak for. They are not civil society so to speak, they are right holders on the worse side of the partnership (…) We have civil society, we have the oppressed, we have the oppressors (…) but then, youth could also speak on behalf of the oppressed. So we may see the youth groups as civil society organisations.

When the youth organisations explained their role, there was a particular focus on "sensitization" of other youth and community members, "reaching out" and "preaching" to them with information.

The youth organisations also pointed out challenges that hindered the youth organisations in fulfilling this role. One important challenge was related to lack of coordination and cooperation amongst civil society organisations. One of the youth organisations said:

> It is a problem – too many NGOs in Malawi. Too many CBOs [Community-Based Organisations], too many youth groups. The impact of civil society is low. If we were more organised, more coordinated (…) we could do more. But there is not such good

partnerships, not so good coordination. The actual sitting down and sharing is not

there (…) it looks like we are one, but on the ground, we are not together.

When I asked why this was the case, I was told that "organisations are focusing more on getting funding than implementing their activities. They fear that cooperation might lead to the other organisations securing the same funding".

Plan staff expressed similar views on the role of youth organisations, they saw them as playing an important role in civil society by representing the concerns of youth, contributing to holding the government to account, and reaching out to other youth and community members with information and services. Plan staff also recognized the challenges of lack of cooperation and coordination: "The lack of coordination among them [local civil society] – it is the biggest challenge. They channel resources all over the place. Leads to messy partnerships and modes of delivery. It is not so well organised". Plan staff also mentioned the challenge that many of the organisations did not really have credibility and legitimacy as youth organisations, and were set up purely with the purpose of accessing resources:

Some youth organisations – they are in touch with youth mainly on paper. They

implement a small activity in a small village; make noise in a small forum. But they

are not very much in touch (…) Most of the organisations (…) choose Lilongwe [the

capitol] as their catchment area. But greater percentage of youth are in rural areas.

(…) There is less faith in local organisations – most organisations are structured

around – you know – making money, and this and that. That is a fact.

Another Plan staff summarized it in a more nuanced way: "Some youth groups are seen as just a way to make money. Some see youth groups as having the potential for great influence, youth can also be seen as agents of change".

To summarize, youth organisations generally see themselves as a part of civil society, speaking on behalf of youth and contributing to holding the government to account. They face some important challenges related to fulfilling this role, many of which are related to the general state of civil society in Malawi. It also was mentioned that there are too many organisations, competing for resources, which makes cooperation difficult and limits the impact of efforts from local civil society organisations. Further, there are issues related to the representativeness and legitimacy of some organisations, as most are based in urban areas, and many are set up with the purpose of making money.

6.2.2 Local civil society organisations and the government

When it comes to the role of local civil society organisations vis-à-vis the government, there was some disagreement amongst the youth organisations as well as Plan staff. One youth organisation explained how they saw the local NGOs such as themselves as organisations who were both working together with and being a check on the government, as local NGOs "are in one way or another helping the government to implement projects and services, help in development (…) and also, help in making sure human rights are observed, help make the government in check and doing its duties". Other youth organisations, however, said that disagreeing with the government could put the organisation and individuals within it at risk, although not fatal risk. One youth organisation said: "the government can threaten you – they can burn your house, but they can not kill you". Another youth organisation stated that "politics in Malawi is a dangerous game (…) if the media start speaking out, they might have to close". But they did also emphasise that they were not worried about raising issues, although careful about how to do it: "We have to be careful about the approach. For example when discussing corruption - instead of focusing on persons directly, we would discuss the budget, look at numbers, question who is supposed to be responsible".

Plan staff saw the main risk towards NGOs not as threats, but rather co-option from the government: "Organisations may be very strong – but once a person gets vocal, the government pulls them aside and corrupts them. Suddenly, they become totally silent". Others claimed that NGOs in Malawi were strong, well respected, and could operate freely without interference. One youth organisation explained that "Civil society is becoming visible and strong. Networks and individual organisations. They speak up, especially during elections". Plan staff confirmed this, stating that the government should also support local NGOs:

> The environment is guided by the NGO act, guiding the formation of NGOs in the country. It is also supposed to help sustainability – the government is supposed to support local NGOs, but that does not happen. But the government generally does not interfere directly with the work of NGOs. They are well respected.

So, the youth organisations see their role vis-à-vis the government as one of cooperation and partnership, as well as holding them accountable. There were some different views on the level of restriction from the side of the government – some claimed organisations in civil society were free to raise any issues, others claimed that organisations had to be very careful with the approach adopted. Plan staff also mentioned the problem of local organisations

being co-opted by the government, as a way to silence them.

6.2.3 Views on youth in Malawi

An important theme that was raised by all respondents was the general attitude towards and perception of youth. It was claimed that youth are seen as idle and promiscuous, involved in drinking, behaving irresponsibly and making trouble. One youth organisation said: "They [youth] easily get into drug abuse, prostitution, and so on (…) young people are hanging around town doing nothing. (…) they just wait for someone to come and give them something. They are not visionary, not entrepreneurial". This view of youth as being irresponsible, combined with traditional attitudes of not listening to young people, results in youth finding it difficult to be taken seriously. One youth organisation explained: "Due to traditional attitudes – young people have been subdued, their intellectual capacity is not recognized (…) young people are not recognized as able to make contribution (…) our tradition and culture does not recognize young people". Another youth organisation confirmed this, saying that: "Often, youth are scared to voice their concerns in the community around adults – unless they are told to speak (…) some young people can stand up – but not everybody. Youth do not have a voice". This was also confirmed by Plan staff: "traditional leaders say that – if youth say something, they will say 'here is nothing you can tell us'". Although Plan staff discussed the importance of challenging these traditional attitudes, observing the interactions between Plan staff and youth indicated that some Plan staff also had similar attitudes. Especially, the one focus group discussion described in section 4.3.2, where the Plan staff continuously interrupted youth in order to talk on their behalf and clear up "misunderstandings" which in reality were simply difference of opinion, showed that traditional attitudes can also be persistent within the organisations that seek to challenge them.

An important element of the negative attitudes towards youth was that they were often involved in violence. According to one youth organisation, "the biggest challenge is how most adults perceive youth (…) Most adults think that youth are volatile, violent (…) they cannot contribute to development". As discussed in chapter two, throughout Malawi's history, youth have been involved in violence, either because they have been brainwashed or because they have been manipulated in other ways. This was the case during the Banda dictatorship, as well as during the multi-party era (Englund, 2002, p. 13, 2006, p. 80). This was mentioned as an important challenge by many of the organisations. One youth organisation said: "youth

have been used and abused – politicians and those in power have used them for their own benefit. During multiparty democracy – parties used young people to harass opponents". This was confirmed by one of the youth networks: "in the past, political parties would use them to start fights. Because of that, people think they can not contribute to development now (…) the problem is our leaders – they manipulate youth. It is the politicians who are irresponsible. They try to woe us". Plan staff also saw this as an important challenge:

> Youth may be made to demonstrate, strike, go into the streets – but when all is well, they are forgotten. They have been used to address the agenda of other political parties – they will go and throw stones at other political rallies. Youth can be easily seduced due to their financial stand, their lack of economic empowerment.

Just as youth have been manipulated for political purposes, both youth organisations and Plan staff mentioned that youth have been manipulated by other actors, such as NGOs. The findings related to this are discussed below in section 6.2.4.

Plan staff also mentioned that they thought youth could be perceived as a threat because of higher education levels than the rest of their community:

> Most people in committees – do not have same level of education as youth. Youth will talk about new innovation. Many adults – they don't know. Youth look brighter, have higher levels of understanding. Fear of the unknown – sometimes they [youth] are very bright, adults fear they might take over.

Based on the discussion with the youth organisations as well as with Plan, it is clear that the way in which youth are viewed in Malawi influence how youth organisations are perceived and their ability to achieve their aims. Youth are often viewed as lazy, promiscuous and potential troublemakers. Youth involvement in violence was seen as an important challenge, especially as this is often a result of being manipulated by political leaders, as has been the case throughout Malawi's history. It was also found that according to traditional culture, the voices of youth are not recognized as worth listening to, which made it difficult for the youth to be heard and taken seriously. Finally, the higher education levels of youth combined with their relatively higher knowledge of new technologies led to some adults seeing them as a threat. Combined, these challenges were to a considerable degree influencing the way in which youth organisations were perceived, and therefore also their ability to carry out their activities and achieve their aims. However, as discussed in 6.1.1, the aims of the youth organisations and networks is exactly to challenge and change those negative perceptions, and

show how youth can contribute positively to society.

6.2.4 How Plan and International NGOs are perceived

The youth organisations' perceptions of INGOs were rather similar. They explained how their role should be to support and strengthen local organisations, and that many of them attempted this. However, the youth organisations also said that the INGOs try to operate as local NGOs:

> The international organisations – most of them wear two faces. (…) They want to be local civil society organisations when it comes to how to spend resources - they want to implement themselves rather than doing it through partners. Save The Children, ActionAid, Africare – all operate like local NGOs. They are supposed to do the technical support, the finance and so on. The role of the internationals should be to support local issues and local advocates.

Some youth organisations also mentioned the sustainability challenges mentioned in section 6.1.3, of INGOs building the capacity of local NGOs, but then staff moving on to the INGOs: "Organisation built their capacity – then they were poached. Organisations [INGOs] can provide 10 times the salary. In the local NGOs, you lose institutional memory, capacity, and so on". Further, it was perceived by the youth organisations as if INGOs were not really willing to strengthen local NGOs to the point where they could actually compete: "They [INGOs] have not built capacity for them [local NGOs] to stand on their own and even compete with them".

Plan staff saw their own role as one of supporting and strengthening local civil society, especially in terms of building their capacity and support processes of coordination. One Plan staff explained how this capacity building had been very successful:

> Most INGOs are giving out their money to local NGOs. International NGOs have helped to build the capacity of local NGOs of how to advocate, how to do resource mobilization - was very difficult in the past. There has been a shift - from INGOs implementing to sub-granting – has put civil society on the map, has built their capacity to implement projects and so on.

They also explained how they see Plan as a part of national civil society, who sometimes steps up as a voice, and other times supports the local organisations to do so:

> Plan is a civil society organisation. Come forward when things are not going well for children, use their strength to influence. Plan would be referred to as a part of civil society. Works with other organisations, and plays a role independently. Sometimes,

Plan may choose to be out of discussion, to be not part of the activities of civil society (…) We depend on our partners, who are key in civil society.

Some of the respondents, both within Plan and the youth organisations, stated that the community members rarely knew the difference between different types of organisations, and therefore did not perceive them differently. One youth organisation said: "The grassroots – they do not know the difference between different CSOs (Civil Society Organisations) or between Plan and other organisations. They do not distinguish". Most of the respondents, however, claimed that the community did know the difference, and some claimed that community members had more faith in the INGOs than in the local organisations. One Plan staff explained:

INGOs are well respected, and seen as less corrupt. They complement government, are seen as development organisations (…) Local organisations – seen as less dependable, they do activities to create money for their own. People do not have confidence in them. Local NGOs are only seen to do work when they get money – when they don't, they do not work (…) They are seen to drive expensive cars, personal ones. INGO staff never drives fancy personal cars.

Interestingly, the youth organisations as well as Plan staff also said that the community had more faith in local organisations when it came to raising issues and concerns important to them: "they trust us [local NGOs] when it comes to talking of issues they think are important, but not to implement their needs". This was also confirmed by Plan staff: "When it comes to advocacy, people have more faith in the local NGOs. They trust them to carry forward their agenda. They are seen as strategic, acting in good faith – people want to see them engaging much more".

The youth organisations also claimed that local organisations had more credibility in the eyes of the government, and can therefore have a greater influence and impact through those channels. Endorsing views and receiving criticism from INGOs was seen as embarrassing to the government, and it was claimed by youth organisations that they would be less likely to listen:

For example Plan's research – the child labour study – if local organisations had done it, it would have more credibility. The government just looks at the internationals and say 'they have the money' (…) It often takes longer for government to endorse advocacy from International NGOs – do not want INGOs to have the glory, even when

the issue is sensible.

It was also mentioned that INGOs have to sign Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with the government in order to be allowed to operate in Malawi, and it was claimed that these MOUs restrict what areas INGOs can address, especially when it comes to governance and political issues: "International NGOs form part of civil society but have to sign MOU with government, which restricts them. They cannot properly address governance and political issues".

As discussed in chapter 2, youth have been manipulated by those with power throughout Malawi's history, particularly within politics. And as described in in section 6.2.3 above, youth are particularly vulnerable to this manipulation and exploitation because they have limited financial resources. It was claimed by many of the youth organisations as well as Plan staff that also NGOs and INGOs manipulate youth for their own purposes in Malawi. One Plan staff mentioned that "the NGO sector see it [youth] as a stream of funding". One youth organisation further explained:

> The international NGOs – they are exploitative (…) They identify youth clubs – the clubs do not have negotiating power. The youth clubs are used as mobilizers - International NGOs find them handy. (…) They go voluntarily if they get bottles of Fanta – that is not volunteering. They buy them with bottles of Fanta.

Another youth organisation elaborated:

> International NGOs have not worked very well to build the capacity of local youth NGOs for them to be independent. Sometimes they [INGOs] kind of use them [youth NGOs] (…) Most of them are not directly in touch with youth on the ground (…) Malawi has a controversial history – challenges are that youth are not empowered. Easily become vulnerable – can be used instead of being involved. We are happy to see young people to participate in politics, demonstrations, and so on – but it depends if they do it based on their own motivation.

This section has presented the findings related to how Plan and INGOs are perceived. It was clear agreement between Plan staff and youth organisations that they role should be to strengthen and support the local actors in civil society. However, there was disagreement with regards to what extent this was actually happening. Several youth organisations claimed that INGOs as well as Plan also wanted to play the role of a local organisation, and were not building the capacity of local actors to the point where they could actually compete with

them. Plan also stated that they sometimes play an independent role as a local civil society actor, depending on the issue at hand, but that the local civil society organisations were most important. When it comes to perceptions from the community, most claimed that the community view INGOs and local organisations differently, and have more faith in INGOs when it comes to service delivery and resource management, but more faith in local organisations when it comes to raising issues on their behalf. Local organisations were also seen as having more credibility in the eyes of the government. Importantly, it was also mentioned by the youth organisations that they saw some INGOs, including Plan, as sometimes manipulating and "using" youth for their own purposes. Youth were seen as particularly vulnerable to being used in this way, due to the history of political manipulation as well as their lack of economic empowerment.

6.3 Summary of empirical findings

Being supported by Plan makes the youth organisations and networks able to do more, in terms of realising their aims of promoting the participation of youth, enhancing democratic governance and influencing the decision-makers, contributing to their communities and improve the livelihood opportunities of youth. However, it also influences what issues they work on, as well as in which geographical areas they work on them.

Cooperating with Plan enhances their capacity as organisations, in terms of material resources, the skills and capacity of staff, and the ability to meet donor requirements. One important challenge is however that the organisations supported are already quite strong, and based in urban areas. Supporting weaker organisations in rural areas is seen as risky, as they might not be able to meet donor requirements, and they are therefore filtered out through Plan's "due diligence" process. Another challenge was the systems by which the material support was being provided. A complicated system leads to delays, which again leads to uneven implementation of activities.

The support from Plan poses risks in terms of continuity and sustainability. As staff and members of organisations and networks are supported and trained, they also become more attractive to other organisations, including aid agencies and INGOs, and may be "poached". Also, the youth networks and some of the youth organisations rely heavily on Plan for support. The networks are fully dependent on Plan, but most of the youth organisations have a broader funding base. Plan also provides some support to enable organisations to seek support

from other agencies and organisations. There is however little focus on fundraising from local sources, so although the stronger organisations are able to access aid through various channels, they are still completely dependent on aid in order to function. From a long-term development perspective, this is clearly problematic, in terms of the ability of local civil society organisations to stand on their own feet.

Material support is closely linked to the motivation of youth to join and set up organisations and networks. A strong motivation of youth to join networks was to improve their own position, both in terms of getting some financial allowances, and to improve their skills to make them more likely to get good jobs in the future. It seemed as if the "aid industry" is a highly attractive employer within Malawi, and an important likely source of income one way or another. The motivation for financial improvement was expressed less explicitly by the youth organisations, but I did not get the impression that it was any less important. The prospect of financial support provided by Plan, especially when in the form of allowances or salaries, thus heavily influences people's motivations to become involved with organisations and networks as well as the motivation for setting them up in the first place. Based on the findings, it seemed to lead to more people being involved, but lower levels of commitment to the actual purpose and aim of the organisation or network.

Support from Plan also influences relationships with stakeholders, and this is linked to the relationship Plan has to the community. In communities where the trust in Plan is lower, often due to how the transition to a rights-based organisation was not being managed in a way they could understand or agree with, this seemed to reflect negatively on the local organisations and networks, as it led to confusion in the community. Further, a lack of commitment to and understanding of this transition from Plan staff led to challenges in the partnership between youth organisations and Plan.

When it comes to how they view their respective roles as actors within civil society, most of the youth organisations saw themselves as an important part of local civil society. The local youth organisations and networks seem to see themselves as representing and speaking on behalf of the rest of their communities and youth within it, but they also see themselves as set apart from them. This is indicated by how they say they "reach out to" and "preach to" other youth and the community members. The youth organisations also recognized that local civil society was crowded by too many organisations, often competing against each other instead

of cooperating and coordinating, even when they work on the same issues. This lack of coordination and cooperation was seen as a result of competing for the same funding.

Another important factor when it comes to understanding the role of youth organisations within civil society in Malawi was the general attitudes towards and views of youth. Youth tend to be viewed negatively, as lazy, promiscuous and potential troublemakers, often involved in violence. The manipulating of youth by political leaders, as has been the case throughout Malawi's history, is important for understanding these perceptions. It was also found that according to traditional culture, the voices of youth are not recognized as worth listening to. Furthermore, youth's relatively higher education level and familiarity with new technology compared to adults made them seen as a threat. Combined, these challenges were influencing the way in which youth organisations were perceived, their ability to carry out their activities and achieve their aims. The support from Plan is aiming to contribute to changing this situation, by showing how youth can contribute positively to their communities.

INGOs, including Plan, were perceived as aiming to build the capacity of local organisations and let them address issues at local and national levels. There were disagreements as to whether or not they succeed at this. Most youth organisations claimed that the INGOs, including Plan, were still playing a dual role, both supporting local organisations and at times behaving like local organisations themselves. They also claimed that the communities had more faith in INGOs when it came to resource management and doing things that benefit them, whereas the local organisations were viewed with some suspicion with regards to resource management, but with greater trust when it came to raising issues on behalf of the community. This is a perception based on interviews with organisations, youth networks and Plan, and confirmed by other key informants, but it would of course be necessary to interview also a sample of various community members to see whether this is a correct or misguided perception. Another important finding was related to the manipulation of youth. Throughout Malawi's history, youth have been manipulated, often by being given access to resources. It was claimed that some INGOs, including Plan, could be seen as manipulating youth and "using" them for their own advantage.

7. Analysis of findings

The findings presented in chapter 6 are here analysed through a theoretically informed thematic analysis, focusing on key themes and concepts identified in the literature review: How to understand civil society in Africa and Malawi, and civil society as an arena for participation, the promotion of accountability, and the creation and maintenance of social capital. This will be analysed whilst also taking into account the particular historical and political context in Malawi. Such a thematic analysis serves a dual purpose. A theoretical analysis of the empirical findings enables a deeper understanding of the particular case in question, the cooperation between Plan and youth associations in Malawi. It also allows us to suggest some analytical generalizations regarding how aid might influence the development of civil society in Malawi and in other developing countries.

7.1 Civil society in Malawi - aid dependence, challenges of legitimacy and government restrictions.

The empirical findings give us a better understanding of how civil society functions in Malawi. It provides greater insight into how aid funding strengthens particular types of civil society organisations, influences the choices they make, and what motivates people to join them and set them up. It also provides greater insight into the role of INGOs such as Plan in Malawi's civil society, as well as the relationship between the government and various civil society actors.

As discussed in section 3.3.2, civil society in African countries consists of a wide range of very different actors, including various traditional groups based on kinship and ethnicity, religious groups and more "modern" organisations addressing human rights and development issues, often supported by international actors such as INGOs or donors (Fukuyama, 2000, pp. 4–5; Hyden, 2010, pp. 253–4). This case study focuses on the latter type of organisations and networks, as they were all set up with aid-support, and maintained through aid. The organisations supported by Plan Malawi have a lot in common; they aim to address similar issues to each other as well to Plan. Naturally, Plan Malawi are selecting organisations to cooperate with based on whether they agree with their aims and strategies, and invest considerable amount of funding and resources into strengthening their capacity, as discussed in section 6.1.2. Selection is however based not only on the aims and strategies of

organisations, but also on their capacity to implement and meet the demands from donors when it comes to reporting and accounting. This selection is done through the "due diligence" process, which is used to identify which organisations to engage in larger-scale partnerships with, so it does not apply to the youth networks, who receive only small amounts of activity-based funding. The partnership between Plan Malawi and local youth associations thus contributes to building and strengthening a specific type of actors within civil society in Malawi. This is important, because a lot of INGOs and donors including Plan Malawi aim to contribute to "strengthening civil society" (Plan Malawi, 2012, pp. 18, 24–25), but overlook the fact that they are not attempting to strengthen civil society as such, but to strengthen particular elements within it. In the case of Plan Malawi and the youth associations in this study, it contributes to strengthening actors who work on particular issues, such as child right and youth empowerment, but also to strengthen a specific type of organisations who meet the criteria of the "due diligence" process. This leads to a bias towards supporting rather large organisations based in urban areas, as opposed to smaller organisations in rural areas that may be more representative, but have less capacity to meet donor requirements. This is in line with Fukuyama's claim that aid may support mainly the local elites who are good at proposal-writing (Fukuyama, 2001, p. 18).

The organisations and networks in this case study all have aims related to youth empowerment, both in terms of political participation, participation in their communities, the improvement of livelihood opportunities and skills development. Which particular aims they focus on, and *how* and *where* they do it, is however highly influenced by the cooperation with Plan. Although Plan staff recognized that their role is supposed to be to support the youth in what they aim to do, Plan is restricted in terms of what they can support and where, based on where their funding comes from. Grants from donors tend to be geographically and thematically restricted, sponsorship funds are only geographically restricted. Plan seemed to use the opportunity provided by sponsorship funds to support the youth networks to carry out activities of their own choice.

The literature suggests that civil society organisations in Africa often are highly aid-dependent (Bratton, 1994, pp. 7–8; Hyden, 2010, p. 253). This was also found in this case study. The organisations and networks are not only influenced by Plan in their choices, they are highly dependent on aid – from Plan or other donors and INGOs - to carry out any activities at all. They are dependent in terms of funding for staff (for the organisations, the

networks do not have staff), buildings, materials and transport. They also see themselves as dependent in terms of enhancing the capacity of their own staff, particularly to meet the reporting and accounting requirements of donors, despite the fact that Plan selects partners who already have quite a high level of capacity in this regard. The youth networks were completely dependent on Plan (although Plan aimed for them to become independent), whereas the youth organisations were dependent on a set of INGOs and donors. Even when Plan engaged in capacity-building efforts to make them more independent of Plan, it seemed to reinforce aid-dependence overall. Supporting them to apply for funding from others reduces dependence on Plan, but reinforces aid-dependence in general, as there was little focus on the local generation of funds. As also mentioned within the literature on civil society in Malawi (Booth et al., 2006, p. 16), providing training to staff make them more likely to be "poached" by INGOs and donors, leaving the organisations behind with a continued need for skilled staff. The theory on civil society brings out a number of challenges related to aid-dependence, many of which are relevant in this study, as will be discussed below.

Aid-dependence of the organisations and networks implies a lack of autonomy of organisations and networks, and can limit their credibility, local support and legitimacy (Bratton, 1994, pp. 7–8; Edwards & Hulme, 1996, p. 966). This is compounded by the well-known case of the "briefcase NGOs" who are only set up in order to access funds (Mkandawire, 2010, pp. 1162–63). Although I did not see any indications of the associations in this case study being "briefcase NGOs", it was clear that the opportunity to access funds, gaining employment and improving livelihood were important motivating factors. This is only natural in a context where most people struggle to make ends meet, and does not imply that the youth involved in the organisations and networks are not also committed to the "cause". Combined, the aid dependence of organisations, the livelihood-based motivations for people to become involved and the existence of "briefcase NGOs" can lead to people viewing local civil society actors with suspicion. As discussed in section 6.2.1, the findings revealed that youth organisations and Plan both thought the communities were sceptical to local NGOs, believing they were set up with the purpose of accessing funds, and spending money on themselves.

Another challenge related to aid dependence is the lack of domestic "rooted-ness" of foreign funded NGOs (Hyden, 1997, p. 19). When it comes to the youth organisations and networks in this case study, one could argue that they are not "rooted" in Malawian society, because as

described in chapter 5, they are all relatively new, set up in the mid-to-late 90's, and with the support of aid. However, considering that independent organisations were not allowed until multi-party democracy in 1994 (Anders, 2002, p. 44; Eidhammer, 2005, pp. 38, 79), and that the transition to multi-party democracy coincided with an increased interest from donors in democracy, human rights and civil society organisations in Malawi (Booth et al., 2006, p. 16), most civil society organisations are set up with the support of aid, simply because aid was available at the time it was allowed to set up organisations. In this sense, the organisations lack "rooted-ness" because they are relatively new and set up with support from abroad, but that does not necessarily imply that they are not legitimate representatives of people in Malawi. In order to assess that, it is necessary to take a closer look at their activities, and explore the views within the communities they are supposed to represent. A deeper exploration of the legitimacy and credibility of local organisations in the eyes of the communities in which they work, and how this is influenced by aid, is one recommendation for further research.

Although it seemed that local civil society actors were viewed with suspicion when it comes to resources management, and were in that regard seen as less credible than INGOs, it was also claimed that communities had more faith in the local actors when it comes to raising issues of their concern (see section 6.2.4). Further, the local actors were also viewed as more credible when it came to influencing the Malawian government, who was seen as unwilling to "give in" to demands from INGOs and donors, irrespective of the issue itself. Plan as well as the youth organisations and networks were not quite in agreement regarding to the relationship with government. Whereas all saw the government as an important partner as well as someone to influence and hold to account, as discussed in section 6.2.2, there were different views on whether the government was restricting the space within which civil society organisations operate. Some claimed there were no such restrictions; others claimed you had to be very careful both in terms of what issues you addressed as well as the approach taken. Human Rights organisations working in Malawi have suggested that the government has moved towards more restrictive policies towards civil society during the last few years (CIVICUS, 2012; Trócaire, 2012), which fits within a broader trend discussed within the academic literature, of more restrictions towards civil society organisations across Sub-Saharan Africa (Bates, 2010). The events in 2011 discussed in chapter 2, with great popular unrest and violent demonstrations in Malawi which included arrests and about twenty deaths (Cammack, 2011, pp. 9–10), also indicates greater tension in the relationship between civil

society organisations and the government. In addition, organisations in Malawi as in most of Africa are required to register and get approval from the government in order to carry out any activities at all (Pinkney, 2003, pp. 211–12) Against this background, I was quite puzzled by how these issues were only briefly mentioned by the organisations in this case study, and that there overall did not seem to be great restrictions on their operations. That might be because their activities were less controversial and seen as less threatening by the government, but it might also be related to what Banik defines as a "self-regulating mechanism of self-censorship", resulting from a fear of the government (Banik, 2010, p. 46). To what extent such a culture of self-censorship, a fear of the government and restrictions related to particular themes or issues influences civil society in Malawi is another recommendation for further research.

7.2 Youth participation – shaped by economic motivation, manipulation, and negative attitudes

The empirical findings in this thesis show that all the partnerships between Plan and different youth organisations and networks in this case study aim to promote the participation of youth – in their communities, in politics and governance, and in the local economy (see section 6.1.1). The aim of this part of the analysis is not to assess to what extent these efforts are successful in terms of achieving their aims, but rather to take a broader look at how the efforts to promote youth participation through the partnerships between Plan and youth associations play out, and what implications this has for our understanding of civil society in Malawi.

The Plan-supported activities related to participation implemented by the youth organisations and networks take different forms, and have different aims. Some are related to political participation, such as engaging with local government officials to get information about and influence policies and budgets, or engaging with student councils or the youth parliament in order to raise issues and influence decision. Based on a pluralistic approach to citizenship, where citizenship is based on participation and agency (Gaventa, 2002), these efforts can be seen as aiming to promote youth citizenship. Importantly, as discussed in section 7.1 above, aid funding channelled through partnerships with INGOs such as Plan shape how these initiatives play out. It influences which actors initiate them and take the lead, as well as the choices they make about what issues to address and where to do so. This leads to challenges related to legitimacy and credibility of such initiatives to promote youth participation and citizenship, as it raises the questions of who participates, and why they choose to focus on

particular issues. This is yet another issue that would be worthwhile to explore in further research – how aid influences citizenship in highly aid-dependent countries. Does it lead to greater participation only for those already privileged, in terms of education and access to resources (Brinkerhoff & Crosby, 2002), or does it, as suggested by Pinkney, give a voice to groups who are usually not heard (Pinkney, 2003, p. 98)?

Although there was a lot of focus on how Plan supports youth associations to participate on their own terms within the interviews and focus group discussions, as discussed in section 6.1.1, it also became clear that Plan staff are involving youth in activities to support the achievement of Plan's aims. One example is the involvement of youth in sponsorship activities. These are purely practical activities such as the collection and distribution of letters related to Plan's communication with sponsors and sponsored children; it is not related to the overall aims of the youth organisations and networks, beyond the fact that some of the youth networks are being funded from sponsorship funds. It could also be understood as a way to provide economic empowerment through livelihood support, as the youth receive some allowance for such activities. From the perspective of Plan staff, it was seen as a win-win situation, they are being useful to Plan and receive something they need in return. Also for other activities implemented in cooperation with Plan such as meetings and workshops, there was generally some kind of "allowance" from Plan involved, and this was a key motivating factor as discussed in section 6.1.4. This allowance could be seen as a way to compensate for the opportunity costs of participation, as participation always entails a cost of time, resources or risk (Brinkerhoff & Crosby, 2002, pp. 61–62). However, in the context of Malawi, this seems to have rather perverse effects, because the compensation often outweighs the opportunity cost. My impression from the interviews was that youth could get more income from allowance given at meetings, than from actually working (if they are lucky enough to have a job). This becomes a challenge for participation initiatives, because the issues at stake become less important than the allowance provided. It is also highly problematic from a wider perspective of economic development, as it becomes more attractive to find a way to access aid than to actually have a job in the "real" economy – thereby reinforcing the aid dependence of Malawi overall.

The involvement of youth in activities that are "useful" to Plan as well as the provision of allowances becomes more problematic when seen in the light of the history of manipulation of youth in Malawi, as discussed in chapter 2. Adults in positions of power officially

promoting youth engagement and participation, but in reality using youth for their own aims, have been an important part of Malawi's history (Phiri, 2000). The Malawi Young Pioneers is a key example. Officially, they were started in order to empower youth and strengthen their ability to contribute to development; but in reality, youth were brainwashed into loyalty and obedience, and used as instruments of surveillance, oppression and violence (Eidhammer, 2005; Mapanje, 2002). In the era of multiparty democracy, political leaders are "buying" youth with money and alcohol to speak out and support them, to carry out violent demonstrations, and to harass opponents (Englund, 2006). In a historical and political context where youth are so accustomed to being "used and abused", the claim by youth organisations that manipulation is also being done by INGOs (discussed in section 6.2.4) is perhaps not so surprising. If the youth are used to their engagement and participation being "bought" by adults, why should they view INGOs differently?

This needs to be understood not just within a historical and political context, but also within an economic context. It is not surprising that economic motivation was so important, considering that Malawi is an extremely poor country, with high levels of unemployment (Banik, 2010, p. 35). The lack of economic empowerment of youth make them more vulnerable to manipulation, from any actors who can provide access to resources. Hence, ironically, the efforts by Plan to promote their economic empowerment such as for example helping out with sponsorship activities and receiving an allowance, could also be seen as a way of "using" youth for their own purposes. The lesson here is not that these particular activities are big problems in themselves, but that youth are highly unlikely to decline involvement in activities that can provide access to resources, irrespectively of whether the activities have anything to do with addressing issues they have identified as important. Further, efforts by INGOs to promote economic empowerment such as providing small allowances in exchange for activities may enhance dependency rather than lead to long-term economic empowerment.

Another important factor shaping the participation initiatives by Plan and the youth organisations and networks was the views and attitudes towards youth in Malawi. As discussed in section 6.2.3, the empirical findings clearly show that youth face negative attitudes in Malawi. They are seen as irresponsible, promiscuous, violent and lazy. Such cultivation of negative images of youth can become an important barrier to their participation (Youniss et al., 2003, p. 138). However, these negative attitudes did not seem to lead to

isolation of youth in the communities, as suggested by empirical research from the US (Jarrett et al., 2004, p. 42). Another barrier to the participation of youth was how they were not seen as worth listening to, according to traditional attitudes where they are not recognized as being able to make a contribution. The youth participation activities were seen as a way to challenge and change those attitudes. However, one problem here is that such traditional attitudes take a long time to change, and even seemed to persist amongst some Plan staff. Another interesting finding was how Plan was very focused on formalizing youth networks, aiming for them to "graduate" into proper, registered NGOs. On the one hand, this could be seen as a way of strengthening arenas for youth participation. On the other hand, it can be seen as an indication of seeing them as "citizens of the future" (Roche, 1996, p. 479), where their participation in youth groups and networks is seen as important because the focus then is to train them to become part of civil society in the future, as opposed to participating now.

This has implications beyond this particular case study. Any organisation or donor bringing in funds to support youth to exercise their right to participate in Malawi need to be aware of the history of manipulation of youth participation, and the economic context where access to resources is a primary motivation. Furthermore, it is important to be aware of the prevailing negative attitudes towards youth, as well as those of seeing youth as not worth listening to, or seeing youth as citizens of the future. Combined, these factors make youth easy targets for manipulation. On the other hand, it might be misleading to portray the youth as passive victims being manipulated. The way in which they shift the focus of their organisations and networks in order to access resources could itself be seen as a form of empowerment – they are using the power at their disposal to gain access to the resources they need. However, it is important to remember the imbalance of power between funders and recipients (Mercer, 2003, p. 748). At the end of the day, the youth organisations and networks are – or at least, see themselves as - dependent on the donors in order to promote the participation of youth.

7.3 Accountability – influenced by politics, patronage, power and transition.

As described in sections 3.2.2 and 3.3.4, one of the key roles of civil society organisations is to hold the government and others with power accountable, and in that sense be a part of the checks and balances in a democratic system. And as discussed in section 6.1.1, all the youth organisations interviewed saw it as an important part of their role to hold the government accountable, enhance transparency in decision-making and engaging in governance initiatives. The youth networks were less explicit about this aim, but did mention engagement

with local decision-makers in order to find out what they do and how they spend money. In other words, they initiate and engage in bottom-up strategies to enhance political accountability of decision-makers at various levels (Newell & Bellour, 2002), sometimes also referred to as "policy accountability" (Ackerman, 2007, pp. 31–32). Plan sees their role as one of supporting youth organisations and networks in these efforts.

In order to gain better insight into how these attempts to enhance political accountability play out, it is important to see it within the context of Malawi's history and politics. As discussed in chapter 2, the multi-party era has been characterised by political chaos and confusion, with political leaders changing allegiances and parties as they see fit. Also, political leaders have generally not been held accountable for acts of repression in the aftermath of the dictatorship as well as during more recent events such as the deaths during the demonstrations in 2011 (Briggs, 2010, p. 19; Mapanje, 2002, pp. 178–79; Sharra, 2013). Further, it is important to note the role of traditional authorities such as chiefs. According to Eggen, in addition to their traditional role they have an institutionalised role within the state, and their power and importance have been enhanced vis-à-vis the state, but without having formal mechanisms of accountability such as elections (Eggen, 2011). Combined, these factors may lead to doubts as to whether the political system itself is conducive to the promotion of political accountability.

Patronage is another important factor that influences how initiatives to promote accountability may play out. This is seen as an important part of Malawian politics and governance – resources are being controlled by "patrons", powerful individuals within the state system who use their control over resources to provide for particular groups that serve their interests (Booth et al., 2006, p. 9). This may limit the effectiveness of initiatives aiming to promote accountability, as people might be more inclined to accept corruption from a patron who provides them with access to resources. However, it is also important because it may lead to any other actors with access to and control over resources, such as INGOs, become viewed as another patron – someone to engage with, and try and build relationships to, in order for them to provide access to resources.

Accountability is also relevant when it comes to private and non-governmental actors (Newell & Bellour, 2002, pp. 19–23). This is particularly important considering the relative weakness of the state compared to actors within civil society (Whaites, 2000, pp. 130–34), as well as Malawi's aid-dependence (Banik, 2010, p. 24). Accountability is therefore important in the

relationships between youth organisations and networks and the youth they supposedly represent, in the relationship between the organisations and networks and Plan, and when it comes to Plan and their donors. According to the literature, accountability in such relationships tend to be directed upwards, towards donors (Bano, 2008; Bratton, 1994; Vakil, 1997). Further, efforts by donors aiming to enhance downward accountability tend to focus on more technical aspects such as accountancy, monitoring and evaluations (Edwards & Hulme, 1996; Mkandawire, 2010; Newell & Bellour, 2002). This corresponds well to the findings of this study discussed in sections 6.1.2 and 6.2.4, where accountability seemed to be primarily directed upwards, towards Plan and ultimately towards donors. It was found that this leads to a heavy focus on meeting donor requirements and satisfying formal criteria, on reporting and accountancy as opposed to accountability. This also implies less focus on the concerns and priorities of youth and their organisations and networks; they are less accountable to their members and interest groups in terms of raising issues they think are important. This may influence the credibility of the youth organisations in the eyes of the decision-makers and thereby limit their ability to influence them and hold them accountable, as they are seen as representing the concerns of donors and INGOs as opposed to that of young people in Malawi. In this regard, the findings support the arguments in the literature about the dubious accountability of INGOs and donor-funded NGOs (Mercer, 2003, p. 755). Irrespective of whether the organisations are genuinely attempting to be accountable also to their constituencies; they face challenges of different directions of accountability, as donors control resources, and therefore donor requirements often takes precedence over local concerns (Newell & Bellour, 2002, p. 11).

The findings indicate that Plan Malawi has a rather uncomfortable role as a middleman, being squeezed between the requirements of donors on the one hand, and the requests from the youth organisations and networks they work with on the other. As power is central to the demands for as well as the response to calls for accountability (Newell & Bellour, 2002), this "squeeze" can be understood in terms of power. Plan Malawi has power over resources vis-à-vis the youth organisations and networks they support, but the donors have power over resources vis-à-vis Plan. So, although several Plan staff expressed a wish to be able to support the youth organisations and networks to focus on their own priorities, there was a recognition that the main priority was to meet the donor requirements, make sure money gets spent, and that reports and accounts are received on time. The youth organisations and networks also raised the issue of Plan's downwards accountability, that they would like greater transparency

from Plan in terms of their decision-making and budgets. Plan Malawi's ability to support youth organisations and networks in their efforts to enhance accountability is therefore limited by the way in which this support is administered, as well as by the accountability of their own processes.

It also seems as if the transition to a rights-based approach in 2003 (see section 5.1 and 6.1.5) has led to Plan and the organisations they work with being seen as less accountable by the communities, because the communities see less visible benefits from their efforts. This is somewhat ironic, considering how accountability is a key element of the rights-based approach to development (Uvin, 2007, p. 2007). The findings do however suggest that this is primarily due to the way this process of transition was administered as well as a lack of commitment to this new approach from some staff, as opposed to a result of the rights-based approach itself. As such a transition of approach was common amongst a wide range of development actors in the early 2000's (Banik, 2010, p. 34; Uvin, 2007, pp. 601–02), it would be interesting to explore further how such a transition is viewed from the communities in which the work takes place, and what implications this has for how the accountability of the organisations is perceived.

This analysis is relevant beyond the organisations and networks being the focus for this analysis. When organisations are more accountable towards donors than towards citizens, it limits their credibility in terms of promoting the accountability of government. Further, in an environment such as Malawi, where the resources of INGOs are relatively high compared to the resources of government, working to enhance the downwards accountability of these INGOs towards the communities in which they work may be equally relevant as promoting government accountability. Also, when development organisations change the way they work in a community in a way that is not well-communicated or agreed with, this has implications for how they are viewed by the community, which may undermine the very purpose of changing the approach.

7.4 Social capital – how aid influence cooperation and trust.

In this thesis, social capital is defined according to Putnam's definition, consisting of "the features of social organisations, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (Putnam et al., 1993, p. 167). The

empirical findings shed more light on how these features play out in Malawi's civil society, and how they are influenced by the cooperation between Plan and youth associations, as well as by aid more broadly. An overall finding was that being a part of groups and organisations was seen as a good thing in itself by the youth, as they could share, discuss, cooperate and learn from each other – in other words, develop networks for and norms of cooperation.

Some of the findings were related to trust between different actors in civil society, as well as between civil society groups and the communities they work with or represent. As has been discussed previously in this analysis, it was claimed by the local organisations as well as Plan that the communities had more trust in Plan and other INGOs with regards to resource management and service delivery (see section 6.2.4). When it came to local organisations, they were viewed with suspicion when it came to managing resources, seen as potentially corrupt and set up for self-enrichment, but still communities had more trust in them than in INGOs if it came to speaking on their behalf and raising issues of their concern. Levels of trust between Plan and the youth organisations and networks are also relevant here. As discussed in section 6.1.5, the youth organisations expressed that they did not feel trusted by some Plan staff, they felt micro-managed and as if they were told what to do. This was not a problem with all Plan staff, and seemed to be a problem particularly in some Programme Area Offices where the staff were not fully convinced of the transition to work in partnerships and cooperate with local NGOs. When the partnerships are characterized by lack of trust, this has implications for how these organisations influence trust in the communities where they work – if the youth organisations are micro-managed by Plan, they are also less able to be responsive to demands and suggestions from the community in which they work. This contributes to our understanding of trust as a component of social capital (Putnam et al., 1993, p. 167), because it shows that involvement with civil society organisations in itself do not necessarily lead to enhanced trust, that there might be different levels of trust associated with the same actors depending on the issue at stake; and that the level of trust between civil society actors has an impact on trust between the community members and these actors.

People's motivations to join and set up organisations are also important for understanding how this may influence levels of trust. As discussed in section 6.1.4, one important finding in this research was that gaining access to resources was a primary motivation of youth when it came to being members of as well as starting organisations and groups. When this is the key motivation, what impact does this have on trust, and therefore social capital? Can competition

for access to aid within and between networks and organisation erode those bonds of cooperation and trust that they are supposed to create? To respond to these questions, one could argue that irrespectively of what motivation brings youth together, the fact that they do meet and work together in a group might open their eyes to the importance of cooperation and build trust, and therefore still contribute in some way to enhance social capital. And indeed, the youth did explain that they found it a good experience to be a member of a group, to learn from each other and to cooperate. Furthermore, Hyden rightly states that mobilizing resources often is one of the purposes and functions of civil society organisations (Hyden, 1997, p. 12). However, when the primary motivation to be involved with and set up organisations and networks is to gain access to resources, this also influences how networks (in Putnam's terminology – as features of social organisations) operate. It is recognized within the literature on Malawi that many organisations are set up purely for fundraising purposes (Eggen, 2011, p. 106), and there is a lack of capacity to build horizontal networks, as well as a high level of competition amongst organisations (Banik, 2010, pp. 45–46). This is also supported by the findings of this thesis – as explained in section 6.2.1, the youth organisations as well as Plan explained that local civil society organisations often had difficulties cooperating, because they saw each other as competitors for the same resources.

These findings contribute further to our understanding of how aid may influence social capital. In one of the few empirical studies on the topic, Bano's study in Pakistan, it is concluded that that organisations receiving aid funds had a lower support base, fewer members and less credibility; hence aid may contribute to the erosion of social capital rather than its creation (Bano, 2008, p. 2310). Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to draw any strong conclusion regarding this, the analysis so far indicates some support of Bano's conclusions. Competition for resources between civil society organisations makes cooperation and coordination difficult, and maybe not even desirable as it could reduce chance of getting funding. Networks and groups seem to not only aim to facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit, as is key within the theory on social capital, but also to facilitate access to resources for individual benefit, or at least the benefit of this specific group. Further, community members seem to have little trust in local organisations, seeing them as set up for the enrichment of its own founders and staff.

According to Putnam, lack of cooperation between civil society actors is problematic because the "weak ties" connecting people accross different groups in society and thereby contributing

to social capital are not developing (Putnam et al., 1993, p. 175). High levels of competition may lead to stronger ties connecting members of a particular group, but it may also lead to greater hostility towards those outside of the group, because trust only extends to those in the same group (Fukuyama, 2000, pp. 4–5). Putnam's contrast between horizontal and vertical networks is important for understanding how the cooperation between Plan and youth associations may influence social capital. The key argument is that horizontal networks are crucial for the creation of social capital, but vertical networks may not have such a positive effect (Putnam et al., 1993, pp. 173–75). This is highly relevant, because one of the findings described in section 6.1.2 was that Plan supported the more informal youth networks by helping them to become formalized, aiming for them to become professionalised and registered as NGOs. Such formalization tends to imply more vertical structures, such as boards, chairpersons, and so on. Hence, the support from Plan aiming to strengthen the networks may simultaneously lead to them having less of a positive effect on social capital, because greater distance is created between those who make decisions, members and the community overall. This is another recommendation for further research – an exploration of how organisations with different degrees of being horizontal or vertical have different effects on social capital in a developing country context.

As discussed in section 7.3, patronage is an important factor in Malawian politics (Booth et al., 2006, p. 9), and therefore also within civil society. Patron-client relationships are vertical relationships that are seen as not conducive to the creation of social capital, because client-client relationships are characterized by competition, where as the patron-client relationship may be characterized by exploitation and shirking (Putnam, 1993, pp. 173–75). In a society where patronage is widespread such as in Malawi, any actors with control over resources, such as Plan, INGOs and donors, may become viewed as patrons. This is in line with the findings related to the competition for resources amongst local civil society organisations discussed in section 6.2.1, and the challenges in the partnerships between Plan and youth organisations related to lack of trust discussed in section 6.1.5. Civil society organisations in Malawi can thus be seen as competing clients in competition with each other, and in relationships with patrons (donors, INGOs) which are not characterized by trust and thereby not contributing positively to the creation of social capital.

8. Conclusions

So, what conclusion can we draw from this case study regarding how cooperation between INGOs and youth associations influence the development of civil society in Malawi? The overarching conclusion is that efforts to strengthen local civil society through aid may be limited or even undermined by aid itself. This is because of mechanisms inherent in the aid system, as well as how aid influences the motivations of actors within civil society. The way in which aid may undermine its own of aims of strengthening civil society can in this study be seen in four distinct ways.

Firstly, aid shapes civil society in terms of what types of actors are strengthened within it, what they do and where, and what motivates people to join and set up organisations. The cooperation between Plan and local youth associations in this case study seems to lead to the strengthening of particular types of actors within civil society, working on issues that are similar to those of Plan, based in urban areas and having quite a high level of capacity and professionalization. It also to a certain extent shapes what these actors work on and where, depending on how dependent they are on Plan compared to other funders. This leads to challenges in terms of representativeness and legitimacy. These challenges are enhanced by the fact that access to economic resources is such a crucial motivating factor for the establishment of as well as involvement in civil society organisations in general. Also for those organisations with genuine and legitimate aims, as seems to be the case in this study, access to resources and improvement of livelihood opportunities is an important motivating factor. This is not surprising in a country with such levels high of poverty and unemployment; but it leads suspicion towards local civil society actors, as people think they are set up purely in order to access funds. Further, the support they receive reinforces their dependence on aid. The associations are not able to access funds outside of the aid-system, and trained staff are quickly recruited to the international aid industry. So although cooperating with INGOs in the short run leads to enhanced capacity in terms of the ability to do more, it also reinforced dependence on aid. This contributes to the theory of civil society in developing countries, as it shows how efforts to strengthen civil society through aid may reinforce dependence.

Secondly, this study contributes to our understanding of youth participation within civil society, as it shows how efforts to facilitate youth participation may risk becoming ways of using or manipulating youth. In this particular case study, this is due to cultural, political,

historical and economic factors. Culturally, negative attitudes towards youth is a limiting factor in terms of their ability to participate within civil society, and this also seems to be the case amongst some Plan staff, leading to youth organisations and networks not feeling trusted to implement activities or contribute with their own ideas and initiatives. Historically and politically, youth have been manipulated by different powerful actors for political purposes. Economically, lack of access to resources and employment makes youth vulnerable to being used by actors with power and resources, whether these are politicians or INGOs. In this study, it was found that Plan was involving youth in activities that were purely useful to Plan, in exchange for some economic compensation. This is not to say that Plan was on purpose manipulating youth, it seemed to be done with the best intentions, aiming to contribute to improving their livelihood. Also, it is misleading to see the youth purely as passive victims – rather, they could be seen as clever agents in terms of utilizing opportunities to access resources. However, irrespective of motives on either side, the power imbalance between funder and recipient is not to be ignored, and such initiatives are unlikely to lead to the long-term empowerment of youth, as they become even more dependent on aid.

Thirdly, this study shows how aid channelled to civil society with the aim of enhancing accountability may be undermined by the mechanisms of aid itself. Within the relationships between Plan Malawi and the youth associations, it was clear that the main direction of accountability was upwards, towards Plan and ultimately towards donors. Despite calls for and efforts to be more accountable towards the communities where they work, meeting donor requirements becomes the dominant concern for Plan as well as the youth organisations, as they otherwise risk losing access to resources. In line with the aid-related accountability challenges mentioned in the literature, the ability of Plan to promote accountability through the activities with youth associations thus becomes limited by the focus on donor requirements as well as by the lack of accountability of Plan's own systems. In addition, this study adds to the existing theory on accountability and civil society, by showing how changes in approach within organisations may be important for how their accountability is perceived. Ironically, Plan's transition towards becoming a rights-based organisation (and with it, aiming to become more accountable) seemed to lead to them being viewed as less accountable by some of the communities they work in as well as by the youth organisations. Clearly, other factors than aid are also important constraints on the ability of youth organisations to promote accountability, in particular the political realities of leaders not being held accountable, and how patronage is entrenched throughout Malawi's political system. But the key point coming

out of this thesis with regards to accountability, is that actors who are primarily accountable to donors lack credibility in terms of promoting the accountability of decision-makers, as their own processes are not characterized by the same transparency and accountability they encourage local organisations to demand from government.

Fourthly, this study contributes to a greater understanding of how aid-funded efforts to enhance social capital become limited by the way in which aid support in itself leads to competition for resources and suspicion towards those who access them. Clearly, the cooperation between Plan and youth associations did result in bringing youth together, learning from each other, cooperating for common aims and finding solutions to challenges they faced. However, as economic motivation is an important reason for why youth (and anyone else) in Malawi join or set up organisations, the prospect of aid funding leads to competition amongst local civil society actors including youth associations, which may undermine the bonds of trust and networks of cooperation which are components of social capital itself. The creation of social capital may be further undermined by the attempts to formalize youth networks as well as by the prominence of patronage also within Malawi's civil society.

These conclusions give rise to recommendations for researchers as well as those working within the aid industry or being engaged in civil society organisations. There is a great need for further research into how aid shapes civil society in developing countries, and in particular, ways to support civil society in developing countries without ultimately leading to a weaker and more aid-dependent civil society with dubious credibility and legitimacy. When it comes to those working in the aid industry, I hope these conclusions will not simply lead to disillusionment, but encourage greater reflection. In particular, I hope this thesis can inspire aid professionals to look beyond the tunnel-vision of impact evaluations, and take a broader look at how a particular cultural, historical, political and economic context shapes how development interventions play out in practice, as well as how what aid aims to achieve may be undermined by how aid works. For the civil society activists in developing countries, I hope to contribute to an increased awareness of the risks inherent in aid-dependence, and inspire them to focus less on "capacity" as something coming from INGOs or donors in the form of material resources or training workshops, but as something they can build up and strengthen themselves, based on support from the people they work with, and thereby make them stronger and more independent in the long run.

References

Aboum, A., Alemu, K., Evensmo, I., Hafild, E., Kruse, S.-E., & Riddell, R. C. (2012). *Tracking Impact, An exploratory study of the wider effects of Norwegian civil society support to countries in the South*. Oslo, Norway: Norad. Retrieved January 20, 2013 from http://www.norad.no/no/resultater/publikasjoner/publikasjon?key=389645

Ackerman, S. R. (2007). From Elections to Democracy in Central Europe: Public Participation and the Role of Civil Society. *East European Politics & Societies*, *21*(1), 31–47.

Active Youth Initiative for Social Enhancement. (2013). AYISE Website. Retrieved May 2, 2013, from http://www.ayisemw.org/

Adams, W. M. (2009). *Green development : environment and sustainability in a developing world*. London; New York: Routledge.

African Union. (2006). The African Youth Charter. Retrieved April 4, 2013 from http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/AFRICAN_YOUTH_CHARTER.pdf

Alparone, F. R., & Rissotto, A. (2001). Children's citizenship and participation models: Participation in planning urban spaces and children's councils. *Journal of community & applied social psychology*, *11*(6), 421–434.

Anders, G. (2002). Freedom and Insecurity: Civil Servants between Support Networks, the Free Market and Civil Service Reform. In H. Englund (Ed.), *A Democracy of Chameleons. Politics and Culture in the New Malawi*. Uppsala, Sweden : Somerset, NJ: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet ; Distributor in North America, Transaction Publishers.

Banik, D. (2010). Support for human rights-based development: reflections on the Malawian experience. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, *14*(1), 34–50.

Bano, M. (2008). Dangerous correlations: Aid's impact on NGOs' performance and ability to mobilize members in Pakistan. *World Development*, *36*(11), 2297–2313.

Bates, S. (2010). Sub-Saharan Africa Country Reports - Introductory Overview (Editorial). *International Journal of Non-for-Profit Law*, *12*(2), 5–8.

BBC. (2013a, March 11). Malawi arrests over "anti-Joyce Banda coup plots." *BBC News Africa*. Retrieved March 30, 2013, from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-21745495

BBC. (2013b, March 14). Malawi Profile. *BBC News Africa*. Retrieved March 30, 2013, from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13864369

BBC. (2013c, April 10). Joyce Banda: Malawi's first female president. Retrieved March 30,

2013, from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-17662916

Booth, D., Cammack, D., Harrigan, J., Kanyongolo, M., & Ngwira, N. (2006). *Drivers of change and development in Malawi, Working Paper 261*. London: Overseas development institute (ODI).

Bratton, M. (1994). *Civil society and political transition in Africa* (No. Vol. 11, No. 6). Institute for Development Research. Retrieved January 20, 2013, from http://worlded.org/docs/Publications/idr/pdf/11-6.pdf

Briggs, P. (2010). *Malawi*. United Kingdom: Brandt Travel Guides Ltd.

Brinkerhoff, D. W., & Crosby, B. (2002). *Managing policy reform: concepts and tools for decision-makers in developing and transitioning countries*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press.

Bryman, A. (2008). *Social research methods* (3rd ed.). Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.

Bräutigam, D. A., & Knack, S. (2004). Foreign Aid, Institutions, and Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Economic development and cultural change*, *52*(2), 255–285.

Cammack, D. (2011). *Malawi's political settlement in crisis*. Retrieved January 20, 2013, from http://www.institutions-africa.org/filestream/20111110-appp-background-paper-04-malawi-s-political-settlement-in-crisis-2011-by-diana-cammack-nov-2011

Centre for Youth and Children's Affairs (CEYCA). (2011). *Annual Report 2011*. Lilongwe, Malawi.

Chambers, S., & Kopstein, J. (2001). Bad Civil Society. *Political Theory*, *29*(6), 837–865.

Charmaz, K. (2003). Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Cheek, J. (2003). An Untold Story? Doing Funded Qualitative Research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Chikwanha, A., & Masunungure, E. (2004). *Young and old in Sub-Saharan Africa: Who are the Real Democrats?* (No. 87). Institute for Democracy in South Africa.

CIA Factbook. (n.d.). Malawi. Retrieved May 27, 2013, from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mi.html

CIVICUS. (2012, March 22). CIVICUS warns of impending crackdown on Malawian civil society, Press Release. Retrieved April 4, 2013, from https://www.civicus.org/en/media-centre/press-releases/776-civicus-warns-of-

impending-crackdown-on-malawian-civil-society

Coelho, V. S. P., & Von Lieres, B. (2010). *Mobilizing for democracy: citizen action and the politics of public participation*. London ; New York: Zed.

Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data: complementary research strategies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Cohen, J. L., & Arato, A. (1992). *Civil society and political theory*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, *94*, 95–120.

Edwards, M., & Hulme, D. (1996). Too close for comfort? The impact of official aid on nongovernmental organizations. *World development*, *24*(6), 961–973.

Eggen, Ø. (2011). *Dissonance in Development - Foreign aid and state formation in Malawi*. Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Ås, Norway. Retrieved April 4, 2013, from http://www.nupi.no/Publikasjoner/Boeker-Rapporter/2011/Doctoral-thesis-Dissonance-in-Development

Eide, A. (2006). Human Rights-Based Development in the Age of Economic Globalization: Background and Prospects. In B. A. Andreassen & S. P. Marks (Eds.), *Develoment as a Human Right - Legal, Political and Economic Dimensions*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard School of Public Health.

Eidhammer, A. (2005). *Malawi - eit lite land i Afrika*. Oslo, Norway: Kolofon AS.

Englund, H. (2002). The Culture of Chameleon Politics. In H. Englund (Ed.), *A Democracy of Chameleons. Politics and Culture in the New Malawi*. Uppsala, Sweden : Somerset, NJ: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet ; Distributor in North America, Transaction Publishers.

Englund, H. (2006). *Prisoners of freedom: human rights and the African poor*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

eufrika.org. (2012, July 28). TIMVENI for child and youth journalism in Malawi. Retrieved April 4, 2013, from http://www.eufrika.org/wordpress/2012/07/timveni-for-child-and-youth-journalism-in-malawi/

Evans, P. (1996). Government action, social capital and development: Reviewing the evidence on synergy. *World Development*, *24*(6), 1119–1132.

Eye of the Child. (2012). *Eye of the Child Annual Report 2012: Promoting Childrens Rights in Malawi*. Blantyre, Malawi.

Fine, G. A., & Harrington, B. (2004). Tiny publics: small groups and civil society. *Sociological Theory*, *22*(3), 341–356.

Font, J., & Galais, C. (2011). The Qualities of Local Participation: The Explanatory Role of Ideology, External Support and Civil Society as Organizer. *International Journal of Urban & Regional Research*, *35*(5), 932–948.

Fukuyama, F. (2000). *Social Capital and Civil Society. International Monetary Fund Working Paper* (No. WP/00/74). Retrieved January 20, 2013, from http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2000/wp0074.pdf

Fukuyama, F. (2001). Social Capital, Civil Society and Development. *Third World Quarterly*, *22*(1), 7–20.

Gaventa, J. (2002). Exploring Citizenship, Participation and Accountability. *IDS Bulletin*, *33*(3), 1–14.

Ginwright, S., & James, T. (2002). From assets to agents of change: Social justice, organizing, and youth development. *New directions for youth development*, *2002*(96), 27–46.

Goodwin, M. (2006). Constructing and Interpreting Qualitative Data. In A. Bond (Ed.), *Your Masters Thesis, How to plan, draft, write and revise*. Abergele, United Kingdom: Studymates Limited.

Hummelbrunner, R. (2010). Beyond Logframe: Critique, Variations and Alternatives. In N. Fujita (Ed.), *Beyond Logframe: Using Systems Concepts in Evaluation* (pp. 1–35). Japan: Foundation for Advanced Studies on International Development (FASID), International Development Reserach Institute. Retrieved May 1, 2013, from http://www.fasid.or.jp/_files/publication/oda_21/h21-3.pdf

Hyden, G. (1997). Civil Society, Social Capital and Development: Dissection of a Complex Discourse. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *32*(1), 4–30.

Hyden, G. (2010). Civil society in Africa: Constraints and Opportunities for democratic change. In *Engaging civil society - Emerging trends in democratic governance*. Japan: United Nations University Press.

Ikelegbe, A. (2001). The perverse manifestation of civil society: evidence from Nigeria. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *39*(1), 1–24.

Jarrett, R. L., Sullivan, P. J., & Watkins, N. D. (2004). Developing social capital through participation in organized youth programs: Qualitative insights from three programs. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *33*(1), 41–55.

Jenkins, R. (2001). Mistaking "governance"for "politics": foreign aid, democracy, and the construction of civil society. Retrieved January 20, 2013 from http://ccs.ukzn.ac.za/files/Mistaking_Governance_Politics.pdf

Lerner, R. M., Dowling, E. M., & Anderson, P. M. (2003). Positive youth development: Thriving as the basis of personhood and civil society. *Applied Developmental Science*, *7*(3), 172–180.

Lewis, D. (2002). Civil Society in African Contexts: Reflections on the Usefulness of the Concept. *Development and Change*, *33*(4), 569–586.

Malawi Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture. (n.d.). Malawi Youth Policy. Retrieved May 1, 2013, from http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Youth/Malawi/Malawi_youth_policy.pdf

Mapanje, J. (2002). The Orality of Dictatorship: In Defense of My Country (Afterword). In H. Englund (Ed.), *A Democracy of Chameleons. Politics and Culture in the New Malawi*. Uppsala, Sweden : Somerset, NJ: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet ; Distributor in North America, Transaction Publishers.

Matthews, H., Limb, M., & Taylor, M. (1999). Young people's participation and representation in society. *Geoforum*, *30*(2), 135–144.

Mercer, C. (2003). Performing partnership: civil society and the illusions of good governance in Tanzania. *Political Geography*, *22*(7), 741–763.

Mitlin, D., Hickey, S., & Bebbington, A. (2007). Reclaiming development? NGOs and the challenge of alternatives. *World Development*, *35*(10), 1699–1720.

Mkandawire, T. (2010). Aid, Accountability, and Democracy in Africa. *Social Research*, *77*(4), 1149–1182.

Moss, T., Pettersson, G., & Van de Walle, N. (2006). *An Aid-Institutions Paradox? A Review Essay on Aid Dependency and State Building in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Retrieved May 1, 2013, from http://ssrn.com/abstract=860826

Mzale, D. (2013, March 4). Fuel, fertilizer top MW imports in 2012, p. 10. The Nation.

Newell, P., & Bellour, S. (2002). *Mapping accountability: origins, contexts and implications for development*. Brighton [England]: Institute of Development Studies (IDS).

Norad. (2009). Principles for Norads Support to Civil Society in the South. Retrieved May 1, 2013, from http://www.norad.no/en/tools-and-publications/publications/publication?key=128394

Nussbaum, M. C. (2011). *Creating capabilities : the human development approach*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Nyasa Times. (2013, February 15). Malawi MPs demand MK2bn for fuel allowances: Threaten to sabotage govt business. Lilongwe, Malawi. Retrieved from http://www.nyasatimes.com/2013/02/15/malawi-mps-demand-mk2bn-for-fuel-

allowances-threaten-to-sabotage-govt-business/

O'Faircheallaigh, C. (2010). Environmental Public participation and environmental impact assessment: Purposes, implications, and lessons for public policy making. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, *30*, 19–27.

Obadare, E. O. (2005). Second thoughts on civil society: The state, civic associations and the antinomies of the public sphere in Africa. *Journal of Civil Society*, *1*(3), 267–281.

Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR). (2006). Frequently aksed questions on a Human Rights Based Approach to Development. United Nations, Geneva, Switzerland. Retrieved May 1, 2013, from http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FAQen.pdf

Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR). (2008). Working with the United Nations Human Rights Programme - A Handbook for Civil Society. United Nations, New York and Geneva. Retrieved May 1, 2013, from http://www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/CivilSociety/Documents/Handbook_en.pdf

Orvis, S. (2001). Civil society in Africa or African civil society? *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, *36*(1), 17–38.

Ostrom, E. (1996). Crossing the great divide: Coproduction, synergy, and development. *World Development*, *24*(6), 1073–1087.

Ostrom, E., & Ahn, T. . (2010). *Foundations of social capital*. Cheltenham, UK; Northhampton, MA: Edward Elgar Pub.

Phiri, K. M. (2000). A Case of Revolutionary Change in Contemporary Malawi: The Malawi Army and the Disarming of the Malawi Young Pioneers. *Journal of Peace, Conflict and Military Studies*, *1*(1). Retrieved May 1, 2013, from http://www.oocities.org/mcpmalawi/article3.html

Pinkney, R. (2003). *Democracy in the Third World* (2nd ed.). Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Plan International. (2013a, April 11). Where we work: Malawi. Retrieved May 1, 2013, from http://plan-international.org/where-we-work/africa/malawi

Plan International. (2013b, April 11). About Plan. Retrieved May 1, 2013, from http://plan-international.org/about-plan

Plan Malawi. (2012). *Plan Malawi Country Strategic Plan 2012-2016*. Lilongwe, Malawi.

Putnam, R. D. (1993). The prosperous community. *Current*, (356), 4.

Putnam, R. D., Leonardi, R., & Nanetti, R. (1993). *Making democracy work: civic traditions in modern Italy*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Ribohn, U. (2002). "Human Rights and the Multiparty System Have Swallowed our Traditions": Conceiving Women and Culture in the New Malawi. In H. Englund (Ed.), *A Democracy of Chameleons. Politics and Culture in the New Malawi*. Uppsala, Sweden : Somerset, NJ: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet ; Distributor in North America, Transaction Publishers.

Riddell, R. C. (2007). *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford: Oxford Universtiy Press.

Roche, J. (1996). Children- Rights, Participation and Citizenship.pdf. *Childhood*, *6*(4), 475–493.

Sharra, A. (2013, March 3). Pains of the July 20 killings. *The Nation*. Lilongwe,.

Sinclair, R. (2006). Participation in practice: making it meaningful, effective and sustainable. *Children & Society*, *18*(2), 106–118.

Skocpol, T. (2008). Bringing the State Back In: Retrospect and Prospect The 2007 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, *31*(2), 109–124.

Stake, R. E. (2003). Case Studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Thagaard, T. (2003). *Systematikk og innlevelse : en innføring i kvalitativ metode*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.

The Nation. (2013a, February 20). Striking staff set to shut down airports. Lilongwe, Malawi. Retrieved May 1, 2013, from http://www.mwnation.com/national-news-the-nation/15888-striking-staff-set-to-shut-down-airports

The Nation. (2013b, February 21). Maize prices rise 79% between Dec 2011-2012. Lilongwe, Malawi.

The Nation. (2013c, February 25). Living on less than a dollar a day in the city. Lilongwe, Malawi.

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2013). *Dele for å skape. Demokrati, rettferdig fordeling og vekst i utviklingspolitikken. Meld. St. 25 (2012-2013)*. Oslo, Norway. Retrieved May 1, 2013, from http://www.regjeringen.no/pages/38286079/PDFS/STM201220130025000DDDPDFS.pdf

Timveni Child and Youth Media Organisation. (2012). *Timveni Business Plan 2013-2017*. Lilongwe, Malawi.

Timveni Meida. (n.d.). Timveni Media Facebook Page. Retrieved May 29, 2013, from https://www.facebook.com/pages/Timveni-Media/223782240972781?fref=ts

Trócaire. (2012). Democracy in action: Protecting Civil Society Space, Trócaire Policy

Report. Retrieved April 24, 2012, from
http://www.trocaire.org/sites/trocaire/files/pdfs/policy/Democracy_in_Action.pdf

UNDP. (2010). *Human Development Report 2010, The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development*. United Nations. Retrieved May 1, 2013, from
http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2010_EN_Complete_reprint.pdf

UNESCO. (n.d.). What do we mean by youth? Retrieved April 23, 2013, from
http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/youth/youth-definition/

United Nations Development Programme. (2013). *Human development report 2013: the rise of the south : human progress in a diverse world*. New York, NY: United Nations Development Programme. Retrieved May 1, 2013, from
http://issuu.com/undp/docs/hdr_2013_en?mode=window

Urdal, H. (2006). A clash of generations? Youth bulges and political violence. *International Studies Quarterly*, *50*(3), 607–629.

Uvin, P. (2007). From the right to development to the rights-based approach: how "human rights" entered development. *Development in Practice*, *17*(4-5), 597–606.

Vakil, A. C. (1997). Confronting the classification problem: Toward a taxonomy of NGOs. *World Development*, *25*(12), 2057–2070.

VonDoepp, P. (2002). Are Malawi's Local Clergy Civil Society Activists? The Limiting Impact of Creed, Context and Class. In H. Englund (Ed.), *A Democracy of Chameleons. Politics and Culture in the New Malawi*. Uppsala, Sweden : Somerset, NJ: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet ; Distributor in North America, Transaction Publishers.

Whaites, A. (2000). Let's get civil society straight: NGOs, the state, and political theory (Development, NGOs and Civil Society, Selected Essays from Development in Practice.). Oxford, UK: Oxfam GB.

Woods, D. (1992). Civil society in Europe and Africa: Limiting state power through a public sphere. *African Studies Review*, *35*(2), 77–100.

Woolcock, M. (1998). Social Capital and Economic Development: Towards a Theoretical Synthesis and Policy Framework. *Theory and Society*, *27*(1), 151–208.

Woolcock, M., & Narayan, D. (2000). Social Capital: Implications for Development Theory, Research, and Policy. *The World Bank Research Observer*, *15*(2), 225–249.

World Bank. (2004). Data Overview, Malawi. Retrieved May 13, 2013, from
http://data.worldbank.org/country/malawi

World Bank. (2006). *World Development Report 2007 - Development and the Next*

Generation. Washington DC.: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank. Retrieved May 1, 2013, from http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTRESEARCH/EXTW DRS/0,,contentMDK:23062361~pagePK:478093~piPK:477627~theSitePK:477624,00 .html

Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research: design and methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Young, I. (1989). Polity and group difference: a critique of the ideal universal citizenship. *Ethics*, *99*, 250–274.

Youniss, J., Bales, S., Christmas-Best, V., Diversi, M., McLaughlin, M., & Silbereisen, R. (2003). Youth civic engagement in the twenty-first century. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *12*(1), 121–148.

Youth Net and Councelling. (2013). YONECO Website. Retrieved April 11, 2013, from http://www.yoneco.org/index.php

Youth Net and Councelling (YONECO). (2012). *Annual Report 2011*. Zomba, Malawi. Retrieved May 1, 2013, from http://www.yoneco.org/publications/YONECO%202011%20Report%20- %20Final.pdf

Zuurmond, I. (2011). *Promoting Child Rights to end Child Poverty. Achieving Lasting Change Through Child-Centered Community Development*. Working, United Kingdom: Plan International. Retrieved May 1, 2013, from http://plan- international.org/about-plan/resources/publications/about-plans-work/promoting- child-rights-to-end-child-poverty-1