

**TALES OF AN AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY:
DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY IN
MALAWI 1994-2014**

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: IMAGINING THE STATE IN/OF AFRICA THROUGH CIVIL SOCIETY

“Five white men and three white women came down the road. Hidden in the group, in stiff white uniform, were two Ghanaian men with prosperous looking bellies ...As they went past, one of the black men laughed in a forced Senior Service way and, smiling into the face of one of the white men, kept saying ‘Jolly good shot, Himmy. Jolly good’. He was trying to speak like a white man, and the sound that came out of his mouth reminded the listener of a constipated man, straining in his first minute on top of the lavatory seat...So this was the real gain. The only real gain. This was the thing for which poor men had fought and shouted. This was what it had come to: not that the whole thing might be overturned and ended, but that a few black men might be pushed closer to their masters, to eat some of the fat into their bellies too. That had been the entire end of it all.” (Kwei Armah, 1968: 124)

In the more than twenty years which have passed since what commentators variously called sub-Saharan Africa’s “*second independence*” (Muna, 1991), “*second wind of change*” (Diamond, 1998) and “*third wave of democratisation*” (Huntington, 1991) the assumed subject of that supposedly meaningful transformation, civil society, has itself become the site of a contested set of political demands and trajectories. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the rather uncritically construed civil society of the early 1990s could never live up to its billing, construed as it was in the image of a democratising anti-authoritarianism sweeping away the last vestiges of the Cold War from Santiago to Warsaw and finally in Nairobi, Luanda and of course Soweto. This was civil society as the transcendental subject, signalling the victory of the people over what was in an African context a particularly self-aggrandising expression of authoritarian power. This was, however, a subject with a dual mandate; firstly to democratise, but then also to support the development of Africa’s stagnant economies and supposedly unmodernised societies.

Bayart’s ‘politics of belly’ (1993) was a particularly apposite analogy for the slick and adaptable yet single-minded narcissism of the post-colonial Cold War state. The quote from Ayi Kwei Armah which opens this book was written at the beginning of this period,

appearing in his novel *The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born* in 1968. For all its age it is no less insightful into the nature of the post-colonial political compact. Of course Kwei Armah was writing in a context when there was little else but the state for such predatory impulses to be indulged. But when Fanon wrote "*Zombies, believe me, are more terrifying than settlers*" (1961: 56), he might quite easily have recognised such 'Zombies' in some of today's African civil society organisations, with the professionals who populate these organisations parroting policies and political slogans directly inherited from their Western donors. Nonetheless, where the state and its agents had played its part (partnered by international and imperial interests) in the developmental sclerosis which had pervaded the African continent through the post-colonial and particularly late Cold War period, civil society in the 1990s was assumed in some quarters to represent Africa's salvation, the force that would secure Africa's true independence from colonial rule and lead to a people-driven future of prosperity, growth and accountability. This was reflected in a broader enthusiasm for civil society at that time (see, for instance, Fisher, 1998; Fukuyama, 2001). Within an African context, in an influential and in some senses landmark volume, Harbeson, Rothchild and Chazan wrote that

"...civil society is a hitherto missing key to sustained political reform, legitimate states and governments, improved governance, viable state-society and state-economy relationships, and prevention of the kind of political decay that undermined new African governments a generation ago" (1995: 1-2).

However, writing at the cusp of this explosion in all things civil society, Patrick Chabal sounded some early warnings which appear equally apposite today. The liberal democracy of which this renewed civil society was supposedly a harbinger was, according to Chabal,

"...not possible, precisely because liberal democracy was the historical outcome of the particular circumstances in which capitalism shaped the relationship between state and civil society in Western Europe. Ideal government in Africa today would be something else" (1986: 14).

This book represents the culmination of six years of research visits, interviews, workshops, conversations, attention and analysis of the international political environment and economy for civil society organisations in Malawi, and how they respond to and work with/beyond this environment. In some ways, this is an 'old-fashioned' book. A number of recent works have asserted the importance of moving beyond the formal civil society sector in any appraisal of African political agency, to consider what Partha Chatterjee (2004) called, in a different context, 'political society' (for instance: Dwyer and Zeillig, 2012; Chabal, 2014; Branch and Mamphilly, 2015). Chatterjee argued that the kinds of formalised civil society organisations I analyse in this book reflect a vision of the relationship between the birth of the nation state in the West, which required engaged citizens to monitor and participate in it, and its people, who fulfilled this function. The birth of the nation state in most of the world however occurred in the context of colonial rule, which had already instituted a system of governmentality which segmented people into administrable population groups along lines of ethnicity and tribe. These people were not citizens, but subjects, and were not required to participate in the state. Whilst the early anti-colonial struggles were initially energized by republican ideals of the citizen, the notion of the developmental state, encouraged by international donors and NGOs, re-instituted colonial methods of governmentality, creating population groups along lines of health, income and education, ostensibly so they could be 'cared' for and thus be administered by the state. As such, the civil society of media houses, political parties and professionalised advocacy and service delivery organisations (the latter of which are the major unit of analysis in this book) are 'fictive', sitting above or outside of where real political agency in the Postcolony is exerted (Chatterjee, 2004: 36-38).

As fictive as it may be however (and this is not a depiction which I will necessarily disagree with in this book), the civil society of professionalised campaign, service delivery and advocacy organisations which one finds embedded in most post-colonial African states continues to function as an important component of such states. It has not disappeared, and remains core to international donor development strategies. Indeed, as we will see, some of the staff working in these organisations are aware of and reflect upon the limitations which being a part of 'civil society' places on their agency as political actors. As such then this book does not make any claim to be presenting an image of an African civil

society-as-potential transcendental subject. Rather, it will seek to explore issues of development and democracy in Malawi (and by extension sub-Saharan Africa more broadly) through the prism of one of its key agents since the 1990s, namely civil society, in an effort to understand more systematically the political significance of this sector.

The implications of some of the discussions above will be explored in much more depth in Chapter Four of this book; however what is clear is that the rise of civil society in the early 1990s cannot be viewed unproblematically, and important questions posed then remain equally important now, and reflect a fundamental concern with not simply the nature of civil society in Africa, but perhaps more importantly the nature of the state.

When Richard Sklar fretted sympathetically about the democratic and participatory shortcomings of Nyerere's villagisation, or Kaunda's 'participatory democracy' (1986: 22-23), he held a light up to the function of the post-colonial Cold War African state, as expressed through its attempts to construct compliant publics. Similarly, when Michael Bratton asked "*Is there internal democracy in the organisations of civil society? Or do these structures mirror and reinforce the personalistic and authoritarian patterns of rule that prevail in the political center?*" (1989: 430) these questions, although posed more directly to the character of emergent civil society formations *in opposition* to the state, still reflected this same concern for the central state, its function, and its writ. For put another way, Bratton's questions could just as easily be summarised thusly: To what extent do Africa's civil society organisations represent an extension of the state's power?

There is however a corollary to this question. This is that, in a Foucauldian sense, one would ask not whether Africa's post-Cold War civil society organisations (CSOs) represent an extension of the state's power, but to ask whether they represent a limitation. The limitation to state power which Foucault argued was represented by civil society's initial emergence in organised form in 19th century western Europe was not the anti-authoritarian limitation of the liberal imagination (also transposed on to Africa's post-Cold War civil societies by liberal commentators). Foucault rather imagined this limitation operating as an economic function, preventing the state and its agents from interfering too greatly in the market (Foucault, 2008: 295-313). Applying Foucault's observations on 19th century Europe

to 20th and 21st century Africa has proven controversial for some (i.e. Selby, 2007; Joseph, 2010), and this is a debate this chapter will return to. What this controversy does not mean however is that the question of the relation between the economy, the state and civil society is any less pertinent.

That Africa's emergent civil society formations in the 1990s were ranged to greater and lesser extents in opposition to ruling regimes suggests that they were not simply the products of attempts by those elites to create compliant publics (or were at least examples of attempts which had gotten out of control). However, several points of consideration emerge which suggest the continuing relevance of some of the questions posed above about the civil society of the 'second independence':

- i) The degree to which Africa's post-Cold War civil society represents a check on state power in general;
- ii) The degree to which Africa's post-Cold War civil society represents an extension of the state's power in social and economic life;
- iii) The degree to which Africa's post-Cold War civil society represents a market-driven limitation on the state's power in the economy.

These questions point to the manner in which this book will explore democracy and development in Africa, and Malawi specifically. This is not a book about democratic institutions, but rather the character of democracy and conceptions of development in Malawi, and how these have been shaped by the intersection between colonialism, Cold War geopolitics, liberal internationalism and interventionism (Death and Gabay, 2014) and extraversion (Bayart, 1999). Layered on top of these lines of enquiry into the nature of democracy and development in Africa in general and Malawi specifically is the role of international capital and international organisations (bi and multi-lateral) in shaping and maintaining the environment and agency of Africa's post-Cold War civil society as part of a liberal project of development which translates into a project of social transformation (Williams and Young, 2007). Again, development here will not be explored in terms of technical developmental indicators and outcomes; I am not interested here in assessing how far Malawi has 'developed'. Rather, this book will focus in on civil society as a key agent in

fulfilling the inter-related Western projects of democracy and development which have been visited upon African countries more keenly than any other region of the world. Again, the word 'project' is important here, for development in Africa, like in other regions but probably for longer and in more concentrated form (Young, 2012: 339), has been *projected* by international organisations and donor governments since the end of the Second World War. The factors behind this have ranged through the geopolitical (Westaad, 2005); ideological (Williams and Young, 2007); exploitative and narcissistic (Escobar, 1995). Important to note too, is that the development project, as much as it has been imposed on African states, has also been embodied and welcomed by elite cadres of those same states, empowering them in the immediate post-independence period to solidify their power and silence dissent in the name of 'national unity and development'.

Thus this book focuses on democracy and development in Africa as 'projects'. In so doing we can avoid the overly institutional and technical modes of analysis which pervade the political science literature (some of which has already been referred to) and which often accompany interrogations of these concepts in practice in Africa. We can also appreciate the highly ideological and normative components of what are normally treated as taken-for-granted concepts, seeing them as amalgamations of self-interest for sure, but also firm belief and ideological principle. Indeed, as James Scott (1998) has reminded us, the firmer the belief in how concepts like democracy and development should be and can be operationalised, the more likely they are to go wrong and result in unforeseen circumstances (in the latter respect for those who plan developmental and democratic interventions at any rate).

The projected nature of development and democracy in Africa brings us back again to issues of the nature of Africa's post-Cold War states. Are they mere 'governance states', the result of the World Bank's project to democratise and develop African states according to certain neoliberal techniques and practices which now deeply penetrate African government ministries, as argued by Harrison (2004)? Or do African states exert a greater degree of agency than has hitherto been recognised in pursuing their interests through balancing the demands of both external and internal sites of pressure, as argued by others (Brown, 2012; Harman and Brown, 2013), thus reformulating these projects for their own ends? Indeed, whilst Harrison's analysis of Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda is deeply insightful of the

ways in which international organizations have penetrated the finance ministries of African states in the post-Cold War period, and construct CSO agendas in such a way as to support the liberalisation of African economies and the concomitant monitoring of government corruption that this involves (2004: 131), the continuing ability of African governments throughout this period to enact authoritarian and largely colonial-era legislation to crack down on certain sectors of civil society deemed threatening to the state's power, or whose victimisation serves the state's power, has remained strong (Gyimah-Boadi, 1997: 280; more recently, see the rash of anti-homosexuality laws which at the time of writing have been passed in 37 African states [76crimes.com]).

These are all areas which will be reflected upon in this book, through the prism of one post-Cold War civil society, in Malawi. As such, the book makes no claims to be able to answer some of the questions posed above in any general sense. However, this book does emerge after a period of time when much research on Africa across the range of disciplines that constitute what one might label 'international studies' has been concerned much more directly with the African state, than with civil society. The first decade and a half of the 21st century has seen a literature develop which has sought to understand what has been happening to the African state in a period of growing globalisation and multi-polarity. The result has been a broadly bi-polar literature, with some predicting the on-going demise of African sovereignty, at least as conventionally understood with reference to the centrally unified and bureaucratic state (See, for instance, Harrison, 2004; Ferguson, 2006; Englebert, 2009), whilst others have been far more positive about the African state's current and future trajectory (Severino and Roy, 2010; Brown, 2013; Harman and Brown, 2013; Rotberg, 2013). Civil society has thus been rendered a product of this focus on the state. Depending on one's convictions, civil society is either a symptom of the state's demise, or of its resurgence in Africa. An example of the former is the following, from Graham Harrison's book, *Governance States*:

"...a certain kind of civil society has emerged to engage with governance reform in governance states. Organisations to lobby for anti-corruption reform, stronger human rights protection, a mainstreaming of gender concerns into policy, and a concern with 'the poor' have emerged over the last 10 years...Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers require that there

is a degree of participation from civil society...these CSOs are urban-focussed, elite organisations that clearly express themselves using the liberal governance discourse...This discourse might be genuinely felt, but it would be naive to imagine that it is not performed to some extent to please external sources of finance. The presence of CSOs outside the main urban areas is negligible, and many processes of participation have been weak even within this remit...CSOs integration into participatory mechanisms of governance is at best partial, and at worst a form of political manipulation by governance elites and donor-creditors" (2004: 131)

Harrison draws our attention to civil society as an example of how neo-liberal techniques of governance have penetrated and subjected the post-Cold War, post-conditionality African state. Conversely, yet similarly, both Severino and Ray (2010) and Rotberg (2013) illustrate the *vibrancy* of the contemporary African state through the existence of new media technologies and how they are being deployed to hold the state to account.

Understanding the function and place of the African state *through* the prism of civil society however (as was the case with earlier post-Cold War analyses of African statehood; see Mamdani, 1996; Kasfir, 1998; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999; Mohan, 2002) is the function of this book. In this sense it hopes to contribute to a growing re-engagement with issues of civil society in Africa which has emerged in the past few years, specifically utilising critical paradigms (See: Dwyer and Zeillig, 2012; Gabay and Death, 2012; Death and Gabay, 2014; Branch and Mamphilly, 2015). In this book the critical paradigm most often drawn upon (although not exclusively so) derives from the work of Michel Foucault, and concepts he developed such as biopolitics, governmentality, disciplinary and sovereign power. What follows then is a short summation of debates around the applicability of Foucauldian analysis to African socio-political phenomena, an approach which has been subjected to some criticism in recent years.

*Foucault in Africa*ⁱ

Foucault's (2007) study of governmentality – literally mentalities or rationalities of government – grew out of his broader project of seeking to locate the specific and

individualising practices he identified in the analysis of madness, prisons, and sexuality within a broader context of shifting rationalisations of the relationship between states and societies, government and the population. Governmentality, Foucault argued, emerged in the context of eighteenth century Europe and later became more fully realised in neo-liberal economic doctrines in twentieth century Germany and the USA (Foucault 2007; see also Gabay and Death 2012; Rose 1999; Vradi 2013). The central insights developed in the course of this work were that 'government' should be understood as including the diverse range of actors and institutions implicated in 'the conduct of conduct'; in other words the ways in which 'freedom' becomes a product of various techniques of governing, emanating as much from discourse as from particular sites of power, and going far beyond merely the sovereign state or the political executive. Secondly Foucault argued that power relations in the societies he studied (largely 19th and 20th century Western Europe) can and do work through practices of freedom as well as straightforward domination or coercion. One example of this might be the ways in which collective responses to healthcare problems in the United States are made more difficult to achieve, or entirely ruled out, via affirmations of a tradition of 'American individualism' and concomitant focus on individual freedoms, and the supposed challenge to such freedoms a collectivised healthcare system would represent. This of course has governing implications for those who are excluded from the American healthcare settlement in terms of service provision, but also in terms of how people come to see themselves as deserving or not of social services. An example of this would be the findings of the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSAS) in 2010, when seeking to understand how different social groups understood poverty and welfare. In the UK, large relative numbers of low-paid working people receive some kind of in-work benefit, including help with meeting rents. The BSAS found that, in the midst of a financial crisis and recession, greater numbers of working people (including those on some kind of benefit payment) agreed with the idea that people on benefits were in receipt of these payments due to laziness or an unwillingness to work (23%) than due to poor luck (15%) or societal injustice (19%). These figures were not significantly higher or lower than for any other social demographic measured in the survey (National Centre for Social Research, 2013: 41-46)ⁱⁱ.

Foucault's work has of course been enormously influential, and the concept of governmentality has been subsequently extended far beyond the domains within which

Foucault himself was concerned. In the field of African studies, for example, the use of Foucauldian governmentality has been extended by authors such as Jean-François Bayart (1999), John and Jean Comaroff (1999), Achille Mbembe (2001), James Ferguson (2007), Rita Abrahamsen (2003) and others. Criticisms of such theoretical applications to the study of African politics are not new. Foucault has been caricatured as a Euro-centric, inward-looking theorist obsessed with textuality, discourse and representation, and having little of value to say to those outside metropolitan café culture (Williams 1997). In response, more recent postcolonial theorists have drawn attention to the African influences upon Foucault and his contemporaries, particularly Tunisia and Algeria (Ahluwalia 2010), as well as noting that the concept of governmentality in particular lends itself to more empirically focused and concrete forms of analysis (Abrahamsen 2003). Indeed, Foucault himself understood his overall project as providing an analytical 'toolbox' from which *"...others could dig around to find a tool that they can use however they wish in their own area"* (in Walters, 2011: 138).

Nonetheless, in recent years a debate has emerged around the kinds of societies Foucault's analysis was devised for, and the uses (or abuses) of Foucauldian analyses of non-European contexts. This is part of a broader concern within many social science fields about the suitability or effectiveness of mainstream theoretical traditions in comprehending and explaining forms of politics outside 'the West' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012; Cornelissen et al 2012; Death 2013; Gabay and Death 2012; Inayatullah and Blaney 2004; Vrasti 2013). Mainstream approaches to international politics for instance have tended to assume the centrality of the state; to focus on problems such as inter-national war, international organisations, and formal diplomacy; and to marginalise questions of gender, race, identity, poverty, development, the environment and ideology. Critical perspectives, including those drawn from Foucault's work, have sought to provide new tools for understanding and explaining global politics in ways which avoid some of these limitations.

Healthy debates have arisen regarding the strengths and weaknesses of some of these newer attempts to explain politics in parts of the world like Africa through concepts like governmentality. Theorists like Jan Selby (2007) and Jonathan Joseph (2010) have worried that governmentality-based analyses of liberal interventions in Africa sometimes appear to suggest that African countries are becoming increasingly liberal, civil, and dominated by

practices of freedom rather than forms of domination and coercion. Joseph (2010: 224) argues that *"contemporary forms of governmentality can only usefully be applied to those areas that might be characterised as having an advanced form of liberalism"*. This is because the very concepts themselves were developed to describe changes in political order in mid-twentieth century Western Europe. Whilst Foucauldian forms of governmentality might successfully create free, rational, responsible, and civil individuals and societies in places like Europe and North America, he suggests, *"[i]n other parts of the world the management of populations may have to rely on cruder disciplinary practices"* (Joseph 2010: 239). In other words, African politics since at least the colonial period has been characterised by straightforward disciplinary rule, alongside authoritarian forms of governing. The 'conduct of conduct' through discourse and norms has proven minor set alongside the punitive colonial era legal frameworks still deployed by many African governments today.

If we switch tack away from the state, to the main focus of this book, civil society, it might be argued that there is even more reason to be cautious in embracing a wholesale Foucauldian approach. As mentioned a few pages ago, Foucault maintained that the emergence of civil society as a site of freedom in 18th Century western Europe was in fact a tactical deployment by the state to ensure its own limitation, preventing the state (through its agents) from imposing its will on the market. The example given above of the US healthcare system illustrates Foucault's point well. Even when the state seeks to exert some control over market forces, civil society, not simply in the form of organised institutions but also in deeply-held and embodied personal beliefs, acts to protect the market from the state's interventions. In Africa however scholars have noted seemingly different dynamics at play, dynamics which have seen social movements deeply embedded in systems of rents and patronage block attempts by the state to engage in neoliberal reforms such as removing petrol subsidies or opening public-sector wages to market competition (Williams, 1997: 286). Whilst retaining a cautious approach to the wholesale applicability of Foucault to Africa (and indeed beyond western Europe in general) we similarly risk fetishizing the state-civil society binary by taking some of these criticisms too seriously. For instance, whilst many have long-drawn our attention to the revolving-door nature of many CSOs in Africa, coining the term 'GONGO' (Government Oriented NGO) in the process (Specifically: Fowler, 1991; Clark, 1995; More generally: Gyimah-Boadi, 1997; Harrison, 2004), thus breaking

down the distinction held in liberal political theory between the state and civil society, the distinction is not necessarily any easier to maintain in the West either. The revolving-door nature of government-to-lobbyist and back again on Capitol Hill, or the high turnaround of governmental special advisors returning back to the non-state and private sector is a core feature of the US and UK political systems. It may be that the specificity of the demands made by those in civil society who can extract rents from the state change according to different domestic contexts, but demand and extract rents they nonetheless continue to do, through a mixture of state-limitation and market manipulation.

In general then there are two reasons to continue to bring a governmentality framework to the study of African state-society relations. First of all, the success and/or failure of liberal interventions on the ground is an empirical question for researchers. Selby's (2007: 336) suggestion that *"the globalization of a Foucauldian model of power ends up inspiring a quintessentially liberal...reading of international politics"* in which all societies everywhere are becoming progressively more free and liberal as a result of liberal interventions, tackles the issue from the wrong end of the equation. Rather, adopting a governmentality framework can contribute to understanding how states and civil societies are being built in Africa by Western interventions and (crucially) with what success; how African agency is exercised in these projects; and what the implications of Western interventions are for African politics at local, national and transnational levels. This does not in any way assume a priori the success of such interventions, nor the increasing liberalness of African societies. In short, the success and/or failure of liberal interventions on the ground is an empirical question for researchers which lends itself to Foucauldian sets of analytics (Gabay and Death 2012: 3).

A second factor for the utility of governmentality approaches to African cases emerges from arguments which have been recently made about Africa from a more optimistic perspective than that of especially Joseph (2010). High profile Africanist scholars such as Crawford Young (2012: 222-224), and in particular Robert Rotberg in *Africa Emerges* (2013), have suggested that, in a buck to the assumption that African politics can be characterised by authoritarian rule, African polities have in fact become increasingly politically pluralised since the turn of this century, and subsequently democratic. Whilst I would share Young's

cautious approach when he contends that for most African countries this opening up has signified a move “away from authoritarianism rather than to full democracy” (2012: 224), the introduction of more regular elections and freer civil societies than has previously been the case on the continent surely poses a challenge to those critics of governmentality approaches in Africa which have rejected Foucault’s methodological utility precisely on the grounds that African societies are ruled by more nakedly disciplinary methods (Joseph 2010: 239). Indeed, even if such apparently liberal procedures as elections and a free press are uneven or illusory to greater or lesser extents across the continent, this surely makes a governmentality approach more, not less applicable, in understanding why populations submit themselves to them with such increasing regularity. Even in weak or collapsing states it is possible to identify such processes at work. Englebert argues that in states which should perhaps have disintegrated long ago the writ of the state stills holds through the spread of petty officialdom in rural as well as urban areas. Central governments unable to assert the state’s authority has not meant the death of the state, for “*it will not be uncommon for state agencies in remote provinces of the country to continue to exert local authority*” (Englebert 2009: 42). At the same time, those not directly in the employ of the state continue to assent to the state’s power, even where the state’s central authority has been eroded. Getting the appropriate stamps on the appropriate paperwork still holds the key for most people to access the services they require and desire, and the state is still viewed by most people as *the* site of legitimate power and distribution, even where such functions are poorly performed, if at all, leading to what Englebert calls “*the puzzle of acquiescence*” (Ibid: 4).

More generally, those who argue that Foucault’s ideas are inapplicable beyond advanced liberal societies may be at risk of displaying a degree of idealism about the liberalism of these societies and implicitly a degree of backwardness about African societies. Whilst the lack of policy differentiation, similar career trajectories and ideological affinities between many candidates for public office in African countries led Thandika Mkandawire to label these countries as “*choiceless democracies*” (1999; see also Ferguson [2007: 69-89] for the transnational class-based nature of African and Western political-economic elites), an Afrobarometer survey in 20 African countries (ranging from Zimbabwe to Botswana) revealed that an average of 57% of respondents perceived there to be a fully or near-fully functioning democracy in their country (Afrobarometer 2009). This suggests a fertile ground

for exploring issues of the conduct of conduct through freedom, of how supposedly free subjects render themselves *subjected*, and so on (Vrasti 2013).

Indeed, and in a similar move to the unities noted between civil society in Africa and the West, perceptions of political conditions in many parts of the African continent are not so dissimilar from the Euro-American contexts to which scholars like Joseph and Selby suggest Foucauldian analyses should be tied. Positive perceptions of democracy in Africa are not at a much lower rate than that reported in a YouGov survey of attitudes to democracy in the UK, which revealed a 67% positive response (YouGov 2012: 4)ⁱⁱⁱ. Similarly, as critical scholars such as Stuart Hall (2011) and David Harvey (2007) have argued, UK and US politicians of apparently different political hues have long drawn from the same conceptual and ideological toolbox of neoliberal economic orthodoxy, thus arguably rendering these democracies 'choiceless' in similar terms to their African counterparts. What I attempt to suggest here then is not that Africa is becoming progressively and uniformly freer as a result of exogenous liberal interventions, but that neither does African politics represent an anomaly or illiberal backwater (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012). Rather, the often contradictory blend of freedom and coercion we find on the continent – the mutual interdependence between the conduct of conduct and sovereign power, and the blurring of once-familiar binaries such as public and private, state and society, power and freedom – implies that *"African politics, so long misunderstood as backward, is starting to look very up-to-date indeed"* (Ferguson 2007: 210).

What does all of this mean for our understanding of civil society in Africa? At the very least, it requires us to adjust our empirical sights. If we are to understand the composition of the African state via the expression of civil society, then this is not a line of investigation which can end with the brute fact of government involvement in the workings of civil society. It also means we have to extend our analysis to the ways in which those who are positioned as the gatekeepers of civil society in Africa, most notably formal civil society organisations, understand their position within a broader field of social and governing power. For as this book will reveal, CSOs in Malawi do not simply understand their position as one of being transparent interlocutors between state and society, but also as social agents themselves, capable of composing the state in their own image. Understanding where that image

derives from will help us understand how the 'conduct of conduct' and the governing of freedom take place and operationalise themselves in an African context.

Why Malawi?

So far in this chapter I have sought to establish a broad context for the discussion of civil society in Africa, and yet two of the following three substantive chapters of the book concern themselves specifically with Malawi. In this section I want to discuss why Malawi provides a suitable environment to explore the questions raised in this chapter. Although often overlooked in Anglophone political and historical Africanist research in favour of its bigger regional neighbours Tanzania and Zambia, Malawi is in many respects an archetypal post-colonial African state. Independent since 1964, Malawi's national independence leader, Hastings Kamuzu Banda, rose to prominence through his steadfast opposition to the settler-proposed federation of Nyasaland (now Malawi), Northern and Southern Rhodesia (Zambia and Zimbabwe respectively). Although in many respects Banda's politics evolved in different and controversial directions from his peer group of Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta and Kwame Nkrumah^{iv}, in other respects these politics were very similar, involving big-man one-party rule, disappearings, arrests and exile for opponents or suspected opponents, the arming of youth cadres, and the crushing of any internal dissent expressed through formal or informal civic association. The churches were the only civil society actors given freer rein during Banda's rule, which lasted until Malawi's first multi-party elections in 1994 (when Banda was anywhere between 90 and 100 years old, his date of birth never having been fully ascertained), the campaign for which the Churches played a central and formative role.

Many African countries emerging into multi-party democracy in the 1990s did so in one of two ways. Some, like Cameroon or Burkina Faso did so in such a way that ruling autocrats retained power by playing off rival factions and establishing a number of political parties who in fact represented the pre-democracy leadership. Democracy in this sense was a performance of authoritarian rule (Mbembe, 2001). Other states, such as Malawi, but also Kenya and Zambia amongst others, did indeed see the transference of power away from Cold War autocrats to pluralist political systems which subsequently produced governments of different political stripes in the following period. In Malawi for instance, there have been

four post-Cold War presidents, representing three different political parties. However, some have argued that such pluralism has only operated at surface level. In Malawi specifically I have argued elsewhere that there is a *longue durée* of patrimonial politics which transcends party affiliation and is rooted in Hastings Banda's rule between 1964 and 1994 (Gabay, 2014). As mentioned above, more generally Thandika Mkandawire has labelled this second type of democratised African state as "choiceless" (1999), with political elites across parties deriving from the same "...*top cadres in central banks and finance ministries, many of whom had worked for a time in international financial institutions*" (Young, 2012: 64). As such they share very similar ideological outlooks, especially when it comes to economic liberalisation and the economistic function of civil society espoused by many in the World Bank which I outline in Chapter Two. This also leads to officials elected to one party crossing to other parties or splintering to form new parties depending on which way the political winds are blowing. Again, this is something characteristic of a number of African states, including Malawi, where the constitutional provision preventing parliamentary floor-crossing has been regularly flouted since 1994 (Gabay, 2014: 377).

Although Graham Harrison's seminal work on what he called "governance states" (2004) did not include Malawi in its purview, Malawi is nonetheless typical of the kind of sovereign settlement Harrison describes. Donor agencies, particularly the Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) play a key role in government ministries, *and* in shaping and directing civil society activism (Chapter Three; Gaynor, 2011). Indeed, as mentioned above, and like many other African states at the end of the Cold War, Malawi had little formal civil society to speak of beyond the Churches. The more informal associations (adhering more to Partha Chatterjee's notion of 'political society' [2004]) which participated in the moves to end Hasting Banda's rule (similar to those who drove the 'national conferences' in Francophone African states i.e. students' groups, labour groups, etc.), were not particularly legible to the Bank, being too disparate and political for the Bank's agenda (this will be explored in much more detail in Chapter Two). As we will see in Chapter Three, bi and multilateral donors therefore took it upon themselves to fund and construct civil society in Malawi, as they did elsewhere in Africa (Harrison, 2004: 131). As such Malawi is once again fairly typical of the post-Cold War African state favoured by the donor community i.e. practitioner of regular and relatively free and fair multi-party elections,

pursuant of relatively consistent economic policies in line with World Bank and IMF conditions, with civil societies actively pursuing donor agendas around corruption, governance and accountability, all designed to ensure consistency of neo-classical economic policy across time, even when the state is being driven by differently constituted governments as a result of the aforementioned election cycle.

And so even though an exploration of the themes raised in this chapter as applied to Malawi will not provide generalizable answers and conclusions, it will nonetheless be fruitful to apply these debates in a country as typical as Malawi, even though, as we will see as the book progresses, there are also important particularities which makes Malawi equally interesting to explore in this context. A further point about the time-period under consideration here also seems apposite. Although the research presented in this book - particularly that derived from my field visits to Malawi - date only as far back as 2008, it did not make much sense to consider the issues discussed in this chapter and throughout the book outside of the context of Malawi's general post-Cold War developmental and democratic record. As a period of time 1994-2014 marks the transition away from the authoritarian rule of Hastings Banda with the country's first multi-party elections in 1994, to its fifth (and greatly contested) such set of elections in May 2014. In terms of development, it is also a period of time which incorporates the majority of the period allocated to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015), which, as I will illustrate in Chapter Three, have been incredibly important in shaping civil society responses to developmental issues in Malawi.

As a generally under-researched country within the international studies/comparative politics canon, it seemed therefore like writing this book would be a good opportunity to bring together the various primary and secondary sources which document the post-Cold War period into one volume. Although the analysis of my primary field-research is by necessity limited to the periods of time I have spent in Malawi since 2008, I have compensated for this by reviewing a great deal of the relevant secondary literature on and about Malawi's post-Cold War state-society relations and position within the international political economy (a good deal of which has been published by Malawian publishers, and is thus not widely accessible outside of the country), as well as writing a whole chapter based

on an analysis of World Bank approaches and visions of civil society globally, and in Africa, in the post-Cold War period (more details on this, and how this chapter fits into the overall flow and argument of the book, are provided below).

Chapter Outline

Having established the conceptual and methodological terrain upon which this book stands, it is now appropriate for us to consider the trajectory the rest of the argument and empirical material will follow. The main analysis begins in Chapter Two with a consideration of multilateral understandings of civil society, and how these have evolved, generally, in the post-Cold War period. Graham Harrison (2004) and David Williams and Tom Young (2007) have done much to illuminate what the latter call the World Bank's "*liberal project*" vis-à-vis civil society in Africa, and how it is powerful in establishing the limits of political possibility for civil society activism in African states, but as Jon Sande-Lie (2015) has revealed, the World Bank is not a unitary actor, and its eventual positions may be both a result of internal contestation (and eventual silencing – see also Broad, 2006), as well as fundamentally contradictory. Chapter Two therefore will focus on how, as the main international organisation to develop systematic processes for engaging civil society, the World Bank has evolved its position on civil society over the past quarter of a century. The chapter will seek to understand the role civil society plays in composing the African state form in the eyes of the Bank and by extension other international organisations, in order to set the scene for how civil society, development and democracy have interwoven in post-Cold War Malawi. In order to develop the analysis in this chapter I analysed all of the major documents and reports released by the Bank in the years since the Cold War on civil society. The first of these was an internal memo released in 1998 on engaging NGOs in World Bank operations, but in the following years what constituted civil society became more broadly defined. From 2002 the Bank began releasing biannual reports on civil society engagement, and it is these reports which form the main backbone of the analysis in Chapter Two.

Chapters Three and Four focus more squarely on Malawi. Apart from the odd foray into Western headlines, most typified by the protests which rocked former president Bingu wa Mutharika in 2011, Malawi does not feature much in grand discussions of Africa's past or

future. However, in its very ordinariness (although there are many things which make it not so ordinary at all), Malawi provides an exceptionally useful test case for Foucauldian investigations into the place of civil society as an expression of state-making in Africa. That its post-Cold War development has been largely free from extreme forms of authoritarian rule and political violence means that Malawi exhibits some of the features that precisely make it an incubator for the 'conduct of conduct' and governing through freedom i.e. an active press, freedom of association and so on. Of course, as subsequent chapters will illustrate, many of these 'freedoms' have been circumscribed at various points by governing authorities, but they nonetheless persist, and offer us an insight into the ways in which civil society facilitates a certain form of governing through freedom in Malawi which, even though at times resisted, may be characteristic of the direction of travel for the rest of the continent.

Chapters Three and Four thus form a two-pronged approach to the post-Cold War and contemporary scene in Malawi. In Chapter Three we will explore how civil society has engaged and been engaged by issues of development, most notably the Millennium Development Goals. The chapter will address the manner in which developmental programmes like the MDGs incorporate certain governmental rationalities which become implicated into the everyday operations and discourses of civil society organisations in Malawi. Expectations of what development should bring and how it should be achieved in Malawi emerge not from a distinctly 'Malawian' national space, but from spaces which incorporate a distinct Malawian context certainly, but also derive from neoliberal governmental logics which emerge from entirely different transnational trajectories. This chapter will illuminate the implications of such governing rationalities for thinking through how autonomous civil society organisations in Malawi can really be from the international political and economic structures which arguably underpin poverty in Malawi by consistently emasculating the state and eviscerating its capacity to organise the local economy. This will be illustrated more concretely by Chapter Four, which deals more squarely with post-Cold War democracy in Malawi, and the ways in which some parts of civil society have been implicitly engaged in the undermining of democratic development in the country. Without romanticising in any way the records of past Malawian presidents, especially the recently deceased Bingu wa-Mutharika, this chapter will illustrate how in the

aftermath of Mutharika's death, Malawi finally had a President - Joyce Banda - with which international financial institutions and international capital could do business. As a result, and away from the international propaganda about how Banda represented a new page in Malawian and African politics, this has resulted in the silencing of those parts of civil society seeking a more economically just outcome for Malawi's citizens. A fundamental question this chapter addresses then is whether the continuing patrimonial nature of politics in Malawi represents an endogenous obstacle to democratic development and the 'people power' of civil society, or whether exogenous factors produce a form of civil society which in part tolerates such behaviour at particular times.

The analysis in both Chapters Three and Four emerges from several years of ethnographic research in Malawi. Since 2008 I have visited the country on four separate occasions, conducting 43 interviews mainly with different CSOs, but also journalists, historians and other academics (particularly at Chancellor College, Zomba), and political bloggers. My ethnographic research also included participating in a United Nations Development Programme roundtable meeting with Malawian CSOs, and in 2013 I organised, together with Raymond Mwenitete of the Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET), a workshop for over 30 CSOs to discuss and strategize around the post-MDG agenda. It is no over-exaggeration to say that without Raymond the workshop would not have happened, not simply because I was not in Malawi to carry out all of the necessary logistical and organisation preparatory work in advance of the workshop, but also because Raymond was (and is) much more of an 'insider' in the Malawian CSO community than I can ever hope to be, and was thus able to 'sell' the workshop in ways that I would not have been able to. The amazing engagement with the workshop that Malawian CSOs illustrated (in terms of attendance and active participation) was in large part down to Raymond. Too often in academic writing we do not sufficiently recognise the integral part played by on-the-ground partners in our research. More than simply mentioning Raymond in my 'acknowledgements' section, I wanted here to illustrate how incredibly integral someone like him is to doing ethnographic research in perhaps not entirely familiar contexts. An important additional note to the interviews I conducted is that I have decided not to present them in this book with any form of explicitly identifying information, for instance names, dates, places, etc. This has been to protect the anonymity of the participants (during a period of time when

CSO leaders have been targeted by arson campaigns, imprisonment, etc), as well as to reflect staff turnover amongst some of the organisations I visited repeatedly over the period of time I was visiting Malawi. Instead of identifying information accompanying every interview quotation I have provided relevant information within any text preceding a quotation which should provide the reader with enough contextual background within which to process the 'data' as presented.

In Chapter Four especially, I have supplemented this ethnographic research with analysis of newspaper reports produced from within Malawi as well as internationally, reports of commissions of inquiry established by the Malawian government into the various protests and related events which occurred during 2011-12, reports from multinational corporations with business interests in Malawi, and statistics produced about the Malawian economy by the Centre for Social Concern, based in Lilongwe, Malawi.

In sum, this is a book which takes an instructive example in Malawi to make some arguments about nearly a quarter of a century of civil society activity in Africa. Reflecting the liberal triumphalism of the immediate post-Cold War period, this was a sector which was rather unproblematically envisaged as the subject of Africa's transformation, but which, viewed in a longer-term context through the prisms within which such transformations were presumed to take place (i.e. development and democracy) is a far more problematic sector than that first imagined. Fundamentally this tells us much more about the condition of the African state than it does about civil society per se, an argument which we need to trace back to the initial stirrings of support for civil society amongst the international financial institutions which have done so much to support this sector in Africa, and to which, in the following chapter, we will now turn.

CHAPTER TWO

CIVIL SOCIETY, THE TRANSFORMATIONAL SUBJECT AND THE WORLD BANK

“Donors have been successful in influencing the current version of civil society in these countries so that a vocal, well-funded section of it, which intervenes on key issues of national development strategy, acts not as a force for challenging the *status quo*, but for building societal consensus for maintaining it.” (Hearn, 2001: 43)

As alluded to in chapter one, the term ‘civil society’ is a broad term that can take in many different types of actors. Interest in the potential of civil society to help countries achieve democracy and development has been as broad as the term itself. Whilst civil society has always been an active contributor to matters of national and international importance (think of the anti-slavery campaigns of the 18th and 19th centuries, through to the anti-nuclear and civil rights campaigns of the 1960s and 70s), in terms of international development and democracy in the developing world, civil society groups only came to the attention of donor agencies in the 1980s and early 1990s, largely in the guise of major international NGOs, as well as various women’s and indigenous people’s groups. At a series of landmark UN conferences, including the first and second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (1981 and 1990), the Rio Earth Conference (1992), and the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), civil society actors provided important inputs into conference outcomes (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 25; Hulme, 2007: 4-5).

This chapter however focusses on the major international financial institution which has driven the civil society agenda the furthest, the World Bank. In this chapter, we will explore how the Bank has evolved its thinking vis-à-vis civil society in the nearly two decades since the release of its internal guide on consulting NGOs and CSOs (World Bank, 1998). The chapter will simultaneously explore how the Bank has evolved its consultation strategies and practices. In sub-Saharan Africa the World Bank in particular has been the major force in delineating the space for both civil society and other donor agencies when it comes to matters of development. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to understand how the

preeminent actor in shaping the space for civil society in sub-Saharan Africa has evolved its thinking and practice on civil society in general terms, as a means of laying out the ground for the book's subsequent analysis of civil society in Malawi.

There is also a further function of this chapter. In the late 1990s and early 2000s there was a great deal of literature written about how the Bank engages with CSOs, and the successes or failures of CSOs to have their demands/agendas met. The literature which emerged in this period reflected underlying factors which had led to a seeming (re) emergence of civil society and CSOs across a range of spheres in international and domestic spheres. Quite often it would depend on the authors' own normative values as to whether they attributed success or failure, hope or despair, to this civil society re-emergence, something which was quite evident in much of the literature about CSO-World Bank/International Organization (IOs) relations at that time. Constructivists for example tended to view civil society engagement with international organizations (including the Bank) as an inherently good thing, which would, by and large, democratise these organisations and hence international politics, which from this perspective was being increasingly sited away from traditional domestic governance structures towards IOs (see for instance, Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Keane, 2005; Scholte, 1998; 2002; 2004). More critical scholars (where this book more broadly situates itself) tended to view these developments far more sceptically, aware of the dangers and likelihood of co-option, and other forms of domination and hegemonic legitimation which new avenues of 'participation' and 'consultation' opened up (See for instance: Chandler, 2004; Colas, 2005; Knight and Smith, 2008).

Whilst clearly manifesting great differences, what these authors on both sides of the debate had in common was a failure to meaningfully engage with *why and how* the Bank (or the particular IO under study) chose to engage with CSOs. For constructivists the 'why' question wasn't very important, it was just assumed that IOs *should* be engaging. Critical scholars on the other hand were less concerned with the 'how', but were very clear on the 'why' i.e. IOs engaged with civil society to further entrench their power, and the power of neoliberal economic hegemony. Whilst not unsympathetic to this position, it does nonetheless seem important to understand in greater detail how IOs, and in this case the Bank, conceptualize engagement, what it's for and how it should be done. This is not however to say that there

are not scholars who have looked at these issues in the past. Some have indeed looked at Bank–civil society engagement processes and concluded that these mechanisms are conditioned and directed by the Bank in order to provide cover for institutional agendas (Udall, 1998). Others have suggested that Bank-civil society engagement practices have represented an even more pernicious attempt on the part of the Bank to limit ideology and practice that runs counter to conventional ‘Bank-think’ (Broad and Cavanagh, 2008), thus limiting its engagement to those CSOs who think like it (Nelson, 2002). It is nonetheless the case however that much of this literature is getting out of date, and so it is an additional function of this chapter to update this literature and take a critical perspective to both the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of Bank-civil society engagement, in addition to laying the groundwork for the chapters of this book which follow.

On the previous page I argued that the Bank has been the major force in delineating the space for civil society in sub-Saharan Africa. How does one arrive at such a conclusion? After all, many donors operate with and fund CSOs in sub-Saharan Africa. These include bilateral and multilateral governmental agencies, as well as some of the bigger International NGOs and multi-national corporations, the latter of which may provide funds to CSOs working in areas of resource extraction to build schools or other perceived ameliorative projects (see for instance Hönke, 2012). It has been however through the Bank-sponsored and devised vehicle, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes (PRSPs) that civil society organisations have been officially endorsed as development actors, alongside donors and national governments, coming together to address matters of development in particular countries. Indeed, the PRSPs have been the international community’s primary vehicle for addressing poverty and development in those African states which have been able to prove their aid worthiness by mostly minimising (or being seen to minimise – see Chapter 4) conflict and corruption. By August 2013, the IMF could report that the large share of low-income countries now had some version of a PRSP in place (IMF, 2013)

This is important because of the principles which underpin the PRSPs process, the most important of which is country ownership. At its most basic, ownership means that PRSPs should promote “national ownership of strategies through broad-based participation of civil society” (IMF, 2013). Country ownership is fundamental to the PRSP process, because the

process itself was a response to critics of the Bank who had accused it of riding roughshod over sovereign governments during the preceding period of structural adjustment in the 1980s and 1990s (see SAPRIN, 2004 for a primary example of this critique). However, we cannot view the principle of national ownership in isolation from the twin principle of partnership which underpins the PRSPs process. Partnership refers to “*involving coordinated participation of development partners (government, domestic stakeholders, and external donors)*” (IMF, 2013) and is the principle which ensures that national ownership of the PRSPs does not stray too far from the internationally prescribed poverty reduction agenda.

As Harrison has shown (2004), it is in sub-Saharan Africa that the Bank has been most able to pursue the PRSP process and its ownership and partnership agendas. Indeed, the region hosts more World Bank civil society focal points than any other (World Bank, 2006: 41)^v. Faced as it was in the mid-1990s by a series of newly democratising and weak states, whose governing classes were populated by former Bank employees and other western-educated sympathisers, in the same year as the PRSP process was introduced Thandika Mkandawire defined sub-Saharan African democracy as ‘choiceless’ (1999), with political parties and institutionalised movements led by a series of relatively ideologically indistinguishable figureheads. Choiceless as this situation may have been for African citizens, these weak, homogenous democracies proved ideal for the Bank’s PRSP experimentation.

As we will see in this chapter, although the relationship has fluctuated, the Bank has largely sought a broad engagement with African civil society groups in the post-Cold War period, which has only been enhanced by the PRSP ownership and partnership agenda. However, at a very early stage the Bank set its parameters of what it considered civil society to be. As noted above, the term can be very broadly defined to include anything which exists between the family and the state. For the Bank however, this was not defined enough; In *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth* (1989) the Bank establishes its relationship with civil society along a series of exclusions:

“In some spheres ... there can be little compromise. Family and ethnic ties that strengthen communal actions have no place in central government agencies where staff must be selected on merit, and public and private monies must not be confused...*the challenge is to*

build on the elements that are compatible with modernisation and development, [and reject] those that are not" (World Bank, 1989: 60. Emphasis added)^{vi}

James Ferguson has written extensively about how the World Bank's expansion of its modus operandi from finance ministries to NGOs and traders associations was not in fact a radical transition. Arguing that the selective inclusion of civil society in the developmental project did not signify an admittance that the Bank had gotten their SAPs approach wrong in the 1980s, from this perspective the turn to civil society made by the Bank in the early 1990s was in fact a mere technical adjustment in attempting to secure the same outputs which straightforward structural adjustment had tried but failed to achieve i.e. liberalised economies and export-oriented growth. Civil society had become a necessary input because what became known as the 'post-Washington consensus' involved a tacit recognition that governments might after all have some role to play beyond getting the state out of the way of market forces, the overriding idea behind SAPs. After all, economic liberalisation would (and indeed did) stall if the broader population was poorly educated, unhealthy, and subsisting in an environment lacking basic infrastructure. With a recognition that the state had to be brought (partially) back in, some kind of local watchdog was necessary. Hence, the renewed Bank interest in CSOs which started becoming apparent in the 1990s (Ferguson, 2006: 69-88). The quote cited above reveals the selective basis upon which civil society was to be engaged in the new developmental paradigm of the 1990s, in the broader context of governmental reform i.e. that for civil society to play its part in achieving the Bank's economistic developmental outlook, there could be no space for the patrimonial politics which pervaded the space (or in many instances non-space) between the state and the family in Africa (and indeed elsewhere) at that time. It was not however merely about instantiating a space between state and (civil) society, but also about fixing down what the state should be, and what it should do. The turn to civil society then was at the same time a turn away from the state, albeit in a more considered way than the 'wild west' unadulterated free-market days of structural adjustment. As governments and civil society came together under the PRSP agenda to practice the 'governance' of their societies, the sovereignty of the state became a decreasingly important defining feature of statehood in Africa. In other words, governments could no longer hide behind their sovereignty, but had to prove their right to govern through the liberal practice of good governance (Williams,

2008: 3). This led Graham Harrison to coin the term “governance states” as a means of describing African states at the turn of the century, states which were deeply penetrated by Bank and other donor officials on secondment across several ministries, all there to ‘improve’ governance whilst at the same time draining those states of their autonomous sovereign power (Harrison, 2004).

There has in recent years been a healthy debate about the agency of the African state in the face of accounts such as the one detailed above. Brown (2013) has suggested that scholars who have rung the death knell of African sovereignty, by for instance proclaiming the overwhelming power of the global economy, imperialistic international organisations and liberal ideology to penetrate and render meaningless African state sovereignty (see, for instance: Harrison [2004]; Williams [2008]; Gruffydd Jones [2008]), have failed to account for the growing agency of African governments to negotiate their demands at domestic and international levels. It is certainly true that, in recent years, African states have appeared to be more able to assert themselves in the international arena. However, Brown’s two examples of Rwanda and Tanzania are poorly judged (the former being given space by dint of international guilt over the genocide, the latter because President Benjamin Kikwete has been one of the most vocal African governmental cheerleaders for neoliberal policies). Even if we take into account Africa’s biggest economy, Nigeria, developments in 2014 which saw US, UK and French military assistance against Boko Haram remind us of the very parlous nature of African state sovereignty and authority.

To return to our discussion of civil society, the approach to this sector expressed in the 1989 report cited above as a guarantor of good governance was to extend very clearly to the conceptualisation of civil society engagement with subsequent World Bank sponsored development strategies, and the ‘ownership’ agenda more broadly. ‘Ownership’, as we will see, was to be the Bank’s guarantor of a compliant and pliable African state.

On the same page of the same report cited above, the Bank had this to say about civil society’s role in Africa’s post-structural adjustment transition:

“Ultimately, better governance requires political renewal. This means a concerted attack on corruption from the highest to the lowest levels. This can be done by setting a good example, by strengthening accountability, by encouraging public debate, and by nurturing a free press. It also means empowering women and the poor by fostering grassroots and non-governmental organizations, such as farmers associations, cooperatives and women’s groups” (World Bank, 1989: 60)

With this the Bank established civil society’s *raison d’être*. (A certain kind of) civil society in Africa was to be a cog in the machine of keeping the state on track. Where structural adjustment may have failed to produce growth, or leaner, more efficient states (Severino and Ray, 2010: 64-80), the Bank’s recognition of such was not meant to represent readmission of the African state into the Bank’s thinking for development on the continent. The appearance of civil society as a key actor in the continent’s developmental strategy was thus in a monitoring capacity to keep an untrustworthy state in check. In check from what one may ask? At this stage we must rest on the arguments of Michel Foucault, although as the book progresses, particularly in Chapter Four, these arguments will be tested. Foucault argued that the fundamental role of civil society when it emerged as a category in late-enlightenment European philosophy was to act as the state’s self-limitation in the market. In other words, it was in the state’s DNA to interfere and monopolise the market, and so the state established civil society to act as a barrier against its own authoritarian proclivities (2008: 295-313). The major difference in the context of the Bank’s pronouncements on civil society in Africa was that the terms of civil society’s role (and thus the state’s role too) was being imposed externally rather than developed endogenously. How far such a reading of civil society in Africa gets us will be more fully explored in Chapter Four.

Social Development Family vs the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management network

To return to the Bank’s evolving relationship with civil society, it was several more years before the Bank started to formalise its operational approach to the civil society sector. In an African context this is not particularly surprising given the large-scale changes which took place across the continent between the early and mid-1990s. Across the continent during this short period, most countries legalized opposition parties and held competitive,

multiparty elections, in many cases for the first times in their histories as nation-states. This can be set against the five countries which held competitive elections during the previous decade (Botswana, Gambia, Mauritius, Senegal, and Zimbabwe). With the pieces falling together the Bank began to set out more specific criteria for civil society, and the Bank's engagement with this sector. Highlights of this period include the 1998 operational manual entitled 'Involving Nongovernmental Organizations in Bank-Supported Activities' (also known as GP 14.70) composed by NGO/Civil Society Unit of the Social Development Family (SDF). This was followed a year later by a number of more public documents released by the Bank's Poverty Reduction and Economic Management (PREM) network featuring case studies of national civil society activities in Bank-related areas.

These documents lend themselves to comparative analysis due to the different branches of the Bank by which they were authored. As Sande Lie's excellent ethnography of the Bank has revealed, the SD and PREM wings of the institution are often at loggerheads. Sande Lie shows how many SD employees are former NGO workers or academics who have been drawn into the Bank either on secondment or because they believe in 'fighting from the inside' (2015), whilst PREM employees are normally longer term members of the Bank family with backgrounds in economics and accountancy. Sande Lie also shows how PREM maintains the hegemony of its economic approach to development issues most of the time (Ibid). This is reflected in all sorts of situations, from private conversations, to more formal meetings (where SD employees are frequently shouted down) to in-country 'partner' meetings between the Bank, other donors, and country governments.

Reading the aforementioned documents on civil society comparatively reveals some of these tensions. If we begin with the SDF's 1998 manual 'Involving Nongovernmental Organizations in Bank-Supported Activities', we see a difficult to measure and human development-focussed rendition of what civil society is for. For instance:

"These organizations can make important contributions toward ensuring that the views of local people are taken into account, promoting community participation, extending project reach to the poorest, and introducing flexible and innovative approaches" (World Bank, 1998: para 1)

Whilst ostensibly an operational manual (with a suitably bureaucratic code: GP 14.70), which contains advice on categorising and engaging with civil society organisations and NGOs, the manual also contains key pointers to how the authors thought of civil society in a normative sense. This will become important when we shortly compare this normativity with the PREM reports. For now we can see that from the above quote civil society is not a state-focussed entity. This would seemingly disprove the Foucauldian argument posited above that the purpose of civil society is to limit the state (the PREM reports will return Foucault front and centre). Here, civil society exists to promote local participation in development projects, thus presumably achieving a level of accountability which was missing from the structural adjustment paradigm. Similarly, and vis-à-vis the Bank, civil society exists to *"...broaden input into Bank policies, analyses, and country strategies"* (Ibid: para 2). Indeed, the manual contains a warning that *"Bank staff should be aware that while government/NGO collaboration can enhance the quality of Bank-supported operations, it may not be possible in every country situation"* (Ibid: para 3). This perhaps further underlines the notion that for the authors of this manual, the purpose of civil society is not always primarily a state-focussed one, but involves a more comprehensive underpinning of a new, locally accountable set of World Bank development policies. Indeed, this point is made explicit later on in the manual, when the authors argue that:

"The Bank seeks to support the strengthening of the institutional capacity of borrowing country NGOs as an important aspect of promoting long-term sustainable development and engaging the national civil society in development activities" (Ibid: para 27)

So, to reiterate, from the SDF perspective, civil society was to be a component in a broadened-out, sustainable and human development oriented agenda. Of course, being an operational manual this is not the only message inscribed into the SDF document (others include much more managerial and bureaucratic ones such as criteria of partner selection for Bank-funded projects), but this more holistic rendition of civil society is present throughout.

Turning to the PREM documents from the same period, we find an edition of PREMNotes, PREM's internal set of policy and good-practice studies for fellow World Bank staff. PREMNote 30 (Landell-Mills, 1999), written by long-serving World Bank decentralisation specialist Pierre Landell-Mills, presents a subtly yet significantly different picture of what civil society is for. Although presented through the prism of Landell-Mills's experience of working on public sector reform in Bangladesh, the rendition of civil society constructed here fits perfectly with Sande Lie's description of PREM's economically-focussed objectives (2015). The very title of this note is suggestive: 'Mobilizing civil society to fight corruption in Bangladesh'. This is clearly a far more state-focussed, and, returning to Foucault, state-limiting perspective on the role and function of civil society. In this report, civil society is a technical fix to the problem that corrupted governments rarely entertain the normal organs which would hold a light up to corrupt practices and allow markets to flourish i.e. a free press, active judiciary, etc. CSOs can fill that gap, and indeed, according to Landell-Mills, must do so, for "without considerable public pressure, governments are unlikely to foster the transparency and accountability needed to curb malfeasance by public officials. Consequently, there is a major role for civil society organizations to campaign for such reforms" (1999: 1). Indeed, civil society must work not solely on more obvious issues of legislative and policy agendas, but also on more subtle issues of behavioural change, which Landell-Mills makes clear when he closes his PREMNote arguing evocatively that "Changing attitudes and behaviour takes time" (Ibid: 4).

There are not many PREMNotes which focus explicitly on civil society. Searching for 'civil society' on the World Bank's Open Knowledge Repository archive of PREMNotes^{vii}, 27 results feature, only two of which explicitly focus on civil society. This includes Landell Mills' PREMNote 27 above. The other relevant PREMNote, number 24, was published in 1999 and was written by Larry Diamond, author of a number of relatively positivist pieces on African democratic transition in the mid- 1990s (see: 1994; 1995a; 1995b; 1999a). This positivism is very clear in the PREMNote, which opens with an equation, that "*...corruption impedes investment and growth and exacerbates poverty and inequality*" (Diamond, 1999b: 1). As others have argued however, such a conception of corruption ignores its multifaceted nature, the many ways in which it might be considered to be socially and politically legitimate in certain post-colonial contexts (Mbembe, 1992), how it is produced by the

particular manner in which developing countries, especially in Africa, have been inserted into the global political economy (Reno, 1995; Ellis, 2011: 31-67), and how, in certain contexts, it might actually be able to produce investment, growth and social mobility (Cammack, Kelsall and Booth, 2011; Kelsall, 2013).

Nonetheless, and reflecting what James Ferguson called the World Bank's 'scientific capitalism' (2006: 69-88), Diamond's PREMNote continues to list, in the manner of technical inputs, the various 'vertical' and 'horizontal' institutions which are required to keep a developing state on its appropriate path. Civil society, in the guise of a free press, elections and NGOs fall under the 'vertical' banner (Diamond, 1999b: 3-4), as they are deemed to exist below and outside the state. This is civil society as a governing, rather than developmental force, for as Diamond argues, it is the job of civil society to *"...lobby for constitutional changes to improve governance, while also working to monitor the conduct of public officials"* (Ibid: 4). This is a very clear manifestation of Foucault's assertion that it was the job of civil society in classically liberal terms to limit the state's activity in the market (Foucault, 2008: 295-313). It is also an explicit reflection of how Foucault argued power works, i.e. by conducting the conduct of subjects (Foucault, 1982), in this case government officials *and* the agents of civil society who are supposed to be fulfilling their subjectivity by monitoring such officials. As such, imagining civil society in this way has enabled *"...an explosion in de facto government carried out by an extraordinary swarm of NGOs, voluntary organisations, and private foundations"* in *"the last couple of decades"* (Ferguson, 2009: 168). It is important that we comprehend this plethora of non-governmental actors if we are to understand the governance of contemporary neoliberalism and development (Ibid), a task which will be addressed in Chapters Three and Four.

It is of course not particularly surprising that in documents focussing on civil society and corruption, the former is conceived as being a central component in reducing the latter. Indeed, whilst there are not many PREMNotes focussing on the civil society or the civil society-corruption relationship (and thus positing civil society as the potential guarantor of the state's transparency and good-doing), we cannot consider, for instance, Landell-Mills' contribution as the anomaly of a man who sits on the Partnership for Transparency Fund's board of directors (see: <http://ptfund.org/about/board-of-directors/>). There is indeed a

broader pattern of play here, which reaches into the very heart of how PREM, and ultimately, as will be shown, the Bank conceptualises civil society and operationalises its relationships with CSOs.

There are two matters of relevance here, the first being that this appears to be the primary function of civil society for PREM. A bit of background context on PREM and its position in the World Bank structure will help explain why this is important. PREM's raison d'être is that it *"contributes to the design of global and country policies and the building of institutions to achieve inclusive growth in developing countries"*^{viii}. PREM is part of the core Bank structure. On the World Bank organogram in Figure 1 it is grouped alongside all of the regional teams, as well as three other non-regional networks (one of which, the Sustainable Development network, is the latest iteration of the Social Development Family which authored the 1998 manual discussed earlier in the chapter).

Jon Sande-Lie (2015) provides some useful insight into this arrangement of regional and non-regional teams/networks, or what are in Bank-speak 'operational teams' (i.e. the regions) and 'thematic networks' (like PREM). The regional teams are operational for obvious reasons; they are the ones, once split again into country teams, working on the front line of the Bank's operations, liaising with governments and other in-country stakeholders on a day-to-day basis. The thematic networks on the other hand are peopled by the Bank's professional economists and social scientists. It is their role to spread expertise across the organisation, working with operational teams to spread and institute best practice. This is a fine model in theory. However, as Sande Lie reveals, in practice it is made more complicated by the competition this model entails:

"Operational influence implies access to the supervision budget, and for every network this means continuity of that particular idea and its general work. The utmost objective of any network manager is then to mainstream that network's thinking and ideas throughout the Bank, which would secure the network's relevance, sustain its thematic scope and uphold its financial position." (Sande Lie, 2015)

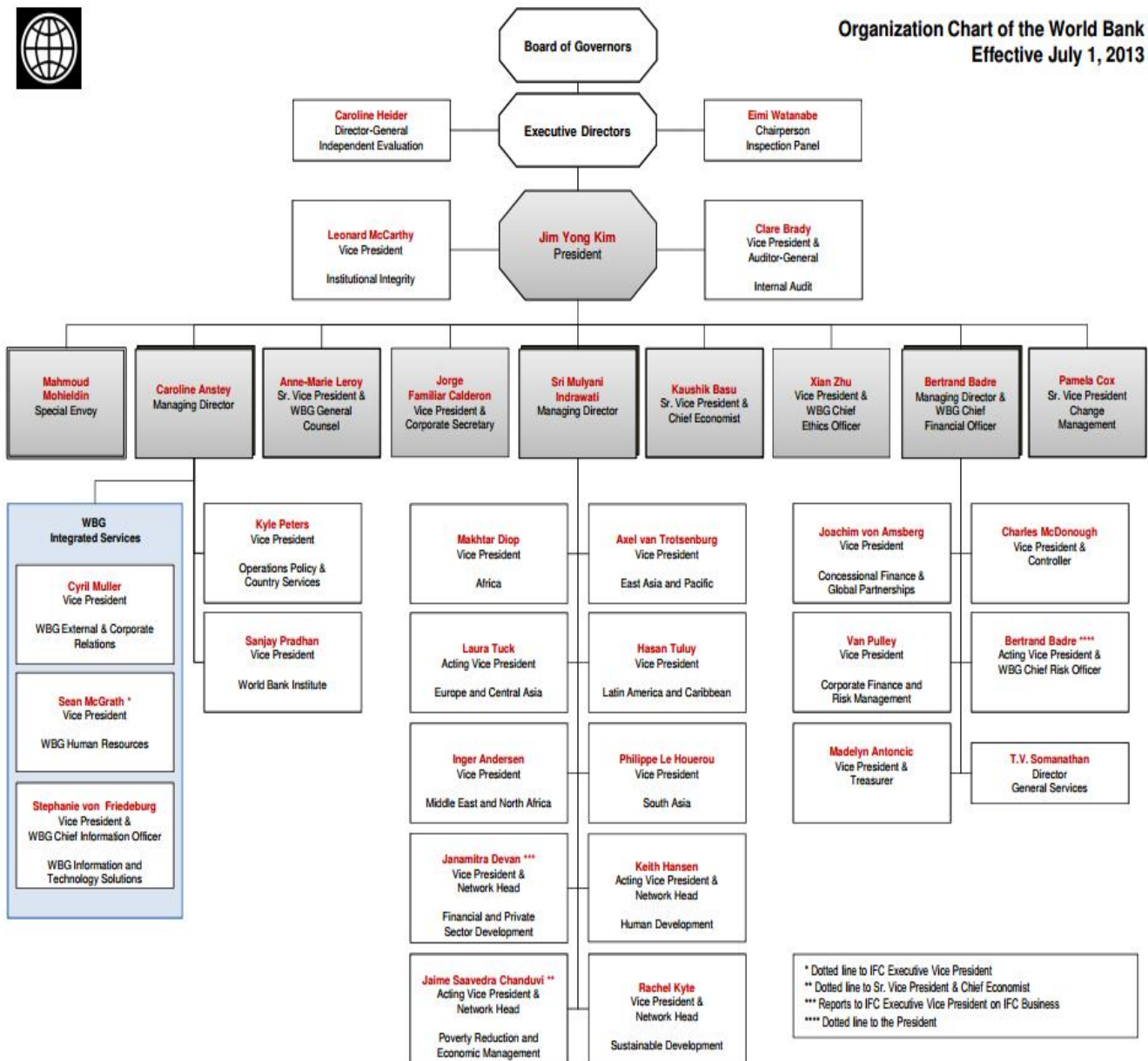
In other words, the thematic networks compete for influence over the operational teams because of the ability to justify network budgets success in doing this involves. Whilst networks provide the 'maps' for the regions, the competition between thematic networks becomes about *"...which 'map' to deliver and operationalise on the regional side. Networks compete for operational and Bank-wide influence, and their success depends on their ability to infuse ideas into the various regional departments"* (Ibid).

That PREM's view on civil society appears to be a rather technocratic and instrumental one thus relates to the second matter of relevance which emerges from the earlier analysis of the PREMNotes and the Social Development Family's (SDF) broader conceptualisation. In simple terms, which approach does the Bank take more seriously, or in other words, given that it is clear that the 'Bank' is not an homogeneous body, whose conceptualisation has won over with the operational side?

Figure 1: World Bank Organogram^{ix}



Organization Chart of the World Bank
Effective July 1, 2013



It was in the initial 1998 SDF manual where the distinction between a technocratic and more holistic civil society was first articulated in Bank literature. The manual reports on two categories of NGO relevant to the Bank's work:

“(a) Operational NGOs, whose primary purpose is to fund, design, or implement development-related programs or projects; and (b) advocacy NGOs, whose primary purpose is to defend or promote a specific development cause and which seek to influence the development policies and practices of the Bank, governments, and other bodies...Operational NGOs usually have more field-level experience that is relevant to the Bank; but advocacy groups may also be able to offer valuable grassroots insights and challenge conventional development thinking” (World Bank, 1998: Para 7)

At both a thematic and operational level it appears that the Bank has consistently favoured the kind of civil society favoured by PREM and articulated under point a) of the above quote. The following insights reinforce this impression, and leads to some thoughts on why this might be the case.

Constructing a legible civil society: The Bank takes sides

In 1996, following pressure from an international network of NGOs called the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review International Network (SAPRIN), which had campaigned for a more inclusive element to Bank economic policy making following the failure of structural adjustment, then World Bank President James Wolfensohn wrote to SAPRIN to invite a dialogue between the Bank and civil society over issues of economic and development policy. The result was the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI):

“SAPRI sought to add local knowledge to the economic policy making process and to legitimise a voice for organized civil society in such decision making processes at both the national and global levels ...[It] was a tripartite arrangement involving national governments, World Bank teams and national networks of hundreds of CSOs” (SAPRIN, 2004: 5)

Established as a process in which SAPRI participants would have equal access to all relevant World Bank documents pertaining to structural adjustment in the selected study countries, the process soon became bogged down by Bank recalcitrance to live up to the promises of the original Wolfensohn approach to SAPRI. Ultimately the Bank attempted to circumvent the whole process by institutionalising SAPRI into the Bank's own research programmes. When the NGOs involved refused to do this the Bank disowned the whole process (Ibid: 31-33).

This is a clear sign that when faced with a situation beyond its ability to control, the Bank has been very quick to close down the 'advocacy' element of civil society, seeking instead to transform it into a more institutionalised, 'in house' element of its own programmes. SAPRI's account of this process may lead us to conclude that this occurs when the Bank is faced with 'inconvenient truths' which it wishes to bury or whose agents it wishes to sideline. Indeed, in many respects the Bank is actually quite clear about which policies it will take on board from civil society and which it will not, and further, what kind of civil society it wants to engage with, and what kind it does not. It is interesting to note, for instance, the manner by which the Bank seeks to depoliticise or co-opt protest movements which are either explicitly anti-Bank, or whose demands require the radical revision of Bank policies towards economic liberalisation. Take the following image and caption from a Bank report on civil society engagement published in 2005 (World Bank, 2005b: 5):



CSOs march in downtown Washington, DC during WB/IMF Spring Meeting (April 2004)

If the caption were to be removed, it is highly unlikely the people in the picture could be described with the rather apolitical moniker of 'CSOs', which implies a formalised and centralised type of organisation. As has been amply demonstrated, protests against the International Financial Institutions have been constituted certainly by these types of organisations, but also by loose-knit networks of activists, Anarchists, farmers and so on (Gabay, 2010: 121-133). Given the signs being held by the people in this image, we might be at the very least reticent about automatically concluding that these people all hold day-jobs working for CSOs and NGOs. Furthermore, what are these protestors marching about? Again, a focus on the placard in the background of the picture (which reads '*Dam the World Bank, not the World's Rivers*') reveals that this is a protest, at least in part, against the Bank itself. The caption however makes no mention of what these people are protesting against, or which meeting they are protesting outside of. They merely appear in this report as a signal to readers that the Bank tolerates protest, and engages with protestors (or actually 'CSOs', which, as a key aspect of World Bank engagement strategies are clearly a different political agent to 'protestors'). Indeed, several years on, the Bank performed a similar exercise with the 'Arab Spring' protests, claiming that:

“The history-making events in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and the Republic of Yemen created an unprecedented space for citizen activism and increased discussion about social accountability, transparency, and governance. The Bank took advantage of this historic context by focusing on dialogue and consultation, training and capacity building, and grant-funding activities” (World Bank, 2012: 60)

Large numbers of communities across the Middle East and North Africa have been systematically denuded of their livelihoods and abilities to provide for themselves, over decades of neoliberal policy reform implemented by national elites who have enriched themselves off the back of privatisation and supported by international policies of market liberalisation. Just prior to the Arab Spring, the region had experienced a 35-year average zero per cent real GDP per capita growth and had the highest unemployment rate in the world (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2008: 2). In Egypt, changes to Nasserite-era land and tenancy laws which enhanced the occupancy rights of those dwelling and working on land over the owners of that land, have been successively withered away so that today large tracts of Egypt's most fertile Nile valley land has been sold off to export industries and small producers have been forcibly removed into coastal areas where soil erosion and salination caused by climate change have made subsistence farming all-but impossible (Malm and Esmailian, 2013). Did the Bank cause these events to happen? Did the Bank force Anwar Sadat into being an early exponent of neoliberal reform? Most likely not, but the Bank nonetheless has facilitated and cheer-led such reforms, which meant that the Arab Spring movements were not simply about “social accountability, transparency, and governance”, or at least certainly not purely at a domestic scale. Complex networks of transnational policy coherence formed the basis of neoliberal reforms across the Middle East and North Africa, and so the protests which have been sporadically occurring since 2011 have certainly been targeted against national regimes, but with a recognition that these were regimes which had had been propped up by Western interests and enriched by World Bank structural adjustment policies of economic liberalisation over several decades. Such issues go unexplored in the Bank's narrative presented above.

The lack of self-awareness on display here by the Bank is perhaps not very surprising, and yet in many ways the Bank is quite up-front about whom it will work with and on which

issues it will compromise. The Bank has been consistently transparent in its relations with civil society about the constituencies which drive Bank policy and the limitations it claims this puts it under: *“...the Bank has to work within parameters of different country contexts, limited government capacity, and operational challenges...[The Bank] will continue to dialogue on many other issues where differences still persist.”* (World Bank, 2005b: 1) These differences are admitted where they arise, again suggesting that the Bank is not necessarily underhand in how it deals with civil society demands, but merely dismissive of them when deemed necessary. Take this example from a consultation exercise on extractive industries: *“Some CSOs had hoped that the Bank would commit to ending its support for extractive industries investments altogether, but that position was not supported by the executive directors.”* (World Bank, 2006: 11)

This is not to say that the Bank has not attempted to craft the kind of civil society it wants to work with. After early criticism that the Bank’s consultation efforts were very Washington DC-centric (Nelson, 1995, 63), there has been an effort to reach out beyond the Washington DC-based (and, from a Bank perspective, often fractious) CSOs to organisations and groups based in the Global South (World Bank, 2005b: 29). Whilst a notable development, it is also perhaps helpful that many of these organisations are more operational, rather than advocacy focused, and certainly more dependent on Bank and donor financing and support^x. Indeed, in a 2009 report the Bank makes an implicit admission of its frustrations at the more advocacy-oriented CSOs and advocacy professionals:

“A concerted effort was made during the last two years to reach out and engage the chief executive officers (CEOs) of leading international CSOs...Much of the contact between senior Bank management and CSOs was with policy activists in what were often adversarial advocacy sessions...As a consequence, Bank leadership had limited knowledge of the work of the broader civil society community, particularly of the large segment that provides humanitarian assistance, delivers social services, and strengthens civil society capacity in developing countries.” (World Bank, 2009: 5)

An important question to ask is why the Bank desires to work with ‘safer’ operational components of civil society. Of course, in part this may be because the Bank is still not very

comfortable with criticism. But this is arguably also because of the fact that from the Bank's perspective this aspect of civil society is simply easier to comprehend.

Sande Lie documents how on the demand side of Bank activity i.e. in the operational (country and regional) teams, there is a desire for evidence-based analysis with which they can sell development plans to sometimes difficult governments. In one revealing meeting Sande Lie reports an operation manager taking the SDF participants to task for working *"...only with your network's narrow toolbox...Governments are out clients, not CSOs, CBOs, NGOs, or whatever you call this plethora"* (2015). It is this 'plethora' and related ideas of gender equality, empowerment, etc. which are deemed as being *"... 'too soft', 'wooly' and generally difficult to relate to in operational work"*. (Ibid). Ultimately then the Bank's preference for working with organisations that don't seek to directly challenge the mainstream operational/PREM paradigm of the state and development comes down at least as much to a perceived legibility of that that field, as it may be to do with a Machiavellian desire to deflect or silence criticism. Indeed, much of the incompetence illustrated by the Bank in effectively managing the SAPRI process may have derived from its habit of 'seeing like a state' (Scott, 1996, especially Chapter One), its inability to comprehend the complexities of civil society and the field of development more broadly.

This becomes clearer as we track how the Bank begins to try and deal with the 'plethora' of CSOs which began to emerge at the Bank more concretely during the first decade of this century (although the Bank has in fact had a civil society contact point since 1982 [World Bank, 2005b: 3]). In a report released in 2005 under the joint authorship of the Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Network (ESSD, now simply the Sustainable Development Network), which houses the SDF, as well as the Operations Policy and Country Services Network, there is a recognition that, despite the desires of operational team members such as those mentioned above, the Bank has to reach out to a more diffuse set of organisations than those that it previously worked with, including *"...trade [sic] unions, community-based organizations, social movements, faith-based institutions, disabled persons organizations, charitable organizations, media, research centers, foundations, student organizations, professional associations and many others."* (World Bank, 2005a: 3).

However, this is followed on the next page by a statement which speaks directly to the Bank's attempts to make civil society legible:

"The diversity and complexity of global civil society pose challenges to effective engagement with governments and international organizations... Navigating these relationships requires more targeted stakeholder analysis and participatory approaches, and is an important reason why over time the Bank has decentralized much of its relationship management with CSOs to the country level. However, the increasing transnational networking of CSOs also requires consistent strategic engagement at the global level." (Ibid: 4)

Interestingly, the efforts to make civil society legible are reinforced by the type of engagement the report calls for. A legible civil society becomes co-terminous with a civil society which functions for the achievement of the Bank's development aims. This is what the above quote perhaps means by a 'consistent *strategic* dialogue' with civil society. As the following statements illustrate, the strategy is not to engage civil society at the level of defining policy, but rather in implementing it. This once again reinforces the notion that only a civil society which fits into a grid of Bank functionality, representing a technical input into Bank programming, is legible to the Bank.

"...participation can in many circumstances improve the quality, effectiveness, and sustainability of projects, and strengthen ownership and commitment of government."

"...the key role played by community groups in poverty reduction efforts."

"...improved relations in Brazil among government, civil society, and the World Bank resulted in more accepted public policies"

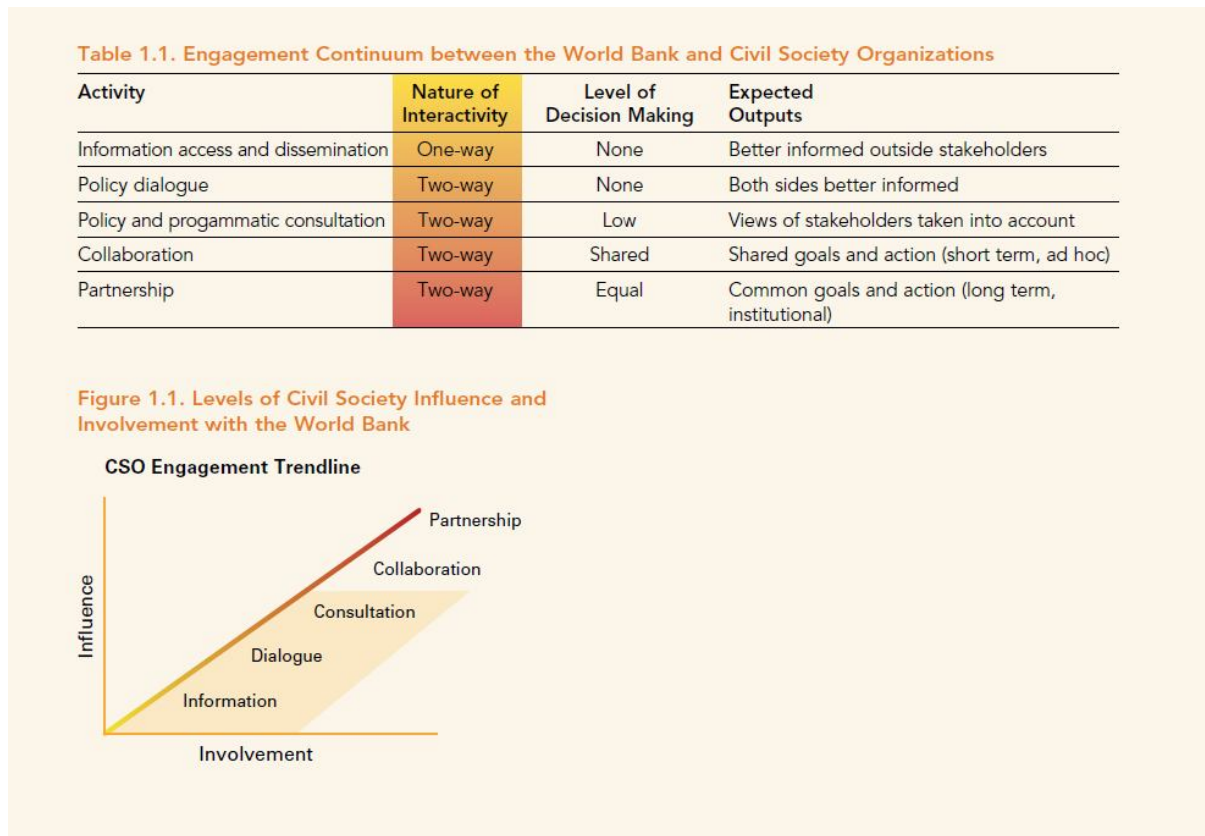
"...a majority of projects studied showed potential for success because their preparation and early implementation were highly participatory."

“...government agencies that actively sought to encourage involvement of beneficiaries achieved a 62 percent success rate in their projects, while those that did not achieved just a 10 percent success rate.”

(Ibid: 6)

Indeed, and to remove any doubt about the limits of the Bank’s ability and/or willingness to comprehend that which exists beyond its own developmental paradigm, a later guide on consulting civil society for Bank staff reminds them of the following: “The 1998 Board paper on NGOs states that, ‘The principle is to conduct open-minded consultations, not to enter into negotiations.’” (World Bank, 2007: 17). It should therefore come as no surprise to the Bank that according to their own metrics as an institution they continue to fail in having meaningful collaborative partnerships with civil society groups at any level. The following graph reveals the Bank’s own self-assessed shortcomings in this regard:

Figure 2: The Bank’s assessment of its civil society engagement record



(World Bank, 2012: xx)

With reference to this graph, the Bank claims that *"to date, most Bank–civil society relations have been concentrated at the first three levels of the engagement continuum"* (Ibid). As can be seen from the definitions provided by the Bank, these first three categories in fact cleave far more closely to the *'Involvement'* pole than the *'Influence'* one. Indeed, even though *'Consultation'* appears on the graph to be at least as much on the influence as on the involvement pole, from the actually provided definitions it is clear that having the *"views of stakeholders taken into account"* does not in any way guarantee the operationalization of those views in Bank policy and practice. This is clear from the results of the SAPRI process, which, according to the key civil society networks involved was effectively closed off by the Bank (SAPRI, 2004), as well as Sande Lie's (2015) account of PREM (and thus economic) hegemony within key sites of Bank policy development.

In order to illustrate these issues in finer detail and to appreciate how these processes are both established on conservative grounds and subsequently get captured by mainstream and orthodox civil society actors, we shall now turn to look at one of the Bank's current major engagement mechanisms, the Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA). The GPSA was established by the Bank in 2012 after a consultation with 1,000 stakeholders (presumably not therefore limited to civil society, although this is not specified) to help *"civil society and governments ...create an enabling environment in which citizen feedback is used to solve fundamental problems in service delivery and to strengthen the performance of public institutions"* (GPSAa) specifically in developing countries. The GPSA itself is a funding mechanism, inviting applications from CSOs in developing countries which have 'opted in' to the programme (39 as of May 2014 [GPSAd]), for project funding around four key pillars, namely Transparency; Representation and Voice; Accountability; and Learning for Improved Results (GPSAb). The kind of civil society invoked by the GPSA is extremely conventional, aligning to that which we found in the PREM analysis earlier on in this chapter. Straightforwardly, the GPSA seeks to provide *"strategic and sustained support to civil society organizations (CSOs) and governments for social accountability initiatives aimed at strengthening transparency and accountability"* (GPSAa), by *"...supporting citizens to have a more articulated voice, helping governments to listen, and assisting government agencies act upon the feedback they receive."* This is both conservative, in the sense of the very

narrow version of civil society deployed here (i.e. anti-corruption, pro-transparency), but also at surface level slightly peculiar. This description suggests a belief that an enhancement in civil society capacity will *"help governments to listen"*, which of course begs the question: listen to whom? On one level this seems highly blind to the elitist nature of the state and its conduct across much of the developing world (variously described as a 'gatekeeper' [Cooper, 2002], 'neo-patrimonial' [Bratton and de Walle, 1994], 'shadow' [Reno, 2000], etc.) although this is unlikely. More likely it is the Bank's less than subtle attempt to prise open the developing state to the interests of the Bank and its liberal project (Williams and Young, 2007), in this case, via what it perhaps rather tellingly calls "Accountapreneurship" (GPSAc). This becomes clearer when we consider in greater detail the way the GPSA is structured.

The GPSA is directed by a stakeholder steering group, which includes members of the World Bank Institute, Government officials (elected and unelected) from Bangladesh, Malawi and Dominican Republic, and then three CSO members and three donor members. More generally, CSOs can apply for an official GPSA partner designation (as of January 2013 the number stood at 100 [GPSAe]), and all three of the current CSO members of the steering group are GPSA partner CSOs, recruited by the World Bank Institute-funded Affiliated Networks for Social Accountability (ANSA). According to a World Bank monitoring organisation, the Bretton Woods Project, *"Of the two CSO representatives selected from developing countries [for the GPSA steering committee], one is from TrustAfrica, a grant making organisation endowed by the Ford Foundation, one of the steering committee's donor chair holders, while the other is from ANSA-Arab World, a branch of ANSA"*. The BWP goes on to note that of the 200 applications submitted during the first call for funding proposals in 2013, over 100 came from Bangladesh and Malawi, two of the three governments represented on the steering committee (Bretton Woods Project, 2013). The BWP's Petra Kjell voiced additional concerns about the GPSA allowing the Bank to cherry-pick which CSOs it funds and works with, and the capturing of funds by Government/CSO elites in countries where the distinctions between these groups are not always so clear due to the difficulty for more independent CSOs to operate (in conversation with the author, July 2014). For instance, some of the earliest GPSA opt-in countries included those facing accusations of serious human rights abuses, such as Belarus, Tajikistan and Honduras.

The GPSA is also indicative of how the Bank is evolving in a world where it can no longer reliably predict its continuing power and hegemony. Although the 'BRICS Bank', announced as a new development bank in 2014, has yet to make a loan, or have a board meeting, its members have agreed to set aside a combined \$100 billion, and it is anticipated that the Bank will start lending soon (Rapoza, 2015). Combined with the emergence of the BRICS as bilateral donors too, and the turn to China being demonstrated by a number of governments in Africa, it is unsurprising that the Bank has begun to reposition itself as a facilitator of development knowledge and expertise, moving towards a concern for the process, rather than the bricks and mortar of development. This is not a new development, more a re-balancing of ongoing Bank activities. As Kramarz and Momani argue, *"The World Bank has always sold ideas, not just loans. Starting in 1996, then president James Wolfensohn rebranded the Bank by articulating a formal vision of a "Knowledge Bank"—a provider of state-of-the-art expertise on development"* (2013: 409).

For this book it is important to consider how some of these issues pan out in an African context. As we will see in the following chapters, in Malawi the Bank's attitude to civil society intersects with a longer historical political economy of the Malawian state. At this juncture then it is worth considering the Africa-specific features of Bank approaches to civil society. As previously mentioned, sub-Saharan Africa is a focal point of the Bank's civil society engagement work. The region also has a much greater and general resonance for the Bank's work on development:

"More than any other region in the world, Sub-Saharan Africa has served as the focal point in Bank thinking about the theory and practice of 'development'...if Africa ever escapes the debt trap and develops in a sustainable fashion, the IDA [International Development Association] would lose its central reason for existence" (Harrison, 2004: 13)

As such the Bank's activities in the region vis-à-vis civil society arguably reveal something more extensive about the Bank's platonic version of civil society, and state-society relations more broadly. A research paper authored by three senior Bank economists (including the chief economist for the Africa region) is revealing in this regard. On the one hand the paper

takes a refreshingly divergent route from standard Bank protocol on civil society as an operational component of Bank policy delivery. As we saw in the last chapter, critical scholars on civil society in the age of Bank engagement and democratisation in Africa, have for many years pointed out the exclusive, ideological, technocratic and in many cases ineffective (by the Bank's criteria as well as other normative sets of criteria) nature of the kind of civil society generated by Bank policy and funding (see, for instance: Kasfir, 1998; Mohan, 2002; Tembo, 2003a; Harrison, 2004; Gabay, 2011; Williams and Young, 2014). Equally, the research paper authored by three senior Bank economists argues that CSOs can be as penetrated by class, gender and ethnic domination as any central government, reflecting "*inequalities in wealth, organization and influence in the political process*" (Devarajan, Khemani and Walton, 2011: 3). Dwelling on the Bank's consistent attempts to engineer an African civil society which can influence state action "*...in the direction of better provision of public goods, equitable human development and dynamic capitalist advance*" (Ibid), the authors question whether external actors (such as the Bank) can play a useful role in achieving these ends, or whether "*...they just add a new set of distortions*" (Ibid).

However, the authors also reveal the desire to engineer the legibility of the landscape which confronts the Bank. They go on to suggest that the Bank must be even more active in constructing a 'workable' civil society in Africa. Their analysis, they suggest:

"...implies that support for civil society should follow an approach that is both organic and experimental: organic in the sense that interventions contribute to change in existing political and societal structures, and not seek to bring "best practice" ideas from outside; experimental in the sense of that there be structured monitoring, information generation and evaluation in the process" (Ibid: 4)

We can see here that the aim is not to allow an organic process (and what that actually means is open to a broad range of interpretation) to come to fruition, but rather to create interventions which will be more deeply embedded in existing societal and political structures, all the better to shape them to Bank developmental priorities^{xi}. However, the Bank's relationship with civil society and CSOs in Africa is not a one-way street, even if for reasons of resources and hegemony it is heavily weighted in favour of the Bank. Indeed, it is

the very weight and momentum of this power which has historically, according to Bayart, allowed African elites to engage in a relationship of 'managed dependency' and extraversion with external actors (2009), from imperial companies to latter day international donors. In other words, as tempting as it may be, particularly for those on the left, to see Africa as the eternal victim, Bayart's analysis pushes us to recognise the ways in which Africans make the best of what are at times some quite straightened circumstances.

In the context of civil society promotion, it is certainly true for instance that the Bank heavily prescribes what kinds of organisations are deemed legitimate for Bank support. As has been demonstrated this occurs through an explicit set of classifications of civil society functionality. But it also occurs more insidiously via a set of norms and discourses which promotes certain types of acquiescent behaviour, and disciplines, or leads to the self-disciplining of behaviour which seeks to challenge Bank orthodoxy (see, for instance, Kamat 2002; Harrison, 2004; Mawdesley, Townsend and Porter, 2004; Gabay, 2011; Gaynor, 2011). However, as much as this is the case, it is also possible to interpret the claims African CSOs make of the Bank in extraversionary terms. Just one brief example can illustrate this for now (The following chapter will explore this in more detail). At a World Bank consultation with African CSOs in 2011, the overall list of demands they made of the Bank are indicative of an extraversionary trend in CSO-Bank relations in Africa:

"More than 1,400 CSO representatives from more than 30 countries participated in face-to-face dialogues, workshops, and seminars...CSOs made a number of recommendations during this process. They urged the Bank to increase funding for CSOs, support CSO knowledge sharing and networking, provide training and capacity building for CSOs to more effectively engage governments" (World Bank, 2012: 53)

According to the Bank (and it is important to bear in mind that, as we saw with SAPRI, the Bank are nothing if not frank about their disagreements with civil society), these were the headline demands issued by this large collection of African CSOs. So whilst many African CSOs are critical of the Bank (Mawdesley, Townsend and Porter, 2004) the Bank also represents the lifeblood for many of these same CSOs. It thus possible to interpret demands such as these (which in effect are focussed on material and organisational, rather than

policy gains) as an extraversionary tactic deployed by African CSOs, a way of managing their dependency on the Bank along terms that most advantage them given the massively unequal power relations which exist between the two.

This is important to bear in mind as we move into Chapter Three. What we have seen in this chapter is that the Bank, as a driving force behind development policy in Africa, and an actor which has historically set the terms for civil society engagement, deploys a very narrow (albeit internally contested) matrix within which it defines legitimate civil society behaviour and characteristics. It's evolution into a 'knowledge bank' has arguably provided even greater opportunities to create and make legible the landscape on which it works, as we have seen with its most recent engagement strategy/intervention, the GPSA. In Africa, where the Bank has historically intervened to quite literally shape and create the post-Cold War civil society terrain, its overwhelming power (shared of course with other bi and multilateral donors) in some senses may provide more material for the kind of extraversionary demands described above. The next chapter will explore these issues in more detail, specifically in the context of Malawi. We will see how Malawian CSOs are by and large hopelessly trapped into a pattern of constrained performance for donors and the development strategies they prioritise (most notably the World Bank Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, known locally as the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy, and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals). We will see that for some CSOs this performance brings material rewards, whilst for others it leads to ever greater depths of material exclusion.

CHAPTER THREE

CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEVELOPMENT IN MALAWI

This chapter will address itself to the 'development' part of the title of this book. In a country like Malawi, it can sometimes be very difficult not to reduce everything in the public realm and political discourse back to issues of development. This is in part because development as a term can act as a kind of 'empty signifier' (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985), where any proposal or activity, whatever its ideological imprint, can be heralded as being carried out in the name of 'development'. Indeed, in the years after formal colonialism ended across much of Africa, 'development' was conjoined with 'unity' as clarion calls of the nationalism and independence which would carry countries like Malawi into the modernised future. It was perhaps no coincidence that under calls for development and unity lay more pernicious agendas of power-seeking which saw all those opposed to the new regimes branded as acting against the 'unity' of the people and the 'development' of the country. This was certainly the case in Malawi under Hastings Banda (see Ross, 2009; Lwanda, 2010; Power, 2010).

In a more contemporary context, there is an interesting question around why it is that development becomes an empty signifier in a country like Malawi. Why it is that every government policy or civil society organisation agenda in a poor country seems to be labelled as contributing to the 'development' of that country, when we do not see the same in wealthier countries. Put more simply, why does building schools in Malawi get called 'development', when the exact same act in the Global North does not? From a critical perspective this might be put down to the Eurocentric paternalism which predated (Hobson, 2012) and still runs through the Western-initiated development project which sees the West as privileged, agentic and forward looking, leaving the non-West as inadequate, passive and immature (Baaz, 2005). However, whilst this might explain why Western actors maintain a division between similar activities which take place in the West and everywhere else, it does not adequately explain why the label of 'development' is so omnipresent *within* countries like Malawi. In Malawi, as with other countries in the region, there is an awful lot of effort expended on labelling everything as being done for the sake of 'development'. The government's main socio-economic plan is known as the Malawi Growth and *Development*

Strategy (MGDS). Indeed, this is a plan which has been updated several times and handed over from government-to-government, even though each government has been formed of a different political party. In the main this is because the MGDS (and now the MGDS II) has been officially sanctioned by the World Bank and stands in place of a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. However, in a similar manner the majority of the most well-funded and prominent civil society organisations in Malawi explicitly tie themselves to that word 'development'. This goes for many of the faith-based CSOs too, although here the field is certainly muddled by the presence of large numbers of evangelical and morality-based church groups. Nonetheless, it is the development CSOs which predominate in public life and discourse in Malawi, certainly in terms of those CSOs regularly featured commenting on government policy in the press, with their offices in the more modern part of Lilongwe which houses the main government ministries and donor headquarters.

A different way of measuring this is to look at the composition of the membership of Malawi's main NGO and CSO umbrella organisation, the Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi (CONGOMA). As of October 2014 CONGOMA listed 262 'local' (i.e. not international) member organisations^{xii}. Of these 262 organisations, 41 used the word 'development' in their title. Independent of these organisations, six used the word 'environment', five 'HIV' and/or 'AIDS', 12 'education' and 30 'child' and/or 'orphan'. The last of these is unsurprising given the prevalence of HIV/AIDs in Malawi, which stands at approximately 7% of the population, with around 800,000 children orphaned by the disease (UNAIDS, 2013). What this tells us is that there is a large number of organisations explicitly committed to a development agenda, and of course many more that may not use any of these words in their title but nonetheless are still committed to this agenda. Examples of these latter organisations, all of which I came across in the research for this book, would be Help for the Elderly; the Malawi Economic Justice Network; Beautify Malawi; and, of course, CONGOMA itself.

And what is this agenda which many of these CSOs are committing themselves to? In large part, as this chapter will proceed to illustrate, it is not a locally derived, contextual definition of development, but rather one which has been implanted into Malawi via a number of processes, including the dependency of most Malawian CSOs on conditional external aid

(with poverty rates north of 80% there is very little opportunity to grow member-funded organisations) (James and Malunga, 2006), the evolution of a transnational CSO elite (Townsend, 1998), of which Malawian CSOs are certainly not alone, but in which they actively participate, and the commitment of the Malawian state to these same agendas mainly for the same reasons (for an accurate portrayal of how both the state and CSOs are drawn into internationally prescribed development agendas see Gaynor, 2011).

Indeed, for all the talk of development policy 'ownership' (Radelet, 2010: 19), the World Bank sets the terms and often imposes the outcomes of national development policy, in the shape of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (Sande Lie, 2015). PRSPs "*describe the country's macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programs over a three year or longer horizon to promote broad-based growth and reduce poverty*" (IMF, 2015). In Malawi, whilst CSOs were involved in nineteen of the twenty one working groups tasked with evolving the PRSP, they were excluded from those dealing with macroeconomic policy. And whilst four of the PRSP's eighteen authors came from CSOs, only two were selected by the CSOs themselves, with their participation being dependent on whether they could generate consensual positions within their broader constituencies (rather than being sources of alternative views) (Dwyer and Zeillig, 2012: 150). As we saw in the previous chapter, such an outcome fits precisely into how the Bank has sought to produce and exclude different kinds of civil societies.

The main vehicle through which international donors have implanted a particular version/vision of development into Malawi has been the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is the goals which have arguably granted organisations such as the World Bank added legitimacy to set the terms of debate when it comes to countries' adoption of PRSPs. This is in part because every UN member state made a nominal commitment to meeting the goals when they were introduced in 2000/2001. And so it is that one of the first stated aims of the MGDS II, Malawi's World Bank-sanctioned PRSP, is to "*...accelerate attainment of the Millennium Development Goals*" (Government of Malawi, 2012: 12). There has been some questioning of the degree to which the MDGs are actually significant in shaping PRSPs beyond notional statements like the above (Clegg, 2015). This would be important if the MDGs and the PRSPs were very different animals. In important respects however, they are

not. If the PRSPs are in many ways a continuation of structural adjustment in terms of promoting the neoliberal economic model (Tan, 2011), but with a 'softer' approach to issues of social provision (Ferguson, 2006: 69-89) and the additional buy-in of developing country elites who continue to benefit from extraversionary tactics utilising para-statal relationships and processes of privatisation (See Chapter Four for an example), then the MDGs do very little to counteract this process. The MDGs can be read therefore as legitimising neoliberal forms of governmentality, of representing what Ferguson calls 'tweaks' to the system of 'scientific capitalism', which, despite the failures of structural adjustment, has barely diverted from its path of deregulatory, export oriented, wage and labour power-suppressing policies (Ferguson, 2006: 69-89). It therefore doesn't really matter how many times the MDGs are mentioned in any given PRSP (and according to Clegg [2015], Malawi's PRSP is neither a serial 'mentioner' nor 'omitter'), as long as they are mentioned just enough.

What of the MDGs themselves however? Why is it that they have done so little to counteract neoliberal orthodoxy? To answer this question we have to both look at the history of how the goals were formulated, as well as the collections of assumptions which have gone into making the goals what they are.

The Millennium Development Goals^{xiii}

By the time this book goes to print the MDGs will have expired, and we might be left wondering what all the fuss has been about. As a short-hand explanation, the MDGs derived from the Millennium Declaration, a lofty text signed by every member of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2000, which referenced nuclear disarmament, poverty eradication, environmental protection, peace and UN reform^{xiv}. The MDGs themselves emerged over the following year, as an attempt by the UN secretariat, International Financial Institutions and core bilateral donors to create a legible set of 'realistic' targets for development, time-limited to be met by 2015. In the words of one of the drafters of the goals, they were conceived of as a way of "...rescuing the document from oblivion" (Vandemoortele, 2011: 4).

And thus it was that the mainstream narrative of the MDGs could describe them in the following terms:

“In September 2000, building upon a decade of major United Nations conferences and summits, world leaders came together ...committing their nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and setting out a series of time-bound targets - with a deadline of 2015 ...The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education – form a blueprint agreed to by all the world’s countries and all the world’s leading development institutions.”^{xv}

This is a particular – and as I said above, shorthand – story about the MDGs; that they emerged unproblematically from the relatively inclusive UN summits of the 1980s and 1990s (i.e. the Rio Earth Summit, the International Conference on Population and Development, and so on), which had done so much to broaden out the developmental agenda from the purely economic matters which had concerned the development industry, and in particular the World Bank, for so long. Furthermore this narrative suggested that the MDGs had universal buy-in. I have written elsewhere about the fallacy of thinking that the MDGs matter to governments and societies everywhere, for instance in India (see Gabay, 2012b: 55-58), where both the state and many CSOs view the country’s constitution as a far stronger and significant document, in developmental terms, than the MDGs, even if successive Indian governments fail to pay it much heed (Nandy, 2002; Roy, 2014). Nonetheless, of greater importance here is the absence of politics and political economy from this narrative about the goals.

We do not have to look very far for evidence that the generation of the goals were intensely political. This includes the accounts of those involved in the process. Colin Bradford was the United States representative to the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development-Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) during the 1990’s. In an unpublished account of his time at the DAC, he relates the process by which the OECD’s International Development Targets (IDTs) were formed. According to Bradford (and secondary accounts also – see Hulme, 2007), the IDTs were important pre-cursors to the

MDGs and formed the basis of those goals and targets (Bradford, 2006: 1). A 1996 document produced by the DAC, 'Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation', lists these IDTs, where their similarity to the eventual MDGs is clear (I have bracketed the relevant MDG at the end of each target):

Economic well-being:

- A reduction by one-half in the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015 (MDG 1).

Social development:

- Universal primary education in all countries by 2015 (MDG 2);
- Demonstrated progress toward gender equality and the empowerment of women by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 (MDG 3);
- A reduction by two-thirds in the mortality rates for infants and children under age 5 and a reduction by three-fourths in maternal mortality, all by 2015 (MDG 4);
- Access through the primary health-care system to reproductive health services for all individuals of appropriate ages as soon as possible and no later than the year 2015 (MDG 5).

Environmental sustainability and regeneration:

- The current implementation of national strategies for sustainable development in all countries by 2005, so as to ensure that current trends in the loss of environmental resources are effectively reversed at both global and national levels by 2015 (MDG 7).

(OEC-DAC, 1996: 2)

Bradford relates that finding an alternative ideological narrative with which to "...sell development" (2006: 2) to development actors (including developing countries) in the aftermath of the Cold War was a major motivation in the drafting of the IDTs (Ibid). This is

clearly a political agenda; indeed, the IDTs, which predated and defined the MDGs, were formulated by a '*groupe de reflexion*' which consisted of all and only the major bilateral donors at that time (Ibid: 3). This account problematizes the idea of the MDGs as an automatically benign and apolitical set of goals and targets. Indeed, David Hulme argues that MDGs rest on a very clear tension between the more human development and inclusive rhetoric of the Millennium Declaration and the years of political activism which informed it, and the neo-liberal, results-based-management policy preferences of the major IFIs and significant governments within the generation of the goals such as the UK's (Hulme, 2007). Indeed, the UK government of that time provides a useful signifier of the kinds of political sacrifices nominally leftist governments were making in the name of 'market respectability' and which eventually informed a great deal of what went into (and what got left out of) the MDGs.

It is clear then that the MDGs were a hegemonic project. They were not produced by developing country governments, or their societies. They were imposed by powerful governmental and inter-governmental entities in the Global North, or what Ashwani Saith argued was "*our plan for them*" (2006: 1168). This is not to suggest that the MDGs were *necessarily* malign as a result of this (although it would be easy to be sympathetic to reading them that way), merely that they were *necessarily* exclusionary. The MDGs did not, for instance, deploy social exclusion, violence against women, or land rights, despite the fact that all of these have provided sites of state-civil society contention over the very meaning of development. Indeed, in excluding these areas and affecting a "*...unilateral narrowing down of the development agenda*" (Ibid) the MDGs represented the culmination of a neo-liberal logic which tied developing countries into a hegemonic project of market-led development. For example, the MDGs implicitly prioritized absolute poverty over relative poverty. This therefore furthered

"...some of the most dramatic and explosive dimensions of the era of market liberalization and neoliberal globalization — that of spectacularly rising inequalities

that are as visible as the worsening forms of social and service exclusion in large parts of the third world. Given the wonderful sentiments on shared human values that preface the MDG statement, such an omission could not have been due to forgetfulness" (Ibid: 1185).

Indeed, the MDGs have been criticised for sins of omission from a number of perspectives. Antrobus has called them 'Major Distracting Gimmicks' in their narrowing of gender issues to access to education, excluding the key issue of sexual and reproductive rights (Antrobus, 2005). More specifically, Kabeer has contrasted the manner by which feminist organisations, so integral to the progress made on sexual and reproductive rights through the 1980s and 1990s, were side-lined from the processes which led up to the adoption of the MDGs in 2000-2001. One result of this was the complete absence of any commitment to provide reproductive health services to all, which Kabeer argues was at the insistence of the Bush administration in the United States (Kabeer, 2015: 384). Similarly, the two major UN women's organisations, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW), were absent from the multi-agency discussions which created the MDGs (Ibid) on which Bradford's accounts, cited previously, are based. Whilst subsequent MDG reviews placed growing emphasis on gender equality as an underpinning principle for achieving many of the goals, conservative forces, including at various times Russia, The United States, the Holy See, Iran, and a number of other (although importantly by no means all) Arab and African states, aligned with each other *"to block language designed to address particular forms of violence against women"* (Ibid: 387).

In other areas, the MDGs explicitly positioned the private sector, and in particular large pharmaceutical companies, as the key to improved development outcomes. Social development was thus rendered as dependent on and implied in private-sector growth. This was a vision of development which was inherently contradictory, dependent on processes such as privatization and subsidy reduction which when implemented have proven high

social costs seemingly opposed to the sentiments embodied in, if not the MDGs then certainly the Millennium Declaration (Amin, 2006).

Thus far I have dwelt on the historical development of the MDGs to illustrate their hegemonic nature. However, in asserting them to be hegemonic and exclusive it would be easy to dismiss them as being apolitical, in terms of reducing the scope of development to a set of technocratic fixes. This is indeed the argument adopted by many critics of the goals. We have already seen that Saith (2006) and Amin (2006) have argued that the MDGs depoliticise development by removing from the agenda any issues which would actually result in the socio-economic transformation necessary to affect meaningful and emancipatory change for the majority-world (See also Ziai, 2011). Indeed, it has been convincingly argued that the MDGs are neo-liberal in their responsabilisation of weak nation states, and rest on racialised (Gabay, 2012a: 1256-1258) and gendered (Antrobus, 2005) analyses of poverty.

However, some of these criticisms fail to provide us with an understanding of the work that hegemony *does*. Indeed, implicit in an argument which states that the MDGs are hegemonic must be an admission of their power to shape imaginations and practices, rather than exist as a simple abstraction. It is unlikely that such a diminished agenda would generate such a high level of consent about and support for the MDGS amongst seemingly unlikely bedfellows, including governments, social movements, the private sector and the academic communities which have measured, tested and assisted in the application of the goals (See for instance: Black and White, 2004; Fantu and Bradford, 2005; McGilivray, 2008). It would appear logical then to treat the MDGs as politically diminished in terms of what they included, but not in terms of what they tried to do, for in order for them to have been achieved there would have needed to have been wide-ranging socio-cultural-spatial transformations across and within areas of high poverty.

When approaching the MDGs, and indeed any development project, we must avoid treating them/it in what Michel Foucault might have called sovereign terms. When Foucault

famously argued that "*We need to cut off the King's head*" (Foucault, 2002: 122), he was referring to the trend within political theory to view power as centralised, to reify it as sovereign. This was reflected in the fact that "*...the formal theoretical concern with what was taken to be power had been fixed...in a preoccupation with questions of causality, sovereignty and order*" (Clegg, 1989: 37). This is clear from the mainstream critical MDG camp referenced above, who, even though taking stances on the MDGs which one might sympathize with, overwhelmingly view them as a direct project of hegemonic domination which mask the 'real' interests of OECD countries and IFIs.

In a Foucauldian sense however, the power of the MDGs can be understood in more embodied, and thus self-administered terms, or what Foucault called "*the conduct of conduct*" (Foucault, 2008: 313). Abrahamsen sums this up effectively when she states that: "*Power...works through systems of knowledge and discursive practices to provide the meanings, norms, values and identities that not only constrain actors, but also constitute them... The modern self is both the object of improvement and the subject that does the improving*" (Abrahamsen, 2004: 1459). Of course though, if we de-center power, then it is very difficult to ascribe intentionality to one subject or another, e.g. the United Nations, Capitalism, or Imperialism. As James Ferguson has argued:

"'Development'...may do what it does, not at the bidding of some knowing and powerful subject who is making it all happen, but behind the backs of or against the wills of even the most powerful actors. A 'development' project may very well serve power, but in a different way than any of the 'powerful' actors imagined; it may only wind up, in the end, 'turning out' to serve power". (Ferguson, 1990: 20)

In this sense then, the expressed intentions of the drafters of the MDGs are beside the point. Rather, it is the way in which "*...planned interventions may produce unintended outcomes that end up, all the same, incorporated into anonymous constellations of control* –

authorless strategies...that turn out in the end to have a kind of political intelligibility" (Ibid). Indeed, as Ilcan and Phillips have argued that, whilst not necessarily designed as such, the MDG framework provides one particular source of twenty-first century thinking about the planet which inculcates *"neoliberal rationalities of government and their calculative practices to govern global spaces"* (2010: 846). The MDGs have therefore been *"a project with global pretensions that engages in the language of targets, best practices, and costs, encourages certain individuals, groups and places to reinvent themselves, and demands the need for better tools to 'track progress'"* (Ibid: 849). Interestingly this last aspect is a significant feature of current efforts to supercharge the MDGs into a post-2015 development agenda (See UN, 2013: 23, 55-56), and may represent a continuation of a deeply invasive biopolitical rationality which has permeated the MDGs and has therefore recast

"...relationships between governing and the governed, producing a diverse range of development problems in need of solutions, and privileging particular spaces for planned intervention. Such developmentalities have a rhizomatic quality to them in that they extend into and permeate various areas in ways that produce transformative effects." (Ilcan and Phillips, 2010: 851)

It is the focus on targets, indicators, data and accounting which has arguably given the MDGs this far more pervasive form of power (certainly more pervasive than those who argue that the MDGs were simply a diminished development agenda might suggest). Scholars such as Barry (2002), Callon and Muniesa (2003) and Larner and LeHeron (2004) have all argued that far from being neutral, accounting techniques when associated with the audit of socio-economic life are powerful mechanisms for shaping those lives.

How this all relates to development in Malawi in general, and the relationship between development and civil society in Malawi in particular will now be the subjects to which this chapter will turn.

Development and civil society in Malawi

When Malawi held its first multiparty elections in 1994, the breadth and depth of the country's civil society reflected the authoritarian nature of the Hastings Banda regime which had ruled the country for 31 years up until that point. Besides religious institutions (Church and Mosque groups) Banda had not really tolerated any kind of formally constituted non-state public bodies in the country (Minnis, 1998: 139-140). As a staunch backer of Western policies during the Cold War, Banda was not reliant on trades unions or any other potentially leftist groups to sustain his power. The protests against Banda during 1992 which set the scene for his announcement of multi-party elections was thus led and mainly constituted by groups brought together under the auspices of the Catholic Church, and other often informal, lay or semi-professionalised movements, such as civil servants, exiles, student groups, etc (Mwalubunju, 2007: 272). We will explore some of the issues this threw up for civil society in Chapter Four, but for now it is relevant to note that the great majority of those organisations who now dominate the civil society field in Malawi, and who formed the main group considered in this book, are relatively young, in that they were established, normally with funds from international donors, in the post-1994 period. Whilst there has been some focus from donors on building CSO political advocacy skills this has proven to be a lukewarm commitment (James, 2005: 11), and the bulk of Malawian CSOs remain embedded in service delivery (Ibid: 8-9), making them key development actors.

The Catholic Church has continued to be a powerful oppositional force in Malawian political and public life, in some instances far more so than the post-1994 CSOs (Immink and Chigona, 2004: 139; Gabay, 2014: 383), although even here it is important to note that Church groups in Malawi are far better at pronouncing on national issues than on local ones which may serve cross purposes with a more conservative local clergy (Von Doepp, 2002: 137). As they have done elsewhere in Africa, donors have nonetheless subsequently

overlooked as political agents many of the other social formations which coalesced into the 1992 pro-democracy movement, which struggle to compete for parity of attention when compared to some of the post-1994 CSOs (Howell and Pearce, 2002: 185). This is in large part due to a lack of professionalization and associated resources. The World Bank (and other donor) injunctions across the continent for transparency has resulted in demands for high levels of (donor-defined) financial literacy from both governments and CSOs. Whilst governments have benefitted from what the bank calls 'technical assistance' in bringing Ministry of Finance systems up to scratch (although this has also represented an imposition of a hegemonic modus operandi on African governments – see Harrison, 2004), CSOs have had to navigate this new terrain of logframe reports, mid-term evaluations and accounts keeping far more independently and unevenly. One result of this has been to discriminate against those groups which are less professionalised (and thus less able to take advantage of urban-based training conferences for instance), and to subsequently divide CSOs between those which do possess the organisational expertise to fulfil donor demands (and thus get funded) and those which do not (Mawdesely, Townsend and Porter, 2004).

Returning to Malawi, those often loosely knit and rhizomatic groups which constituted the pro-democracy protests in 1992 are now nowhere to be found within the main anti-poverty civil society coalition in Malawi, the National Civil Society Taskforce for the Millennium Development Goals (NCSTM) (Gabay, 2011), despite the fact that students, workers and other excluded groups may have a very major stake in the outcome of developmental processes in Malawi. At best these groups are treated as infantilised social categories to be subjected to focus groups and consultations, their interests 'represented' by the post-1994 organisations many of which have been established during that period with donor finance with exactly that purpose in mind (see, for example, Harrison, 2001; 2004; Death, 2013). This situation creates obvious tensions, for one might expect the most impoverished and excluded groups to be precisely those which are most unable to meet international demands for professionalization and transparency. This can leave the more formal CSOs stuck between the rock of international demands on the one hand, and the hard place of growing increasingly distant from the groups and communities they are supposed to be representing in the variety of development programmes, processes and consultations in which they participate on the other hand. In Malawi, most CSO advocacy takes place at

national level with CSOs speaking on behalf of poor rural populations. The communities themselves are rarely subject to empowerment programmes which might enable them to be informed enough to speak critically on issues affecting them. CSO advocacy in Malawi has thus become quite insular and divided from the groups which gave it its mandate (James, 2005: 50). Comments by one CSO participant, which were met with what seemed like unanimous agreement, at the February 2013 workshop I organised in Lilongwe illustrated this tension and distance:

“If we are talking about consulting the public, which public or publics are we talking about? And who is the true representative of the people? Is it the CSO, is it the elected leader? Is it the traditional leader? Because Malawi is, is what we might call a hybrid type of state. It is a modern state running parallel to a traditional state. So when we say we are consulting the people, who is the true representative? Because sometimes we are not making progress because we are not reflecting what type of state we have. There is a traditional state which is very powerful [...] we, the CSOs, sometimes we claim to be representing the people when they have not even sent us, we have not been sent, but we claim it is the people, the peoples’ voice”

By and large however, and congruent with the CSO environment across many parts of Africa (see the discussion in Chapter One, and specifically: Mercer, 2002; Harrison, 2004: 131; Mawdesely, Townsend and Porter, 2004), Malawian CSOs must work within the donor cosmology if they wish to continue to pay their employees’ salaries. The degree to which the individuals working within these CSOs are self-aware of this fact, and become selectively and instrumentally performative of donor agendas as a result (and thus create spaces of resistance or divergence from such agendas), depends on the individuals and organisations concerned, although the practice is not particularly widespread. And even where there is a performative element to the actions of some CSOs, there are simply some occasions where this does not get them very far. For instance, during my first visit to Malawi in 2008 I was invited by the United Nations Develop Programme (UNDP) country officer to a meeting for CSOs at the UNDP offices in Lilongwe. Upon my arrival I recognised many of the people sitting around the conference table as CSO professionals that I had interviewed over the

preceding weeks. This made what happened next distinctly uncomfortable, as the UNDP staff members at the meeting took turns in excoriating the CSOs for not doing enough on the MDGs, not pushing the Malawian government enough on their MDG commitments, and not engaging ordinary Malawians (who, we were told by one UNDP officer, “love to suffer in silence”) in their activities. Whilst some of this may be true, and crass generalities aside, what became apparent at this meeting was that the MDGs provided the UNDP officials with a pretext upon which to admonish and direct the work of the CSOs. Some of the CSOs present were also able to take the opportunity to use the MDGs as a cover to bash the main CSO coordinating network, CONGOMA (Coalition of Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi) for being inept, unavailable for government consultations, and poorly equipped to communicate effectively with its membership (i.e. all formally constituted CSOs and NGOs, who, by dint of government legislation, must be CONGOMA members to receive funds)^{xvi}. Still others appeared to have embodied the criticisms of the UNDP officials, admonishing themselves for not embedding their work more in the communities they represented, and communicating with those communities the apparently important message of the MDGs (a process many CSOs alluded to as ‘sensitising’ people to their poverty, as if people in poverty weren’t already aware of this fact). In Chapter Four we will explore why this last eventuality is almost a structural impossibility in a country like Malawi, with its implanted, urban ‘civil society’ of professionalised organisations. Nonetheless, the self-flagellation on display at the meeting suggested either an extreme performance of servitude, or a sense in which these CSOs were conducting themselves with regard for hegemonic discourses around their role and function. For instance, there was a great deal of cognitive dissonance between the very clear UN-driven agenda on display at that meeting, and the statement by the UNDP country officer which closed it: “*CONGOMA leads, UNDP only supports!*”, and yet the willingness to be subjected to the previous admonishments and the nodding consent I witnessed to that statement suggested that this dissonance was unappreciated by those present, or at least that the environment was not considered conducive to airing such an appreciation.

This theme of how the MDGs are performed by some, and embodied by others, is one I now want to explore further. Prior to my very first visit to Malawi in 2008, I had emailed a number of CSOs about my impending trip and the nature of the research I was conducting. The content of that email was very preliminary (the full text of it can be found in Gabay,

2012b: Appendix 3), detailing the kinds of questions I was interested in, and requesting further contact details (i.e. phone numbers, addresses) with a view to setting up a meeting once I was in the country. Importantly, neither my research, nor my email, was in any way concerned, nor made any mention of the MDGs. The following is the response I received from one CSO director:

<xxx@yahoo.com> writes:

Dear Clive,

I hope you are fine. I would like to confirm that i will participate in your research project.

Our organisation is called xxx and I am the Executive Director/ Founder.

Our address is xxx. Cell is xxx

I'm a member of the Taskforce.

I will be ready to participate in July. *We are mainly focusing on MDG goal 1, 3 and 6.*

Thanks

xxx

(Personal correspondence with CSO director, 13th April 2008: Italics added)

This was the moment when the MDGs intruded into my professional life. Until this point in time I was not researching them, I was not particularly interested in them, and I certainly was not planning on ending up writing several papers and book chapters (including this one), putting together research grants, and organising conferences on them. So in many ways I should be grateful for receiving this email, as it gave me a research agenda which has lasted several years! There is a point to me relaying this information; to underscore how simply unexpected and uninvited the MDGs were in my research agenda at that point in time. The person who sent me this email established his CSO in the early 2000s. Its constituency is elderly people in Malawi, and as such at face value does not serve a constituency directly addressed by the MDGs. Undoubtedly, and as this person subsequently explained to me, statements such as the one in the above email are designed to bring the elderly into the MDGs, because of course elderly people suffer from poverty

(MDG 1), gender inequalities (MDG 3) and contract diseases (MDG 6). And yet upon visiting this person again in 2013, and reflecting on our initial meeting in 2008, I couldn't help feel that this was also someone deeply committed to the goals, even though his organisation was undoubtedly suffering from the narrow focus taken by the goals and their headline exclusion of elderly people. This was an organisation based on the outskirts of the capital city Lilongwe (and thus excluded from the cosiness of the Government-International Organisation-NGO nexus which exists in the centre of the city), with one small funder, and with no other full-time members staff. One might therefore expect a certain degree of cynicism; that if this organisation was dealing with, for instance, maternal health or gender equality, that it would have a lot more money and cachet with donors and government. The first time I met this person this wasn't a question I really put to him. A PhD student at the time, with my list of ethically approved questions and my eagerness to please my research participants, I didn't want to appear rude, or to undermine any strongly held beliefs on his part. In any case, my project was not about the MDGs, and so it wasn't really a line of enquiry I felt impelled to pursue. This didn't prevent my interviewee from making lots of references to the MDGs, reinforcing the impression that here was someone trying desperately to be a part of the MDG 'club'. As well as signing off his email with MDG references, he had inserted his organisation into every MDG-relevant committee and working group he could find.

And so when I arranged to meet this person again in 2013, I wanted to address far more directly his relationship to, and impressions of the MDGs. My approach was to be completely frank; I relayed my impressions of the UNDP meeting in 2008, and brought up the content of his email to me of that same year. I asked him whether he felt that as an outsider (and an academic) I might have links to potential sources of funding which could be jeopardised if he didn't perform the MDG script adequately, and whether he felt a pressure to incorporate the MDGs into his organisational work and the way he communicates it. His response was to tell me: "*No not a pressure, it's an obligation* [CG – smiling – "*an obligation?!*"] *yuh an obligation* [laughing]"

Whilst he never fully explained what he meant by the word 'obligation', as we carried on talking it became clear that it had a dual meaning. On the one hand he kept on returning to

the standard UNDP/World Bank line about governmental obligations towards meeting MDG commitments. But he also made it clear that what little funding his organisation received was so tightly related to the MDGs that he didn't have much choice but to mention them and connect them to his work as much as possible. At the time of our 2013 meeting his organisation had funding for just one project, on the impact of HIV/AIDs on older women. Bemoaning this situation I was told that *"So specifically that is the funding we have, so there are so many issues we are facing but we have no funding"*. Whilst we cannot know what situation his organisation would have been in without the MDGs (i.e. whether it would have more or less funding – it was established in 2004), what can be said with some certainty is that the MDGs have left his organisation struggling. In other words, it didn't seem like the MDGs had been very good for his organisation, by excluding the issues he worked on, and making it incredibly difficult to access funding as a result. His response to this line of questioning was interesting on two levels. On the one hand, there was an admission that *"the problem, although they [The MDGs] are important, other sectors, other issues, because of the challenges, are not able to participate fully in the process"*. And yet those words *"...although they are important"* seemed to speak to a sense in which this person felt unable to quite let go of the MDGs. Now, of course this might have been because beyond his work as a CSO professional he can see the broader importance of the MDGs to Malawi. And yet this was not simply another CSO professional, but the founder of the organisation, and a man who was himself of relatively advanced years compared to his fellow CSO professionals in other organisations. Given how clearly he had identified the exclusions which the MDGs had created for his organisation and the constituency it represents, why would he continue to defend the goals, even after being given multiple opportunities to critique them (the admission above was as close as he got to doing this)?

As we will see more fully below, there are a couple of answers to this question. Briefly though, one answer is that CSOs in Malawi, dependent as they are on funding from international organisations themselves committed to the MDGs, operate in a context of having to perpetually perform a commitment to the MDGs which they may or may not share, as well as a structural context which predicates against opportunities to collectively shift the debate. The other is that the MDGs, and the market-led, development project of individual rationality and responsibility more broadly, has acted to construct and then

constrain the imaginations of civil society professionals and activists as to what is politically possible and socially desirable in a country like Malawi. I have already alluded to such possibilities above, but we will now explore them in greater detail through an account of other conversations I had with Malawian CSOs between 2008 and 2013, as well as a workshop for CSOs I organised in Lilongwe in February 2013, on the subject of the MDGs and post-MDG settlement.

I want to deal with these suggested answers in turn, the first being a collection of more instrumental issues, the second more epistemological. Instrumentally, it is very difficult for Malawian CSOs to work around or beyond the MDGs. I have already highlighted issues of funding streams, and how they are tied to MDG targets. Beyond this however, the very way in which international donors have sought to construct civil society in Malawi, and other aid-dependent countries, mitigates against the kind of solidarity and consciousness-sharing required for a sustained campaign which might proactively define what development should look like in Malawi. This is most easily illustrated with reference to a discussion which took place during the CSO MDG workshop held in Lilongwe in February 2013. Much of this discussion had centred on bemoaning the fact that there had appeared to be such little effort expended by any international or governmental agency on consulting Malawian CSOs regarding the post-MDG agenda. In summer 2012 United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon had announced the creation of a High Level Panel on the MDGs, chaired by three national leaders^{xvii}, and tasked with producing a report by May 2013 with recommendations for a post-MDG agreement. The Panel held three consultations in the capital cities of the three chairpersons' countries, and other countries were supposed to feed into the process via national level consultations organised by governments and/or UN agencies at country-level. With only a couple of months left before submissions to the panel were due to close there had been no movement on any consultation in Malawi, and the sense of frustration amongst the CSOs at the workshop was palpable. Indeed, it is no doubt indicative of this frustration that a workshop organised by a largely unknown academic from London attracted the attention and participation of nearly 30 CSOs (even if acting in my favour was Raymond Mwenitete, who I mentioned in Chapter One).

The corollary to this frustration at a lack of consultation was a recognition that Malawian CSOs had failed to produce their own united platform about what development should look like in Malawi post-2015. One workshop participant made the following comment, to general agreement:

“We CSOs, we have networks yes, but we somehow, we operate in a most disjointed manner. We are supposed to have united front on this and give a position to government, domestically we should have our own position, before even the MDG consultation, on the MGDS [Malawi Growth and Development Strategy] we should have our own position, of how development could happen locally here, so that whomsoever comes, we can say this is the Malawi position and what the CSOs are saying”

The comment that *“we have networks”* is somewhat of an understatement in Malawi. I have already described how the dominant CSOs in Malawi, the Catholic Church aside, have been implanted by donors in the post-1994 period. The huge majority of these CSOs are in fact networks, with the urban professional offices and officers supposedly representing networks of local farmers, cooperatives, people living with HIV/AIDS, teachers and so on.

The civil society network form has not evolved in Malawi by accident. Emerging in the 1990s as a way of conceptualising globalised forms of political and social change, and more specifically what were taken to be as new forms of political activism and communication (see, for example, Castells, 1996; Diani and MacAdam, 2003; Della Porta and Tarrow, 2004), policy think tanks and international development agencies soon began to apply this kind of thinking to the issue of public action and service delivery in developing countries (see for instance, Ashman et al, 2005). Understood as being flexible, responsive, inherently less hierarchical, and in a position to more fully take advantage of new forms of communications technology, the network form, applied to both state bureaucracy and civil society was seen as the antidote to the bureaucratic and centralised sclerosis of the post-colonial developmental state (although the networking of the state was by no means a project solely carried out in the Global South

[See for instance Newman, 2001; Ball, 2009]). Of course, this understanding perpetuated a liberal myth about the autonomy and rationality of civil society, which denied both the agency of international organisations in manufacturing and perpetuating neoliberal hegemony (Chapter Two, see specifically Chandhoke, 1996; Harrison, 2004; Broad, 2006; Sande Lie, 2015) as well as the continued power of the state (in the face of arguments that the state, in an age of globalisation, was being fatally undermined – see, for instance Beck, 1997) to penetrate and utilise civil society actors for its own ends in a form of ‘anti-politics machine’ (Ferguson, 1990).

In Malawi, the best funded CSO networks are of course those which directly address various aspects of the MDGs, and as such engage in a mixture of advocacy and service delivery. Due to local political sensitivities however, donors have proven reluctant to fund a great deal of advocacy work (James, 2005), leaving many of the networks doing advocacy when they can, but lacking dedicated staff for these kinds of activities. On top of being networks, many of the CSOs also coalesce into broader networks such as the one through which I had publicised the workshop, the National Civil Society Taskforce on the MDGs (NCTSM). However, the underlying structure of formal civil society in Malawi sees CSOs being siphoned off into sectoral units which undercut any impetus for cross-sectoral solidarity and unanimity. We also saw this in the context of anti-government protests in 2011, an analysis of which features in Chapter Four. A further structural restriction on CSOs engaging in political activity is that their *raison d'être* is fundamentally apolitical, or at best, designed to support a prevailing international political consensus/hegemony, which has arguably been particularly pernicious and penetrative in Africa (Hearn, 2001). As conceived of in Western Europe, civil society emerged as a political site for the emerging 17th and 18th century middle classes to contest and assert their political rights vis-à-vis the state (albeit in highly gendered and propertied terms). According to Partha Chatterjee, when transferred to post-colonial territories civil society was not intended as a site of political contestation, but rather as a means by which neo-colonial forces such as the comprador elites of many post-colonial states, international organisations and their development programmes, etc. could enact a continuation of the colonial project i.e. the creation and administration of subject populations, as opposed to the nurturing of the dialectical state-citizen relationship of

the liberal imaginary (Chatterjee, 2004: 36-38; see also Mamdani, 1996). One of the main problems limiting CSOs in Malawi in respect of formulating and pursuing coherent political projects then is the fact that this was not what they were established to do, and so they operate in an international political-economic context highly restrictive of any agency in this regard. In order to achieve the kinds of positions which featured in the discussion cited above at the workshop, Malawian CSOs would have to dedicate time and resources to working *outside* of their formal organisational roles, and of thinking beyond their constituencies, developing political platforms which might threaten their funding streams. This is not a likely development, not least because as James and Malunga (2006) have found, many of these networks are in fact highly centralised with little consultative capacity.

Having said all of this, it does not mean that Malawian CSOs are uniformly duped by the hegemonic nature of the MDGs and its associated finances (some are, but more of that shortly), or completely constrained by the structural context they face in Malawi. Groups in the minority rights sector for example, a sector excluded from the MDGs, have found appealing to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) rights discourse can provide access to donor capital that *“allows them agency through local victimage”* (Biruk, 2014: 466). Of course, not all groups are able to play to these kinds of anxieties which pervade the West’s relationship with Africa. There remain however extraversionary opportunities embedded within the framework of the MDGS themselves. During interviews and the workshop, there were several occasions where participants illustrated an extraversionary approach to the MDGs and their associated development architecture. At times this approach was very bluntly put, as for instance the following statement made during the workshop: *“One [of the opportunities presented by the MDGs] is the availability of resources globally. Whenever you push a proposal for resources for programmes which are MDG related, you have a chance of getting the resources”*. This is the flip-side of a complaint often aired by research participants concerning the goals regarding their exclusive nature, which in turn forced CSOs to engineer their language and activities so that they at least took on the appearance on being somehow MDG-related. One interviewee from a faith-based CSO put it this way: *“you try to align your programmes to what donors, and even government, are talking about, just to get going anyway”*, moving on to complain that

“...resources are tied to strategic plans, which are not developed out of a consultative process, they are just developed by donors, in their own thinking, about what is best in their interest”. Similarly, a participant at the workshop remarked that:

“...since funding is somehow linked to meeting these pillars, there have been times I think when we have been forced to do something which is not in tandem with our own strategies, because that is I think that is where somehow the money is.”

And so even in the midst of what appears to be (and indeed is) a highly constricted context, where CSOs have little ability to affect the agenda, or bring new issues onto it, there is nonetheless an extraversionary agency they can exert which sustains the finances and staffing levels of their organisations, and may even deliver certain public goods to their constituencies.

Further evidence of this kind of extraversionary behaviour could be found in other statements by interviewees and workshop participants. One workshop participant from an environmental CSO commented that *“we find that organisations are changing their mission statements from whatever it was to something to do with climate change, just to align themselves”* Although said with a certain degree of sarcasm, the general laughter which met this statement suggested that this was not an unfamiliar assertion.

As well as being extraversionary, this behaviour is also performative. Malawian CSOs (and the Malawian government) *perform* the MDGs at key moments, some consciously and some less so. The coalition to which many of the CSOs I spoke to belong is called the National Civil Society Taskforce on the MDGs (NCSTM). Formally speaking, the NCSTM is part of a broader coalition called the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP). I have discussed the NCSTM’s relationship to GCAP elsewhere (Gabay, 2012b: 117-121). For now, it is important to note that GCAP emerged and evolved alongside and in close collaboration with the United Nations Millennium Campaign (UNMC), an advocacy arm of the UN which was established to engage civil society in the MDGs and their achievement, with the specific goal of encouraging national civil societies to pressure their governments over their MDG commitments. Despite internal dissent about the relationship, UNMC has been a consistent

funder of GCAP's central secretariat since it was founded in 2003, as well as its national coalitions (of which at one point there were over 100), including the NCSTM in Malawi. With the MDGs expiring, and many of the tensions between Northern and Southern NGOs involved in the network proving irreparable (for more on these tensions see Gabay, 2012b: 70-87), GCAP is now not much more than a rump network of poorly funded Southern NGOs, with many of the better resourced NGOs who funded and founded GCAP (along with the UNMC) having moved on to other networks. According to its chairperson, Amitabh Behar, GCAP has been excluded from many of these newer civil society networks which emerged to pressure the UN system in the build up to 2015, and when included has been done so in tokenistic terms so that there are some Southern (Brown, Black) faces at the table^{xviii}.

Nonetheless, during GCAP's 'high-point' years between 2005 (GCAP was the umbrella network for that year's Make Poverty History mobilisation) and 2010, the centrepiece events for which GCAP and its national coalitions got much of its UNMC funding were the 'Stand Up and Take Action' mobilisations which took place annually on October 17th, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. These mobilisations, effected by national GCAP coalitions (such as the NCSTM in Malawi), were in quantitative terms hugely successful, rising from a reported 23 million people mobilised to protest against poverty in 2006 (GCAP, 2008: 6) to 173 million in 2009 (GCAP 2010). Although quantitatively successful, the Stand Up events generated a number of problems. Their relatively simple message was not matched by a deep level of political or economic analysis, and their relationship to the UN system meant that CSOs in some countries were forced into relationships with governments, militaries or other political groups with questionable human rights records who were also committed to 'standing up against poverty' (Gabay, 2012b: 38-43). The problem of breadth versus depth also meant that even in countries where there was a less antagonistic relationship between the state and CSOs, such as in Malawi, the event itself risked becoming a bit of an empty signifier. It is the way in which Stand Up in Malawi became an empty space, devoid of specific political meaning, that created the conditions for a degree of performativity on the part of Malawian CSOs. The Stand Up mobilisations were, for instance, the one time during the year when Malawian CSOs were guaranteed to have visitors from regional UNDP offices, as well as the UNMC office in Nairobi. As such Stand Up became an important event to prepare for, and indeed,

Malawi witnessed the biggest mobilisations across Africa in 2006 and 2007. For this one day, on October 17th every year, Malawian CSOs needed to perform the MDGs, but beyond this, the goals did not necessarily resonate in the same way. One interviewee who works for a media monitoring organisation, given the responsibility within the NCSTM for crafting public and media messages around the goals and NCSTM's activities made this point succinctly when he said:

“...we only talk about MDGs when it comes to the Stand Up and Take Action campaign, when that ends it is business as usual. When that ends there is no consistent campaign throughout the year to make sure we talk about MDGs every day, week or month, we don't have that sustained campaign”

This kind of performativity extends also to how some CSOs perceived the government's relationship to the MDGs. A number of interviewees bemoaned the lack of knowledge within government about particular global policy areas, or UN days of actions/commemoration. Others accused government ministers of being ignorant of the MDGs and yet proactively performing for the international community as if they were implementing the goals as a central component of government policy. One interviewee put it thusly:

“Actually you'd be surprised, you'd be shocked, not even at the ministry level they haven't heard of it [the MDGs]...I think some of leaders do go to meetings and endorse things they don't even know what it is they are endorsing...they don't take that issue back home for dissemination. So they can claim the minister of agriculture came here and knows what's going on, but they put them in shelves and they gather dust”

And so with these reflections we can see how the MDGs provide both an extraversionary resource for Malawian CSOs, even if they exert the agency required to take advantage of this situation in what are some relatively constrained spaces. We have also seen how in some respects set-piece conferences and mobilisations serve as platforms for both CSOs and the government to perform the MDGs to an international audience, without necessarily translating into a more imposing hegemonic project in the domestic context. However, we

will now see that this is only a partially revealing depiction of the agency of the MDGs in Malawi, which sits alongside a far more top-heavy and epistemologically enclosing narrative of what the MDGs 'do' in in the country.

The MDGs, responsabilisation and self-conduct

Many of the members of the NCSTM I spoke to in 2008 gave far greater credit to the MDGs than they deserved. The MDGs would "*look at all people*" (NCSTM, 2007: 19), with various CSO interviewees asserting that they would "*solve poverty*" and that achieving them would be "*like being in heaven*". I relayed several pages ago how the MDGs had become a vehicle through which the UNDP and wider UN system could discipline Malawian CSOs, and how for some this created opportunities to exert a form of 'tight-space' agency where the MDGs could be extroverted or performed. However, for some, the MDGs were more powerful still, in terms of creating the very conditions of what they perceived development to be, for the distribution of responsibility for the alleviation of poverty in Malawi, and in acting as a depository for any and all developmental hopes, even where the goals themselves would inevitably fail to address them. For instance, the MDGs do not, as we have seen in reference to the elderly, 'look at all people'. Meeting the goals would only be like 'heaven' for the 50% of people living in *extreme* poverty (as opposed to poverty of the more 'regular' kind) whose conditions the MDGs promised to improve.

There are a variety of ways then in which the MDGs acted to close down and depoliticise debates around development in Malawi, and subsequently distribute responsibility for Malawi's high levels of poverty and wildly fluctuating economic performance *away* from international politico-economic factors. Some of this, particularly in relation to the enclosing nature of the MDGs, relates to the flip side of the extraversionary and performative strategies discussed in the previous section. This is because for as much as some CSOs may have been able to 'sell' themselves in such a way as to take advantage of the MDGs' associated financial framework, the cost of this has been to establish a narrow cognitive framework in which to understand what development is, and who is responsible for it.

As a first step in noting the depoliticising power of the MDGs it is important to establish just how exclusive many of the CSOs I spoke found them. We have already noted how the Elderly rights organisation referred to previously has only one funded project, on HIV/AIDs and the elderly. In similar ways, other organisations too have had to narrow their agendas to MDG-specific issues in order to retain funding. As I argued above, this can sometimes lead to extraversionary relations whereby these organisations can find some space to exert a degree of agency. However, in many other cases, this does not happen, and organisations, such as the Elderly rights organisation I spoke with, simply have to plod on working on an agenda much reduced from that which they initially desired to establish. Other examples of this kind of dynamic include the minority rights organisation which has also had to focus its work on HIV/AIDs^{xix}. Other interviewees made comments such as *"I think we have had some problems in bringing what are seen as new issues to the campaign"* or *"so we kind of noted a rigidity, because they [CSOs] just make sure they align their activities to what they think the MDGs are saying, other issues were not given a priority in that"*.

Still another interviewee claimed that *"...the direction in which we are moving is not the one that we really wanted in the first place when we were establishing the organisation, but we tended to move in the direction of the donor because we wanted the money, so the issue is money first and then we can discuss other issues"*. The issue of money is very real for CSOs in Malawi, as in many other parts of the continent where domestic sources of funding are near to non-existent (Mawdesley, Townsend and Porter, 2004). The same interviewee went on to claim that in some isolated cases there were CSOs who had clashed with donors in terms of organisational direction, and lost financing as a result: *"There are some now who are not employed because of this"*.

It is clear then that for some CSO professionals there is a conscious struggle, or at least awareness, of the 'sink or swim' nature of conforming to the paradigm of the MDGs, and the ways in which they close down a range of issues. Some of the interviewees and workshop participants felt that donors played a major role in reinforcing this situation. I have included the following complaint, aired at the workshop, at length. It speaks to what Bacharach and Baratz (1962) famously called the 'second face' of power, describing the

ways in which powerful actors can constrain the boundaries of the possible by engineering certain parameters for debate and subsequent outcomes.

“We felt there has been no consultation, or maybe we were consulted, but there was no proper organisation, sometimes it will be at short notice, or a number of CSOs in a sector come together, but maybe people feel they were limited... and we talked about consultation, and our frustrations, the donors take a common position because of how they frame the meetings or consultation, so they have to decide in advance to what extent the consultations will remain, or what areas will be discussed.”

The comment outlines the ways in which the speaker feels that donors have been able to set the agenda of consultations over the post-2015 agenda by a) organising them at short notice leaving little time for preparation or for CSO secretariats to consult their constituent members; b) by consulting at sectoral level, the limitations of which I have discussed earlier on in the chapter; and c) by the donors taking on a common position with which they can then shape the agenda of consultations.

As noted previously, the paradigm of development contained in the MDGs has been accused of being technocratic and deeply neoliberal, in that it excludes some of the most contentious issues at the heart of under-development, most notably land rights and social exclusion. As such this narrowing down of the development agenda contained in the MDGs can be considered to be *anti-political*. However, there are more subtle ways in which the MDGs act as what James Ferguson famously called an *anti-politics machine* (1990), of which the workshop again provided an interesting example. Earlier I recounted the ways in which CSOs working on sexual minority rights have been able to take advantage of an international discourse around LGBTQ rights to access donor capital. This discourse existed beyond the purview of the MDGs, which did not mention sexual minority rights, but has allowed these CSOs to meet certain needs of the communities with which they work. They are however still limited by the MDGs, as the following comment made by a member of a sexual minority rights CSO makes clear:

“...at a national level it is very difficult, because of religious issues or whatever, to influence policy, because there is no policy framework. So it is not an issue of accessing donor funds, because donors want to fund our work, but at national level it is very difficult to inform policy, and so the MDGs are a constraint in that sense”

What this comment makes clear is that the absence of sexual minority rights within the MDGs allows the Malawian government to ignore the issue, not commit resources to it, and indeed to evacuate sexual minority rights from the developmental imaginary. In this way the Malawian government could still claim to be committing itself to the MDGs, at the same time as contravening the liberal approach to sexual minority rights donors are keen for African countries to adopt. It is in this sense then that governing elites in Malawi and developing countries more broadly can be committed to ‘development’, whilst contravening the very principles at the heart of the liberal developmental imaginary.

Thus far in this section the various ways in which the MDGs have acted upon local CSOs in Malawi have been appreciated by the CSO professionals who I spoke with during interviews and the workshop as more or less conscious impositions. However the most pernicious impact of the MDGs on CSOs in Malawi has been the ways in which for many CSO professionals their whole epistemology of development has been shaped and constrained by the MDG paradigm on a much less articulated level. At the beginning of this section I recounted how I had found this to be the case amongst members of the NCSTM I spoke to in 2008. I want now to explore how this epistemological ordering results in the responsabilisation of both CSOs, and ordinary Malawian citizens, for Malawi’s economic and developmental predicaments.

Responsibilisation is a key component of the contemporary neoliberal socio-economic imaginary. The marketplace has shown itself to be an inherently non-risk averse environment. Far from the neurotic subject of Zygmunt Bauman’s *Liquid Modernity* (2000), with its anxieties about the loss of community and its realisations that personal, much less communal security (in its physiological and psychological senses) could never be achieved, the neoliberal marketplace requires resilience and proactivity, subjects who contain the capacity to rise above and pull themselves up no matter the challenge (O’Malley, 2011: 55).

Only as such can the structural factors which produce poverty, inequality and injustice be fairly reapportioned to the subjects who are victims to such manifestations of the neoliberal global economy, thus *deresponsibilising* governments, international organisations, multinational corporations and so on (Larner, 2000). Resilient, proactive subjects do not blame others for their predicaments, much less withdraw into anxiety in the face of such challenges. Rather, they must embrace risk and the potential for failure, all of which entails: *"...a remodelling of liberal subjects in line with a neoliberal vision of everyman as entrepreneur of himself...The new subjects of resilience are being designed in ways of being human that allow them to live in positive freedom under conditions of radical uncertainty."* (O'Malley, 2011: 42).

Such attitudes, about themselves and those they purported to represent, were clear and prevalent amongst many of the CSO professionals I encountered. The prevailing attitude amongst CSO interviewees (from across the interviews I conducted in between 2008 and 2013) and workshop participants was that they required a 'culture change' in order to more effectively mainstream the MDGs as a developmental vehicle in Malawi. This also spoke to issues I shall discuss in the next chapter, of how CSOs needed to be more embedded within Malawian society and communities (something which, as I have already touched upon, CSOs in Malawi will find very challenging due to the structural constraints presented by their genealogy). Comments on this issue included the following:

"...we need to discover that we are there for the people, not the other way around"

"...we need to begin to challenge some of our cultures and the forms and the practices"

"...we are pointing fingers at government, to say government isn't doing enough, to make playing field level in education, enough resources to health sector and so on. I think we all have responsibility to ensure that Malawi achieves the MDGs we all have our roles to play. For example we have CSOs that are into the health sector, others in the education sector. Now the question is what have we done to complement government to ensure we are achieving the MDGs? It's not about always taking government to task, whenever something goes wrong. I'm not sure how much the NGOs have done to make sure they take a leading

role in achieving the MDGs instead of keeping themselves busy pointing fingers at the authorities”

“...we need some kind of civil education to make sure the NGOs know what they have to do to ensure the country meets the MDGs”

“...but it is on the CSOs to do some soul-searching to find out where the campaign is going wrong. The funding is there, good will from donors is there, but as implementing partners, how much have we done to make sure we are on the same page as our partners to make sure we really achieve the MDGs come 2015, so I think the problem now is with CSOs. Maybe they should rebrand!”

What all of these comments from different interviewees reveal is an underlying belief that the problem with development in Malawi lies not simply with the government, inequitable global economic structures, and certainly not with the MDGs and the version of development they have represented. Rather, the problem identified by these interviewees is with the CSOs themselves. As I discussed in Chapter One, many of the criticisms of CSOs as poorly focussed, remote and self-serving are perhaps not too wide of the mark, certainly not in a pan-continental context. What is interesting here however is the primacy given to these factors in explaining the obstacles facing Malawi in achieving the MDGs. As Samir Amin (2006) has eloquently observed, the MDGs are impossible to achieve given the structural inequalities of the global economy, and yet it is CSOs who here cop the blame.

More perniciously perhaps is the way in which the very subjects of the development project, people living in poverty, become responsibilised for their own situations and underachievement in terms of the goals. In 2008 CSO professionals I met spoke of “sensitizing’ people to their poverty”, and getting them to take “responsibility towards themselves”. “Ignorance [the ignorance of those living in poverty]” I was told, “is what has always been the problem”. This is a hegemonic code about the individual’s role in alleviating poverty and social injustice. Whilst, as I noted previously, this is a discourse of individualised and responsibilised poverty which goes beyond the MDGs (see, in a development context, Williams, 1999), it is one which was being maintained and monitored by them. This is a

theme which had seemed to become even more central in the build up to 2015 and the role that citizens should play in a post-2015 settlement. Many interviewees I met with in 2012/2013 expressed the need for citizens in Malawi to 'step up' and help both deliver the MDGs, and also participate more broadly in the development of Malawi post-2015. The following comments illustrate this theme, and the continued emphasis on 'cultural change' should be noted:

"...the goals were nice but they needed certain kinds of values to be embraced by us, in addition to the resources. We were also supposed to be a part of the resources to meet the goals"

"...but if you don't have certain people with certain convictions, at the end its going to be another show. The challenge was probably the need to create a certain mindset, embrace certain values"

"...we in Malawi needed to change our mindsets to do certain things differently, do certain things differently, and that meant at all levels, starting from the duty bearers to the rights holders"

"...citizens can play a great role in ensuring every dollar that is provided really goes to the programmes that are meant to achieve the MDGs, so that is a clear role that I would point out for the citizens. Citizens should own, every community should be able to relate to the MDGs, to say this is what we can do, to make sure for instance in achieving universal education, the citizens also have a role to make sure their children are kept in school, they are able to be given some food, clothing"

We see here then both an evocation of the Rostowian modernisation theory emphasis on the adoption of appropriate values if development is to be achieved, as well as an emphasis on the role that individuals must play in providing material support for the development of Malawi, for it becomes quite clear that the prevailing attitude is that government is incapable of doing this, or indeed should even be the primary agent in doing so. The final quote in particular speaks to this, and once again seems to relegate those structural issues

which might make it difficult for parents in Malawi to keep their children in school, provide clothing, food, etc. as secondary to the actions that individuals could and should be taking to alleviate such conditions and problems, in a world which is, perhaps, just 'naturally' unfair and requires the resilience of individuals to master the conditions in which they find themselves (Liebenberg, Ungar and Ikeda, 2015: 1007).

Conclusion

This chapter began with a reflection on why it is that politics in the Global South gets labelled 'development', whereas in the Global North the very same processes with very similar outcomes do not. Rather than simply follow the (admittedly very convincing) argument that this dual standard relates to the paternalistic project of historical imperialism, I sought to set out the manner by which even where this is the case, there is an extraversionary agency at place amongst agents in (in this case) Malawi which embodies and processes the development project in not always expected ways.

In this chapter I have argued that this relates to a complex mix of performance and predication, whereby CSOs have both consciously and subconsciously taken and played to the hegemonic nature of the Millennium Development Goals in Malawi. The MDGs acted both as a means to gain resources and prestige, but also as a means by which certain developmental issues were ruled out as developmental issues, and indeed enabled a kind of anti-political agency on the part of the government (in particular as argued here in relation to sexual minority rights, but also arguably in relation to other issues absent from the MDGs, such as land rights). Furthermore, as a set of development targets which do little or nothing to identify and challenge the structural constraints of development (Amin, 2006; Saith, 2006), the MDGs have enabled the reproduction of a very old discourse which blames indigenous agents (CSOs, individual people living in poverty) for the conditions in which they find themselves, and as the progenitors of any solutions to those issues. This is not to suggest that the agency of people living in poverty should be discounted. Indeed, the tendency of Malawian CSOs with whom I worked to talk about how Malawians needed to be 'sensitised' to their poverty, as if people living in poverty weren't already aware of the fact, was a reminder of the paternalism which has historically run through the whole

development project. As was the case historically, this was a way of *negating* the agency of people living in poverty to define their own conditions, rather than a celebration of their agency to do anything about those conditions. Listening to and respecting the solutions which people living in poverty identify to that poverty (and indeed which aspects of their lives they consider to be deserving of the label of 'poverty') is not the same as saying they have the responsibility to pull themselves out of whatever conditions happen to have been visited upon them by dint of the structural inequalities which drive the global economy.

What does all of this tell us about the relationship between civil society and development in democratised (i.e. post-1994) Malawi? In this chapter we briefly considered the constructed nature of many contemporary Malawian CSOs, a topic which will be subjected to greater scrutiny in the following chapter. However, what we saw in this chapter was that many Malawian CSOs are only networked in a shallow and unsubstantial sense, unable to accurately speak to or for their supposed constituent members, and thus find it difficult to advocate for issues which exist beyond the hegemonic confines of the contemporary development project, in this case the MDGs. This situation is reinforced by the resource-dependence most CSOs have on international donors, who themselves are mainly focussed on a narrow range of issues. It is thus fair to conclude that Malawian CSOs have been designed to engineer a certain type of development in Malawi although at the heart of this external process of construction is a contradiction. For as we saw with the UNDP meeting at which Malawian CSOs were admonished for not holding the government to account on the MDGs effectively, or with the Stand Up campaigns, which have provided opportunities for Malawian CSOs to perform their commitment to activism around the goals before dropping the MDGs for other more pressing concerns, the more the MDGs are projected as a rallying point by donors for CSOs to organise around, the clearer it becomes that the MDGs bear little relevance to Malawians given the actual conditions which produce poverty and exclusion in Malawi. What gets left then is a game of more or less conscious performance and obedience which fails not only in delivering development to the people of Malawi as they define it, but even in delivering development to the people of Malawi as defined by the country's donors^{xx}.

CHAPTER FOUR
CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRACY IN MALAWI

“After a few hesitant steps in the international arena the national middle classes, no longer feeling the threat of the traditional colonial power, suddenly develop great appetites.”
(Fanon, 1964: 186)

“Now with the new government, there may not be a day’s work for the civil society leadership to stand with us!” (Interview with Trades Unionist, Lilongwe, November 2012)

Political assassinations have not been a feature of Malawian politics since the days of Hastings Kamuzu Banda, Malawi’s former ‘Life-President’, who did indeed rule for most of the life that remained to him following Malawi’s independence in 1964, but has nonetheless been absent from power, and indeed from this plane of existence, for over 20 years. Even during Banda’s rule assassinations were rarely called as such, with victims more often disappeared, dying in suspicious car accidents, or, according to widespread rumours, fed to the crocodiles of the Shire River^{xxi}.

For followers of Malawi’s democracy and politics it therefore came as a shock when, on 13th September 2013, the Finance Ministry Budget Director Paul Mphwiyo was gunned down outside his home by three assailants. Initial responses to the shooting from the political establishment blamed corruption. The President at the time, Joyce Banda, declared publically that she knew the identity of the attackers, and that Mphwiyo, who survived, had been about to bust a corruption ring involving civil servants making illicit payments to themselves through front companies bidding for contracts which were never carried out. A month later Banda claimed she had been misquoted, and that she was not aware of the attackers’ identities. In the meantime though, and with Mphwiyo in critical condition, other rumours circulated suggesting that the Mphwiyo had been shot by criminals looking to protect the highest levels of government (including Banda) from being implicated in the scandal.

Subsequent to these initial events, a donor-mandated and government-ordered (but delayed) audit by the UK firm Baker Tilly identified that between April and October 2013 an amount equivalent of US\$30 million had been in turn stolen, paid to companies for services charged at inflated prices or paid to companies for services where no paperwork had been provided (Baker Tilly, 2014: 5). Commentators in Malawi, as well as Malawi's international donors, have stated that this time period represents a small proportion of the period during which such illicit transactions might have been going on for (the UK government, for example, has been pushing for a more substantial audit). An example of the straightforward theft which the auditors identified is the case of Victor Sithole, an accounts assistant who was found with US\$66,000 in his car, and was subsequently convicted and sentenced to nine years imprisonment (Mapondera, 2014). Sithole was apprehended with the money seven days before the attempt was made on Paul Mphwiyo's life, hence the immediate speculation surrounding the shooting and about whether Mphwiyo was implicated in the plot, or about to embarrass the government by implicating it in multiple attempts to defraud the state (some rumours suggested that some of the money was making its way in the form of donations to President Joyce Banda's Peoples' Party [Smith, 2015a]).

The fall-out of the scandal was immense and ongoing. Whilst a number of relatively low level civil servants have now been convicted of embezzlement, the most high-profile case to make it to court at the time of writing involves Joyce Banda's former Justice Minister Ralph Kasambara, who was arrested and charged with involvement in arranging Mphwiyo's shooting, and subsequently on charges of embezzlement. Kasambara denied both sets of charges. Nonetheless, the stain on Banda's reputation and government was permanent, and taken together with her economic policies (which I will discuss subsequently in this chapter) undoubtedly contributed to her downfall at the presidential elections of May 2014, trailing in third place and losing to the brother of her much reviled predecessor Bingu wa Mutharika^{xxii}. Banda herself might still be charged, and her whereabouts are rarely a matter of public knowledge, fearful as she might rightfully be of political retribution from her successor, Peter Mutharika, who himself was charged with treason during Banda's reign for the events which surrounded the death of Peter's brother Bingu, and his efforts to prevent Banda from ascending to the presidency, as was her constitutional right as vice-president. Beyond the petty political agendas and individual cases of criminality is the price still being

paid by the people of Malawi, who have suffered since Malawi's donors announced in November 2013 that they would be cutting off all direct budget support (about 40% of the national budget) to the government. The subsequent lack of government capacity was blamed by international humanitarian NGOs for the government's slow response to the January 2015 floods which devastated Southern Malawi and displaced around 250,000 people (Smith, 2015b).

In order to relate this all back to Malawi's democratic development in the post-1994, Hastings Banda era (and the place of CSOs within it), it is instructive to explore the emergence, rule and demise of Banda's unrelated namesake Joyce, and the circumstances which created her political rise and demise in such a short space of time (her time in office lasted from April 2012 to May 2014). To all intents and purposes (as of early 2015) on the run, it had all started off so positively for Joyce Banda. In 2009 she had run successfully as the Vice-Presidential candidate on Bingu wa Mutharika's re-election campaign ticket. By 2011 however relations between Mutharika and Banda had soured, based on the former's attempt to position his brother as his successor as Democratic Peoples' Party (DPP) leader and presidential candidate at the end of his second and final five-year term in 2014. As a result, Mutharika fired Banda from her role as DPP vice-president in December 2010 for *"advancing programmes contrary to the party's agenda"* (The New Age, 2010), and gave many of her vice-presidential roles, including a cabinet seat, to his wife, Callista. Banda however could not, constitutionally, be fired from her vice-presidency of the country, and so an uneasy status quo unfolded from December 2010 until Mutharika's unexpected death from a heart attack in April 2012. During this time Malawi experienced its most widespread and violent anti-government protests since the end of the Hastings Banda regime, protests which, because Banda was now officially outside of Mutharika's government yet still vice-president, she could afford to support and utilise in legitimising her attempts to reinstate herself as front-runner to be Mutharika's successor as President come the 2014 elections, albeit with a different party, the Peoples' Party, which she had established following her ejection from the DPP.

When Mutharika died unexpectedly from a heart attack in April 2012, it took almost two days for this to be officially confirmed by the government, now under the de facto

leadership of Bingu's brother and presidential favourite Peter. Together with colleagues in the DPP, Peter Mutharika was alleged to have manoeuvred to have himself installed as president, seeking the support of the military (Singini, 2013: 85-86), even though this would have flouted the constitution, which stated that the vice-president should assume presidential office in case of the sitting president's demise. A constellation of forces, including military, civil society, judicial and media support for the constitutional provision (Yi Dionne and Dulani, 2012), meant that the constitution prevailed and Joyce Banda was installed as president.

In combination with what was the most vibrant anti-government protests for nearly 20 years, Banda's ascent was interpreted by the Western political establishment as representing an optimistic new turn in Malawian politics and the region more broadly, following Mutharika's steady descent into an authoritarianism marked by major fall-outs with international donors over currency regulations, victimisation of civil society activists, and police brutality which resulted in 19 protesters being shot dead (Malawi Human Rights Commission, 2011). Governments which had earlier withdrawn aid from the country in protest at Mutharika's actions expressed public support for Banda as worthy of international support and reinstated direct budget support. UK Prime Minister David Cameron, whose ambassador was expelled by Mutharika in April 2011, praised Banda in the UK parliament (Hansard, 2013), whilst both Barack Obama and Hilary Clinton applauded Banda for *"...improving the lives of the people of Malawi"* (Clinton, 2012; see also Obama, 2013). Similarly, major think tanks and policy centres lined up to praise Banda. Chatham House extended its first ever invitation to a Malawian President when it hosted Banda at a speaking event in June 2012. At a subsequent event in March 2013, the head of Chatham House's Africa Programme, Alex Vines, spoke of Malawi's strategic place in a region becoming important as a potential source for oil, gas and other resources, before wishing Banda good luck with the upcoming 2014 elections in Malawi (Chatham House, 2013). Meanwhile, Freedom House placed Malawi on an 'upward trend arrow' due to the peaceful transfer of power from Mutharika to Banda (Freedom House, 2013). Interestingly for what followed, and the factors contributing to Banda's demise, Freedom House's Freedom Index has been criticised for taking little account of political economy in measuring changes in domestic political freedoms (Harrison, 2002: 81).

The ascent of Joyce Banda seemed then to represent a transition to 'good governance' in Malawi, and across the continent more broadly, where Banda was quickly drawn into the sphere of other donor favourites such as Liberia's Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Tanzania's Benjamin Kikwete (both of whose governments, as will be discussed more fully in Chapter Five, have subsequently been submerged in corruption scandals). Indeed, as well as the Chatham House engagement, Banda was feted for a variety of policy announcements which seemed to suggest a transition away from the authoritarian entrenchment of her predecessor. This included devaluing the national currency, the Kwacha, something Mutharika had refused to do, infuriating the IMF and creating fuel and food shortages in the country. Banda's decision to comply with IMF demands on this issue was nonetheless a domestically deeply controversial move, the politics and implications of which I shall discuss further on in this chapter. Further apparent examples of Banda's embracement of transparency and international legal commitments included announcing that Sudanese president Omar Al-Bashir would be arrested if he attended the African Union summit scheduled to be held in Malawi in 2012 (as a result of which the AU moved the summit to Addis Ababa), and the decision to sell the private presidential jet and a fleet of ministerial Mercedes Benz cars. Despite all of this (and indeed, it is worth noting that whilst the presidential jet was sold, it was subsequently leased back to the government) it is important to note that Joyce Banda was no less of an archetypal 'Chamaeleon politician' (Englund, 2002) than any of her predecessors, having at various points in her political career been a member of all four of Malawi's main political parties. This is also an issue we shall return to.

In the West at least however the emergence of Joyce Banda had marked a transition away from 'typical' African authoritarianism and corruption. Another transition which seemed to have occurred concerned civil society. In the previous chapter I noted that many of the most vibrant forces which coalesced into the pro-democracy movement of the 1990s fell outside of the kind of civil society defined by successive World Bank documents and policies (as detailed in Chapter Two). As such many of the CSOs active in the field of development and democracy promotion/monitoring were formed in the post-1992-94 environment, lack sustained and supportive domestic constituencies, and have been entirely reliant and dependent upon international aid for their survival, resulting in an arguably unhealthy range

of performances/reproductions of a constraining set of international aid policies. This did not all happen by accident. As with democratic transitions across Africa in the 1990s, the agenda and direction of the Malawi pro-democracy movement came to be dominated by now excluded members of the Hastings Banda regime (such as the first post-Banda president Bakili Muluzi) and the new NGO professionals. Any individuals, trades unionists, militants or organisations that were trying to pull the movement to the left were *“unable to lead and grow sufficiently to counter the politics and ‘ideological tools’ of a recycled elite”* (Dwyer and Zeillig, 2012: 6), a fact which simultaneously suited the technocratically-minded donors moving onto the civil society terrain in Africa at the beginning of the 1990s.

The neopatrimonialism, corruption and nepotism detailed in this chapter and which has characterised Malawi’s democracy since 1994 has thus not developed independently of the formal civil society sector. The way in which this sector has evolved since 1994, in hoc to normative donor discourses concerning liberal rights and the emancipatory inherency of the market economy, is directly related to the nature of Malawi’s political institutions. In other words, in many cases, Malawi’s CSOs are not on the outside looking in, but are instead deeply implicated in the nepotism, neopatrimonialism and corruption of the Malawian state. Englund notes two core features of the new CSO sector in the 1990s which point towards this relationship. Firstly, the CSO sector emerged as an overwhelmingly urban-based phenomenon, despite the fact that over 90% of Malawi’s population live in rural areas, and secondly, that in a country with exceptionally high levels of poverty and a sluggish private sector dominated by state patronage, the new wave of CSOs in the 1990s *“...and their new access to external resources made the jobs and contracts they controlled an important commodity”* (2002: 135). Although both Englund, and others (i.e. James, 2005) claim that donors became fatigued with these new CSOs by the end of the 1990s, many of them persist and continue to embody these features. If we start with Englund’s first point, about the urban character of Malawi’s CSO sector, we can see that by being based in Hasting Banda’s pet new capital city of Lilongwe, which he built with South African aid in the 1970s, many of the bigger Malawian CSOs are physically dislocated, along with the rest of this area. The CSOs occupy austere office blocks along the wide-but-empty boulevards of Lilongwe’s ‘City Centre’, a 15 minute bus or Matola-ride through a national park from Lilongwe’s ‘Old Town’ which is where most of the city’s residential and commercial areas lie.

The CSOs share City Centre with the national parliament, government ministries, donor offices, and an increasing number of Chinese-built hotels and shopping malls. Malawi's informal economy is only really present here in the shape of groups of phone-credit and newspaper hawkers. As such, the CSOs, who lest we forget represent some of Malawi's most dispossessed and excluded groups, in a country where there are millions of dispossessed and excluded people, exist at a far remove from their constituencies. It is also worth noting that Lilongwe's urban topography makes protesting against government, in front of government buildings, very difficult. The most common form of public mobility in Malawi involves walking, and getting people to walk from Old Town to City Centre is not easy, given the distance. It also makes protests very easy to police, as there are few main routes into City Centre, and they can be cut off very straightforwardly. Even something as banal as rain can mean that protest numbers dwindle to an insignificant few, as happened in January 2013 when there were attempts to organise protests against Joyce Banda's economic policies (it should be noted though that these protests were not organised by the bigger CSOs, an issue which will become of interest further on in the chapter).

Englund's second point about the new career-path which the CSO sector opened up in the 1990s remained evident in the 21st century. One head of a leading CSO I met in 2008 told me how he had come into the job following a number of failed attempts at starting a business. By 2012 when I returned to his organisation he had returned back to the private sector.

One conclusion we can reach from these points about the instrumentalisation of the CSO sector in Malawi, and the various structural factors which implicate CSOs in the neo-liberal imagination of the donor community and neo-patrimonialism of the state, was neatly articulated by a fellow scholar of Malawian politics who remarked in conversation that if one wanted to get rid of civil society in Malawi one simply needed to buy three plane tickets. The overall impression this all leaves then is that the civil society that we see in Malawi, the one that is legible and has smart inner-city addresses, is largely ineffectual and apolitical, certainly not able to affect substantial political change. Indeed, even when a CSO wants to take on a more explicitly political agenda they can find themselves excluded from the key decision-making and influencing processes. One of the few national membership

organisations I spoke to in Malawi had recently converted from being a members association to a trades union. As a result:

“...we have managed to like, to get crushed in most of the discussions, and we know that the problem was that we transformed from being an association to a trade union. Now when we turned to a union, we were deemed as working against the government, so most of the structures in the government they did not invite us to the discussions on the issues, but we could have a voice in that, so they were side-lining us” (Interview, Lilongwe, February 2013)

This resonates with a broader argument about Government-civil society relations in Malawi, whereby *“Government is certainly inviting civil society to participate in discussion and dialogue of policies, but is also not used to being challenged from inside the country and its inherent defensiveness can quickly turn to aggression against CSOs for ‘meddling in politics’”* (James, 2005: 49). This kind of aggression certainly featured in Bingu wa Mutharika’s anti-CSO rhetoric over the spring and summer of 2011 (and indeed in democratic Malawi dates back to Bakili Muluzi’s presidency, when he would frequently ban protests [Englund, 2002: 137]). Following protests in which 19 protestors were shot dead by police forces, Mutharika gave a speech in which he warned that *“If you go back to the streets, I will smoke you out. Enough is enough”* (BBC 2011). The horse had though, so to speak, already bolted. Many of the CSOs featured in Chapter Three were already out on the streets protesting Mutharika’s rule. Their role in the transition to Joyce Banda was therefore central. It was a petition submitted by CSOs to Mutharika around which the subsequent July 2011 protests against him coalesced. Similarly, the press conference held by CSOs on April 6th 2012 demanding that Joyce Banda be appointed president as per the constitution was significant in warding off Peter Mutharika’s alleged putsch (Yi Dionne and Dulani, 2012). This all followed nearly two decades of international attempts to instigate an activist attitude amongst Malawian CSOs (Mwalubunju, 2008: 274; Gabay, 2011: 497-8). The abiding impression which emerged from the protest activity in 2011-12 therefore was that two transitions had taken place, embodied by Joyce Banda’s ascent on the one hand (as detailed previously) and an activism on the part of CSOs, which included putting lives at risk, which whilst not entirely unique in the post 1994 multiparty era, had

not been witnessed to the same degree before. Ultimately this suggested that CSOs in Malawi were finally 'coming of age' in the liberal imaginary of being autonomous monitors of state activity. Given the docility, performativity and reproduction of hegemonic developmentalism I detailed in the previous chapter, such events (and an interpretation of them) were surprising to me, especially as the events I have described here occurred towards the end of the period in which I was conducting research for this book. On the surface then, it looked like my colleague at the conference might need to buy a few more plane tickets. Would I also have to revise all of my thinking about civil society in Malawi, and in the region more broadly?

Transition vs Instrumentalisation and the rise and fall of Joyce Banda

If you have gotten this far with this book then it will probably be of no surprise to you that I am going to answer the question posed above with a fairly resounding 'no'. I am going to argue that rather than the events of 2011/2012 representing a transition in CSO agency in Malawi what we in fact saw was 'civil society' (in World Bank and donor terms) doing precisely what it was designed to do. In Chapter Two I briefly laid out Michel Foucault's understanding of civil society, which he argued, in a 19th century European context, was created/tolerated by the state with a single function in mind: to limit the state's integral drive to interfere in the market, and to act as a buffer against any such interference (Foucault, 2008: 295-313). Of course, as the past two chapters have illustrated, civil society in Malawi has not been constructed by the state alone. Rather, both state and civil society have in many respects been engineered externally through the conditionalities of donor funding and dependency. The lack of policy space open to successive Malawian governments, as in many other parts of the continent, has produced what Thandika Mkandawire called "*Choiceless Democracies*" (Mkandawire, 1999), where candidates for public office offer very little by the way of ideological differentiation. This is because international aid conditionalities make it incredibly difficult for any politician to depart too far from the accepted script of export-oriented, market integrating neo-classical economics. For instance, in general, repeated attempts by all of the post-1994 leaders to wrest agricultural subsidy policy back from the World Bank have failed, and the issues which dominated public debate in Malawi in the years around Bingu wa Mutharika's death and the

transition to Joyce Banda tended to be scripted from Washington DC and London rather than Lilongwe i.e. LGBTQ rights and currency devaluation (Lowe, 2014)^{xxiii}.

The absence of meaningful policy/ideological differentiation gives voters very little by which to measure political performance. It is thus no surprise that voting patterns in Malawi tend to follow ethnic and regional lines. Indeed, across Africa the balance between whether people affiliate most closely to their ethnic or national identity is quite finely balanced, with 51% of Afrobarometer survey respondents reporting that they identify with their ethnic affiliation at least equally to, if not more so than, their national affiliation^{xxiv}. This result was replicated in Malawi-specific responses. This means that even where people at various points in the political life-cycle might report a greater affiliation to their national group identity, when it comes to elections people may subsequently fall back into ethnic and regional voting patterns (Cheeseman, 2014). Such patterns produce various forms of neo-patrimonial politics, whereby elections are fought over who can promise the most largesse to the largest coalition of ethnic groups. Whilst at times this can be developmental (i.e. new roads, schools, hospitals, etc. – see Cammack, Kelsall and Booth, 2010), such forms of politics obviously create conditions for illicit forms of self-enrichment. As a result political parties in Malawi form and reform, with very few immune from the political calculations involved in trying to retain or obtain power for political gain. I mentioned earlier that Joyce Banda had been a member of all four main Malawian political parties. She was not alone in this kind of behaviour however. Her predecessor, Bingu wa Mutharika was elected president as the head of one party, before leaving that party whilst in power to create a new one. Khembo explains the structural reasons for such events thusly:

“The state is the major and almost only source of gaining wealth, power and influence and, therefore, provides enormous incentives for party formation, splits, disbands, mergers, alliances and coalitions...For some political parties, losing an election means losing access to state wealth and power and the basis for their survival...the liberal political system, the electoral system and legal framework offer entrepreneurial politicians leeway to form, register and operate political parties even if such parties exist only in the abstract. The cost of party formation, political representation and electoral access is relatively low... [some parties] are not ‘genuinely new parties’ but

fissions. In other words, the cost of 'political bluffing' in Malawi is low." (Khembo, 2004: 134)

This occurs hand in hand with what Harri Englund has called 'Chameleon Politics', where *"heroes of yesterday may be villains today, depending on the dynamic of political friendship and animosity...Malawi's political pluralism is a democracy in doubt...a democracy of chameleons"* (Englund, 2002: 17). For instance, in Malawi political parties have never presented coherent and autonomous platforms. They have formed and reformed from the very beginning of the post-Hastings Banda era. Two parties, Alliance for Democracy (AFORD) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) swore never to work with the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), the former party of Hastings Banda. However, by the end of 1995 AFORD had walked out of its coalition with the UDF to go into an opposition alliance with the MCP. Then, in 1999, following an attempt by then MCP president Gwanda Chakuamba to challenge the legitimacy of UDF head and Malawian president Bakili Muluzi, UDF parliamentarians voted Chakuamba out of his position as official leader of the opposition (a manoeuvre which is provided for in Malawi's constitution). He was replaced, with Muluzi's blessing, by MCP vice president John Tembo. Tembo was widely considered to have acted as Hastings Banda's henchman, particularly during the later years of Banda's rule when he was less able to fully exert himself, and was thus hugely unpopular, and indeed feared. As head of the country's security services under Banda, Tembo was most likely involved in the decision to imprison Muluzi in the 1980s, and yet he was hailed by Muluzi as *"...just the kind of constructive and experienced politician that this young democracy needs"* (Bakili Muluzi in Englund, 2002: 12).

Englund goes on to explain that 'Chameleon' forms of politics are historically produced, and are thus not unique to Malawi. They are the product of histories of colonial rule which consistently muddied the waters between 'tradition' and 'modernity', where 'traditional' chiefs, rather than 'westernised' African bureaucrats or members of the petit bourgeoisie were often utilised to implement the modernist imperial project. Thus we continue to see the 'traditional' and the 'modern' spliced together in attempts to further the political objectives of vying sets of elites (Ibid: 18). However, 'Chameleon' forms of politics are not

limited to those elites vying for formal political office; they also extend to those who Chameleon-like leaders are supposed to rule over.

We can now bring this discussion around to civil society. At various points docile receptacles of donor policies, at others rampaging human rights and democracy-promoting activists. But, like a chameleon, these shifts in 'colour' largely run skin-deep. In the 1990s the Malawian state used several means by which to bring this new and well-funded civil society sector under control. One way to do this was the 1999 NGO Act, which legislated for the Council of Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi (CONGOMA) to be the CSO-sector 'regulator'. Being registered with CONGOMA was the only way a CSO could establish and operate a bank account, a necessity for the receipt of foreign funds. 'Politiking' CSOs were threatened with de-registration, and although this has never happened, the threat of it has been effective (Dwyer and Zeillig, 2012: 138). At the same time leading civil society figures have effectively been silenced by appointing them to senior state positions. One example of this is Collins Magalasi, a former ActionAid country official who now serves as an economic adviser to President Peter Mutharika. Another example is Dorothy Ngoma, who I met in 2008 and was by a great distance the most politically conscious member of the National Civil Society Taskforce on the MDGs that I had met. Dorothy was a taskforce ambassador, and was the only member of the taskforce to talk about the structural causes of poverty;

"Because as long as the rich believe it's ok for them to be what they are, and have everything that they have, and continue grabbing and accumulating for themselves, then nothing will change...so this is about the market, doing something about the global market or international market so there are issues also of fairness"

She also had a noticeably belligerent attitude towards government:

"All we care about is can, can you make sure you do something in government, put resources together and make sure the people don't go hungry...we are not seeing you moving much, or fighting it out and doing your best so therefore move. So they will listen, because they know that if they don't...I will not shut my mouth, I am always on

air, I am always talking and I don't need anybody's permission because I have this authority, this assignment, from the civil society community"

Nonetheless, when I returned to Malawi in 2012/13 Dorothy was now in-post as a special adviser to Joyce Banda on women's rights. This kind of government-civil society open door process is obviously not unique to Malawi, or even Africa, being plentifully in evidence in the West. However, in lieu of formalised political opposition groups based on ideological grounds, a vacuum is created when the majority of CSOs are either compliant with or co-opted by the state and/or donors.

We see further evidence of this kind of co-optation in the immediate aftermath of Joyce Banda's civil society-backed unelected ascent to power in 2012. Bingu wa Mutharika's increasingly erratic authoritarianism was, in the main, threatening only to Malawi's CSO sector and anti-government journalists. The issue which undermined Mutharika in the eyes of the rest of Malawi's main rural and peri-urban population was the economic crisis which engulfed the country following Mutharika's refusal to devalue the Malawian Kwacha under pressure from the IMF. The crisis had resulted in a 20% increase in the costs of a basic basket of goods in the period of December 2010-July 2011 (Centre for Social Concern, 2012), the month of the main anti-Mutharika protests, forex and petrol shortages, spiralling food costs and electricity shortages (Cammack, 2012: 376-377). Various interviewees reported that the main issue of contention between Mutharika and the IMF was whether Malawi's other donors would name a figure for a compensatory aid package if Mutharika went ahead and devalued the currency, which they refused to do, hence the stand-off. These cost-of-living issues were compounded when donors cut off all direct budget support following the deaths of protestors at the July 2011 protests.

The stand-off between Mutharika and the IMF is important to note, because Joyce Banda posed the very same question to the country's donors when she assumed power. When Banda also received a negative response, she went ahead and devalued anyway, without any assurances that a suitable aid package would be put together. Whilst donors did reinstate aid, the levels were nowhere near high enough to compensate for a 33% currency

devaluation which had a knock-on effect of increasing the costs of most goods in this heavily import-dependent country by upwards of 40%.

The petition submitted by a coalition of CSOs and around which the July 2011 anti-Mutharika protests coalesced was not therefore, despite international media coverage to the contrary, primarily focussed on Mutharika's increasingly concerning human rights record. Rather, the bulk of the petition's demands concerned socio-economic issues pertaining to living standards, economic mismanagement and jobs (for the full petition see Kumwenda, 2011). And yet even though economic conditions had if anything worsened under Banda, most of the CSOs who had protested about these issues to Mutharika remained silent. Their silence seemed even more pronounced given some of the other things Banda was getting up to.

On Friday November 2nd 2012, the front pages of most Malawian newspapers carried a story about sacks of famine-relief maize being distributed in rural areas of Malawi stamped with the initials of the president, Joyce Banda^{xxv}. The 'JB Maize' story shed light on the murkiness of some of Banda's practices, with the financial provenance of the maize never made public^{xxvi}. Of course in providing Malawian citizens with a political kickback they could quite literally 'eat', Banda was behaving no differently from any other of her predecessors, nor many a politician in any other African country and beyond (consider US 'pork-barrel'-style politics for instance). But herein lies the point: *She was no different*. And yet Banda received a tumultuous international reception, and a silent domestic civil society (or nearly silent, but more of that later) when it came to formulating any kind of public critique of her actions, either in terms of her economic policies, or neo-patrimonial practices.

How do we explain this silence and compliance in the face of such egregiously neo-patrimonial and economically disastrous policies? Some CSO interviewees explained that they thought Banda just needed more time, for instance "*...this period is also her campaign period, so the period is just too crucial for her as a political figure, so maybe if we could give her more time she could be more helpful*". In other words, Banda had not been in power for very long, and had Mutharika's mess to clean up. Implicitly then this was a kind of 'there is no alternative' (TINA) argument, although it didn't really explain away Banda's more neo-

patrimonial practices. Other interviewees, particularly those from organisations with older or more organic characteristics (i.e. trades unions, professional associations) gave a slightly different account, which spoke to the ways in which many of the July 2011 protest leaders had been co-opted by the new regime. This returns us to the way in which Banda was able to keep one foot in government and one foot in civil society during the latter portion of Mutharika's rule. As one interviewee explained:

"...some of the guys who were so influential in the running of the CSOs, maybe they were a part of the JB [Joyce Banda] campaign outside government, so the current leadership I think was so sympathetic, bedfellows, so today they say now they [Banda] are there, and now we can go back to what we were doing before [not being oppositional]. Things like, 'no I think let's give the new administration a chance, maybe, the pressure that we were piling on the old regime lets reduce a little bit and then let's see how it goes' so I would say that the space is there but we have backtracked a bit, so it's a challenge... You talk about influence from our partners, the donor community. There were issues which Bingu was unable to implement, issues of devaluation, it was too hard for Mutharika, but our current president came in and said 'no I will do that' and seems to have won the hearts of the donors with that, but if you dig deep on the ground and check the impact you'll find the people might be worse off than they were."

The interviewee just quoted was in a minority. By far the majority of CSO professionals I spoke with were of the opinion that Banda needed more time. Indeed, later on in 2013 ordinary workers and even state employees took matters into their own hands, engaging in a series of strike actions in demand of higher pay to compensate for the inflation of goods and services which had occurred due to the devaluation. This included sectors ranging from licensed chicken market traders to airport staff. And yet the CSOs were still reticent to come out against Banda. During this resurgence of protests a number of CSOs met under the auspices of their regulator CONGOMA, to discuss their public reticence in supporting the protests. A close observer of these events claimed that:

“The meeting took place behind closed doors. Apparently NGOs that attended agreed to disagree on their position on various issues affecting the country. They also agreed not to criticise each other in public. All this was leaked information but nothing from that meeting has been officially made public.” (Personal correspondence with Malawian political blogger. See also: Kainja, 2013)

Is it just co-option that creates these conditions of silence? I mentioned earlier the vacuum that opens up when CSO leaders are co-opted in a country like Malawi, where a lack of formal ideological contestation means organised opposition is less likely to cohere than if such formal ideological differentiation was apparent. As Harrison argues in a broad pan-continental context, rather than creating impetus for people to form into oppositional forces, to fill the vacuum., this fundamental lack “...is just as likely to lead to various kinds of political distancing: a subversion of state politics or a desire to establish a realm outside of the state...a dynamic of 'political exit' through the construction of civil societies which put distance people between people and the state” (Harrison, 2002: 80). Indeed, even though strikes did start to occur through 2013, they never formed into a sustained and coherent political platform, as evidenced during the 2014 presidential campaign where voting patterns once again fell back on regional and ethnic ties to particular candidates.

But again, we must ask why it is that this silence from the CSO leadership emerges, or rather, why the leadership is active at certain points (i.e. *against* Mutharika) but not at others, when conditions and practices seem remarkably similar to those which pertained under Mutharika. Such questions can be better contextualised if we trace CSO activism in Malawi back into the earlier years of the Mutharika regime. During his first term (2004-2008) Mutharika was largely considered a success, certainly domestically and even internationally with some of the *relatively* less orthodox donors (i.e. Nordic donors, UK Department for International Development). His agricultural policies had created a food surplus, and as late as 2009 (his falling out with donors came in early 2011) he was being photographed at the White House with the Obamas. The main CSOs in Malawi largely shared this positive outlook, and in 2008 had held a candlelight vigil outside the Malawian parliament *in support* of Mutharika's attempts to pass the national budget in the teeth of majority parliamentary opposition. Events such as these add to the confusion in explaining

the significance of CSO activism in Malawi. To recap, they were active in supporting Mutharika in 2008, active again in 2011/12 in opposing him, and then largely silent in 2012/13 in response to reports of corruption, neo-patrimonialism and plummeting economic conditions, all of which bore a striking resemblance to the features of Mutharika's rule which they had previously protested against. In the past I have described the agency of CSOs in Malawi as 'docile' (Gabay, 2011). But being docile does not and has not necessarily implied a complete lack of action, but rather particular courses of action which ultimately serve to underpin hegemonic continuity. Dwyer and Zeillig for instance argue that CSOs in Malawi have become mediators between state and society, rather than bodies that represent or express the desires of ordinary people "...which is of course what the state and IFIs were aiming for" (2012: 157). More specifically, Gaynor (2011) describes the active way in which a major Malawian CSO, the Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN), forced its way into government deliberations around Malawi's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). However, this kind of activity merely serves to legitimate donor and specifically World Bank discourses on participation. Indeed, Gaynor goes on to note how the MEJN leadership became disciplined by the contours of donor expert knowledge relating to development (ibid). It is thus perfectly possible to be both active in a certain sense, and yet politically docile, reinforcing the way in which Foucault (2010) argued that power works through freedom, through the 'conduct of conduct', rather than being reducible to force, coercion or false consciousness. If we explore just one of these moments of CSO activism in depth, we can begin to unpick the broader recent history of Chameleon-like CSO activism in Malawi, and the way in which in many cases it conforms to a mixture of active hegemonic co-option as well as Foucauldian notions of self-conduct and state-limitation.

When in July 2011 Malawi CSOs, together with ordinary citizens, took to the streets, their demands included calls for better governance and adherence to the rule of law, but, as I alluded to above, also pointed to the contradictions produced by neoliberal development policy prescriptions which have undermined the state's capacity to ensure the provision and affordability of basic public services: a guarantee of decent jobs and working conditions, a minimum wage, a social protection system, affordable medicines (Kumwenda, 2011), and so on.

Despite the existence of the CSO petition in which these demands were articulated, there was never a uniform CSO approach. As Cammack argued in relation to the protests:

“...some [of the CSOs] are more radical and some are more experienced than others, and there appears to be no common vision of how to reach their goals... Some are more willing to compromise and work with government; some more than others seem to be influenced by opposition politicians...Building a united, well-informed, and representative civil society leadership is near impossible.” (Cammack, 2011, 16)

This explains the long list of demands made (there were 20 in all) as well as the broad terrain they established, which included macro issues such as wages and economic performance to more particular issues such as the size of the government's car fleet (Kumwenda, 2011). Indeed, Cammack recounts that the agreement to call off the protests and subsequently enter into negotiations with the government in August 2011 split the CSO leadership, creating opportunities for the government to actively 'purge' the more radical wing of this group. This included (alleged) arson campaigns, telephone threats, random arrests and so forth. Plum jobs in government and business were offered to those considered to be more compliant (Cammack, 2012: 388). This is a pattern which continued under Banda, with opponents of the regime being painted as pro Mutharika hangovers, whilst others, as we have seen, were offered, and accepted jobs in government service. This in turn is a major feature of Malawian politics, dating back to Hasting Banda's one party state (see Dulani, 2009: 143; Minnis, 1998: 139), and speaks to the more proactive process of hegemonic co-optation which has defenestrated the civil society sector of its radicalism.

However, in order to understand how processes of self-conduct also underpin these processes we need to view these events in the broader context of CSO docility/conformity to donor agendas. On the one hand one might argue that the events of July 2011 equated to some kind of 'democratic maturation' amongst CSOs after a turn to corruption and poor governance under Mutharika. However, Mutharika was only continuing a trend which had run through every post-Hastings Banda government, as well as the Hasting Banda era itself. There was nothing particularly new about the para-statalism of Mutharika's business relationships, nor his awarding of government positions to family members, and indeed

such trends had been protested against before in the post 1994 era (Mwalubunju, 2007), but on a much smaller scale. So what was it about this particular point in time which brought the CSO leadership in such numbers to the streets?

Cammack argues that an important element of the 2011 conjuncture was rising middle class frustration (2012: 376). However, this does not necessarily explain why a number of CSO professionals, formally representing disadvantaged groups, spoke as CSOs, rather than as members of the middle classes to which they belonged. Speaking to CSO professionals in Malawi it is clear that they did not view their organisational affiliations as an opportunity to merely vent personal middle class concerns. As previously noted, CSOs in sub-Saharan Africa were created in the context of a liberal imagination of the state-society relationship (Harrison, 2004; see also Tembo, 2003b; Williams and Young, 2012; and for other parts of the world, Kamat, 2002; Mawdsley, et al 2004; Petric, 2005). Where funded by external donors, and as we saw in Chapter Two, they exist largely to keep the state at bay, either through delivering services which the state would (or perhaps should) otherwise deliver itself, or by constructing effective accountability and monitoring systems. We must make a distinction here between state and government, for where government may be carrying out actions which limit the role of the state we could expect CSOs to be out in support. This in part explains the street protests which took place in 2008 supporting government attempts to pass the donor-approved budget. The state-civil society relationship of the liberal imagination is therefore maintained.

Turning our attention back to the July 2011 protests in Malawi, such a dynamic provides a possible explanation for the rather uneven nature of CSO activism. The docility outlined in the face of donor agendas that we saw in the last Chapter (or indeed the more 'active' docility of MEJN that Gaynor [2011] notes in the PRSP) does not necessarily contradict the active opposition to government that occurred in 2011. If we understand the function of donor-funded CSOs in sub-Saharan Africa as being a limit on state activity, or an alternative option to building the capacity of weak, and for donors, untrustworthy states, particularly in the market, then it is much easier to comprehend this docility/activism as existing on the same spectrum of CSO functionality. Indeed, as we saw in Chapter Three, one of the demands made by aid agencies of CSOs in 2008 was that they be more active in holding

government to account, a demand to which the CSOs present, performatively at least, willingly agreed.

Where government therefore stops performing as it should regarding its caretaking and limiting of the state, we should expect CSOs, established with the function of ensuring the state's limitation, to protest. Governments seeking to establish their role in the affairs of state and market may then respond by seeking to coerce or co-opt CSO professionals and other activists. A potential rejoinder to this would be to point out that during Mutharika's first term (2004-2008) Malawi experienced its best economic performance for several decades (Cammack, 2012: 386). One might therefore question why CSOs would or should complain at such a performance? And yet for all of Mutharika's successes these were all relative, and did not lead to wide-scale redistribution. By the end of Mutharika's first term, Malawi still experienced some of the highest levels of below dollar-a-day poverty in the world (65% of the population in 2008 [UNDP, 2008]) and hovered around the 165 ranking mark in each UN Human Development Report index of that period. One would think then that there would be something to protest about, *in opposition* to government policy rather than, as occurred with the candlelight vigil in 2008, in support of it.

For all the while then that successive Malawian governments, including Mutharika's first-term government (even if this was tempered by his programme of agricultural subsidies), were broadly following internationally prescribed neoliberal policy prescriptions (which prioritise GDP growth over developmental indicators which might represent a challenge to 'growthism'), CSOs remained not just quiet, but actively supportive of governments whose neo-patrimonialism and para-statalism continued unabated from the pre-democracy era. However, once this elite-enriching activity began to threaten international policy prescriptions (as with Mutharika's refusal to devalue the Kwacha, demanded by the IMF), we saw CSOs spring into action. We can extend this analysis into the Joyce Banda era too. Despite the fact that economic indicators and living standards continued to move in the wrong direction, the majority of CSOs remained silent. Banda, many of them told me, 'needed time'. Most of what she was doing in this time was implementing internationally prescribed neo-liberal economic policy.

What this does not mean is that there were not groups in Malawi recognising the continuities at play at the heart of the Banda government's practices. New protests, this time against the failure of Joyce Banda's government to address the country's long-standing socio-economic problems, were called in January 2013. Although people took to the streets in the country's main towns and cities, there was only one main instigator, the Consumers Association of Malawi (CAMA), rather than the broad coalition which came together for the anti-Mutharika protests. A number of factors dampened the numbers that came out for these protests, including splits between civil society groups, and rumours suggesting that CAMA's Executive Director John Kapito was colluding with Mutharika's party (now led by his brother, Peter) the DPP, as well as a discredited para-statal partner of the former regime (Nyasa Times, 2013).

Despite all of this, the January 2013 protests were followed by widespread public sector strikes against wage depreciation following the currency devaluation and inflation running at over 35%. Once again though, donor-funded civil society organisations were reluctant to come out against the government, and as we have already seen, 'agreed to disagree' in private.

The internal contestation which is apparent across Malawian civil society more broadly speaks of a more Gramscian set of analytics than the Foucauldian ones so far deployed, whereby hegemonic contestation takes place *within* and *on* the civil society terrain, rather than simply *between* civil society and the state (see, for example, Chandhoke, 1994; Colas, 2002), and of course these two positions (Gramscian and Foucauldian) are not necessarily mutually exclusive. However, through a combination of smearing protest leaders, side-lining and buying off some of the civil society leadership, and the willingness of the rest to comply with the Banda government's attempts to realign the Malawian economy according to international diktat^{xxvii}, Malawian CSOs, particularly those which have emerged in the post 1994 period, have once again been neutered, in some cases unwillingly, but in many along the lines of Foucault's observation that the inherent purpose of civil society was to act as the state's force of self-limitation in the market (Foucault, 2008: 295-313), resulting in a range of behaviours and statements which have self-disciplined CSO activism.

Some of the CSOs I spoke with were aware of these issues; issues of corruption, theft, and violence which had characterised every post-1994 government in Malawi. However, the way these issues were framed was in such a way as to suggest that the problem was a *lack* of continuity between governments, when in fact, like in much of sub-Saharan Africa (See Chapter One, but also Mkandawire, 1999; Harrison, 2004) the causes of many of the socio-economic problems which pervade in Malawi are arguably rooted in too *much* continuity, a continuity of neo-liberal, export-oriented, small-state, internationally-prescribed policy implementation. Take for instance the following remarks which were made during the 2013 workshop:

“...maybe the genesis of the problem is about the way our state, or our government is set up. The basic thinking is that country should be taken as a train, which keeps moving, but changes drivers, that being presidents and parties. But that train’s basic frameworks shouldn’t change. That is what is lacking in this country. Here you find when the driver comes in, he wants to change even the pedals of the train, the tyres, everything. So we are moving back and forth.”

Now, whilst it is true that different governments have adopted different names for the various ‘grand vision’ policy documents which proliferate in donor-dependent African countries (in Malawi the two main ones have been Vision 2020 and the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy), the actual content of these programmes vary only very slightly, dependent as they are on World Bank and harmonised donor oversight. And yet at the workshop the discussion around why the MDGs were failing in Malawi focussed in on the ways in which individual leaders kept on upsetting the boat (or in this case the train). The discussion certainly revealed a cynicism with government, but not one that extended to the kind of development being proposed within the programmes they wished their government was sticking to. Another participant remarked:

“So if the rains are bad then you find that instead of focusing on education or whatever then you go round handing out bags of maize or something like that [general laughter]. So that shows that the agenda somehow changes”

This remark referred to the very public show of vote-buying which Joyce Banda had engaged in when distributing sacks of maize in rural areas stamped with her initials on, mentioned previously in this chapter. Whilst this remark at least displayed some critique of Banda's actions (not a critique which had fed into a broader active programme of discontent against Banda's policy decisions), it is interesting once again how frustrations at the lack of development in Malawi is primarily laid at the feet of individuals and their governments, rather than a broader international political economy of development.

Conclusion

What does all of this tell us about the role of civil society in what is supposedly a stable democratised country like Malawi, albeit one that is punctuated by periods of unrest? Ultimately, one's view of the relationship between state and civil society in Malawi depends on where one looks. In this book I have focussed on the formal CSO sector, primarily because it is this sector which according to neo-liberal orthodoxy is supposed to be the guarantor of democracy in post-authoritarian countries such as Malawi. What we have seen is that CSOs certainly act as guarantors, but not of democracy in any kind of radical or participatory sense, but rather a form of democracy which limits itself to periodic elections and a 'there is no alternative' form of politics and economy. Formal CSOs in Malawi have consistently acted as the state's agent of self-limitation, acting for or against particular governments to ultimately defend the global market economy (even if this has not been the stated aim). For those who have broken cover, there has been the stick of persecution or the carrot of government jobs. But what of non-formalised civil society? Who are they and where have they been? The January 2013 protests, organised by a consumers' rights association, points towards responses to internationally ordained policies emerging from alternative sites. The Catholic Church too were vocal in opposing these policies. My ability to answer these questions was necessarily constrained by the nature and focus of the research I carried out, but I raise these questions nonetheless to recognise the importance of further research on this sector^{xxviii}. I also raise these questions because of an intriguing remark made by a workshop participant when discussing strategies for CSO engagement in the post-MDG agenda setting process. I referred to this statement earlier on in Chapter Three (p.x), but I have repeated it here to reaffirm the degree to which we need to avoid the

tendency we find in some literature of being overly-reductive about the political consciousness of civil society professionals (see for instance Kamat, 2002; Chandler, 2004):

“And who is the true representative of the people? Is it the CSO, is it the elected leader? Is it the traditional leader? Because Malawi is, is what we might call a hybrid type of state. It is a modern state running parallel to a traditional state. So when we say we are consulting the people, who is the true representative? Because sometimes we are not making progress because we are not reflecting what type of state we have. There is a traditional state which is very powerful. It’s even able to make laws, by-laws, to make their own policies, to say in this village we will do this or that, so we have this traditional state. And then we have our modern state, which is run by the ministers, so there is that, sometimes that friction, and we, the CSOs, sometimes we claim to be representing the people when they have not even sent us, we have not been sent, but we claim it is the people, the peoples’ voice”

This remark was made at the end of a long session, and provoked little discussion. It was less the content of the remark which was surprising (Peter Ekeh argued about Africa’s ‘two publics’ [Ekeh, 1975] many years ago), but rather the level of auto-cynicism it revealed. And yet, ultimately, whilst behind the closed doors of a workshop there might be nodding agreement with such sentiments, in the harsh world of chasing donor money and attracting government patronage, undermining one’s own legitimacy to speak is not an attractive option, and so the wheel continues to turn, with depressing regularity.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: OF PITFALLS AND POTENTIALITIES

"...the social class which is active at the grassroots is not the same as the social class which is active at the state policy and planning level; nevertheless, they constitute a relatively unified social bloc in the reproduction of dominant ideologies" (Kamat, 2002: 3)

"Only a few NGOs try to resist; and almost all of these have to balance resistance against survival. Many independent thinking NGOs are small, and could not survive by rejecting their donors outright. Robbing Peter to pay Paul... is part of the everyday business of coping"
(Mawdsley, Townsend and Porter, 2004: 877)

The pesky African state; no matter how much the international donor community tries to nail it down, set it on the straight and narrow and keep its stealing hands away from the money so regularly transferred by donors into core government budgets, state agents, be they politicians, public and civil servants or employees of para-statal, keep finding new ways to subvert donor intentions and engage in self-serving financial behaviour. At the time of writing a number of the West's favourite African governments are mired in some kind of corruption scandal or another. I have already detailed the rise and fall of Joyce Banda, much of it embedded in the Cashgate scandal which engulfed her and agents of the Malawian state from the middle of 2013. Meanwhile Tanzania's president Benjamin Kikwete has seen his Attorney General resign and has fired his Land and Housing Minister (BBC, 2014), after it was discovered that senior members of the government were funnelling public funds into private bank accounts. Another donor favourite is Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia, who the World Bank praises for her *"passionate commitment to hard work, integrity and good governance"* (World Bank, 2013). The same piece goes on to refer to the fact that Sirleaf *"...is the proud mother of four sons"*, failing to mention that three of those sons hold senior government posts, including head of the state oil company. It is this nepotism which led to President Sirleaf's fellow Liberian 2011 Nobel Peace Prize winner Leymah Gbowee to quit her position as head of the government's Peace and Reconciliation Commission in order to speak out vociferously against Sirleaf's record (Allison, 2012).

Civil society was supposed to fix this. In Chapter one I listed three lines of enquiry into the state-civil society relationship in sub-Saharan Africa, which I will repeat here:

- i) The degree to which Africa's post-Cold War civil society represents a check on state power in general;
- ii) The degree to which Africa's post-Cold War civil society represents an extension of the state's power in social and economic life;
- iii) The degree to which Africa's post-Cold War civil society represents a market-driven limitation on the state's power in the economy.

As we saw in Chapter Two, the economic impulse within the World Bank which configured civil society with precisely state-corruption (and calling it out) in mind largely won out. As we saw, this was based on assumption that, as stated in point i) above, civil society would represent a check on African state power, an assumption which I have attempted to dismantle throughout the various chapters of this book. Now, it is of course true that many of the scandals I mentioned above were brought to public attention in part via civil society scrutiny, although we saw that in Malawi it took an assassination attempt to really bring Cashgate into the open. Nonetheless, as we have seen at various points in the preceding chapters, the functionality of civil society with regards to keeping a check on the state is highly uneven, and even the supposedly 'best behaving' states continue to be mired in corrupt practices, sometimes with the active compliance of civil society activists who at best stay silent and at worst actively participate in such practices. A recent example from Malawi illustrates this. In early 2015 it was reported that 5 million Malawian Kwacha (around \$10,000) had been diverted from Malawi's donor funded and supported National Aids Council to a conservation CSO called Beautify Malawi. Beautify Malawi had never run any HIV/AIDs projects, and had been established by President Peter Mutharika's wife, Gertrude Mutharika. A number of CSOs called for a public protest, the effectiveness of which was dampened first of all by heavy rain, but also by senior civil society activists who

lined up behind the President in defending the grant to his wife's CSO, including some who had been formally co-opted into advisory positions within the government. This would seem to suggest that it is the state which holds the cards in the state-civil society relationship in Africa (as alluded to in point ii) above). However, this is another assumption which I have sought to problematize throughout this book, for whilst it is partially true that the state penetrates civil society to the extent that the distinction between the two is oftentimes not very useful, it is also the case that the breakdown of this distinction occurs in an international politico-economic context which serves to limit state power in the all-important realm of the domestic economy (as suggested by point iii) above).

The examples provided above of state nepotism and predatory behaviour points to the troubled relationship between the state, civil society and democracy in many sub-Saharan African countries. But by keeping an eye on the state, by monitoring its activities and ensuring it sticks to the World Bank's 'good governance' mantra, civil society was also supposed to prepare the ground for and facilitate development. Indeed, the good governance agenda was going to drive growth in Africa, and growth, of course, would equate to development. But as we have seen in recent years, the high levels of economic growth that Africa has experienced has, in many respects, reinforced the elitist nature of the African polity, leaving huge question marks over the strategy deployed by the Bank, and then others, to promote development in Africa. This strategy was underpinned by what is helpfully thought of as an equation (what Ferguson [2006] has called 'scientific capitalism') which reads broadly as something like:

*Politicians committed to good governance + monitory civil society = market friendly
macroeconomic reforms = economic growth = development*

Indeed, recent years have witnessed a celebration amongst certain commentators and investors about an emerging African middle class, produced essentially by the above equation and reinforcing the monitory role of the international donor community's engineered civil society organisations (see for instance, African Development Bank 2011; Dowden, 2009; Berman, 2013; Kingombe, 2014). And yet, for all the belief that Africa has now finally 'arrived' (Berman, 2013: covernotes), providing new consumer markets for

investors (Mahajan, 2008), the continent's middle class is highly precarious. Most of it earns between \$2-\$4 a day (Ravallion, 2009), meaning that people within this income bracket are highly vulnerable to commodity price fluctuations which affect both the price they receive for their produce (particularly in largely agricultural-based economies) as well as the cost of the imported produce which makes up a high proportion of consumer goods in many African countries.

As such the growth which has been secured by neoliberal macroeconomic reforms, underpinned by CSOs committed to a 'good governance' agenda which predicated against the kind of 'developmental authoritarianism' exhibited in many other successful developmental states such as those seen in East Asia (Kohli, 1994), has simply created growing inequalities within African societies. Indeed, it is notable that for all the recent celebration of Africa's rise in the global economy, Africans themselves are highly sceptical and see little change in their own living conditions to reflect this apparent rise (Dulani, Mattes and Logan, 2013).

We can therefore deduce from some of these discussions on the continuing predation and developmental failures of African states (and for a highly pessimistic account of just how failed most African states are see Englebert, 2009: 1-5), that the formalised civil society of the donor imagination has not fulfilled its promise of creating a more developmentally successful and democratically accountable state form on the African continent. This is something we have seen very clearly in Chapters Three and Four of this book. Malawi retains, twenty years after the 'civil society experiment' was launched in the country, a state form which continues to be characteristically and fundamentally predatory and developmentally challenged (and I am here taking development to mean the provision of basic social safety nets, livelihoods, justice, happiness and health).

It would of course be rather unfair to suggest that these outcomes could be secured (or not) solely through the agency of civil society organisations. Indeed, the suggestion that CSOs can be the primary drivers of democracy and development in Africa (or that they are to blame for the failures to embed democracy and produce development) would be to endorse some of the celebratory and over-zealous literature produced by political scientists in the

early 1990s about civil society in Africa (referenced in Chapter One) which I have in part sought to argue back against in this book. It would also be hugely misleading to paint many African states in the way I have done above without drawing attention to the international political-economic context in which these states operate, and how their historical insertion into the global economy has left little option but to live up to these characteristics. In Chapter Two I attempted to lay out the international political-economic context for the way in which civil society in Africa has emerged, and the functionality it has demonstrated. And to be clear, when I talk here about civil society it is important to recall that it is very much the projection which Partha Chatterjee describes when he distinguishes civil from political society (2004). Political society too is shaped by its international political-economic context, but less predictably because it is constituted by the exclusions and human detritus of the global economy. The civil society which has been the subject of this book however, is imagined by the Bank (as we saw in Chapter Two) to be absolutely central to the functioning of the global economy, and yet it is the functioning of that very same global economy which makes the African state absolutely impossible to be anything other than predatory and a developmental failure. For just, happy, fulfilled African societies would require barriers to be erected by the state against the predatory nature of global capital, something which is clearly inimical to the World Bank's imagination of development, which is predicated on the existence of minimal barriers to trade and investment (or, if you prefer, extraction and exploitation). Again, we saw this very clearly in Malawi with the rapidity with which former President Bingu wa Mutharika evolved from a favourite to pariah of the international political community, in part based on his refusal to devalue the Kwacha and thus make Malawian exports and investment opportunities more attractive to foreign capital.

So, both states and civil societies (in Chatterjee's [2004] sense) in Africa are shaped by and operate in an international political economy which predicates against truly participatory political structures and equitably shared developmental outcomes, despite the reforms and typology of civil society imposed upon African states bearing the promises of such structures and outcomes. It will be helpful at this point then to briefly recap the main points raised in this book as they relate to this argument.

In Chapter Two I argued that the World Bank is the primary ideological innovator behind the growth in interest in civil society organisations amongst development agencies that we have seen in the post-Cold War era. Despite evident internal ideological contestation over the meaning of civil society, through an analysis of key World Bank reports, policy guidance and other documents produced by the Bank over a twenty year period I argued that a narrow, economistic, neo-liberal imagination of the functionality of civil society emerged. Civil society, and in particular civil society *organisations* were to secure the state for the purposes of neo-liberal macroeconomic reforms. Such reforms held the promise of development for World Bank client states, of which a certain form of democratisation (supported by the emergence of civil society organisations) was also key. With their mixture of politically weak post-Cold War states and particularly high levels of poverty and social exclusion, African states provided the *sine qua non* of regions in which the Bank's civil society experiment could be conducted. As I argued above however, it is precisely the politico-economic imaginary which underpinned the Bank's conception of the role and function of CSOs in Africa which predicated against the kinds of social and political outcomes which the Bank thought would be likely in the years following CSO-monitored neoliberal macroeconomic reforms.

We saw this very clearly in Chapters Three and Four. In Chapter Three, on 'Development', I argued that CSOs in Malawi have always had to operate within the structural constraints and context of internationally prescribed development policy. Since 2000 this context has been particularly pervasive, in the form of the seemingly benign and ostensibly universal United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). I say 'ostensibly' because, as we saw in Chapter Three, the MDGs are not necessarily universal in a top-down imposed way, but are also utilised instrumentally, performed, embodied, and as such act in ways which perhaps the drafters and operationalisers of the goals (i.e. Western development agencies) did not necessarily intend. One example of this would be the docility of some Malawian CSOs in the face of the goals, the manner in which they became subservient and required instruction from the UNDP at the meeting I attended and noted in Chapter Three. This docility was far from the monitory vibrancy expected of the CSO sector more broadly in the liberal imagination, which we noted in various World Bank and PREM reports in Chapter Two. As such we might argue that Bank and other donor efforts to instil a liberal vibrancy in

the CSO sector has resulted in, partially at least, what James Ferguson famously called an 'anti-politics machine' (1990) whereby the resources which come attached to international policies like the MDGs affect a reticence to 'rock the boat' amongst potential recipients of such resources. Another example of the unexpected agency of the MDGs would be the way in which they invoked a performance from many of the CSOs I spoke and worked with. This performance was in the main instrumental, a way of accessing funds, prestige, and generally hitching onto the "*juggernaut of all bandwagons*" (Saith, 2006) which the MDGs have represented in material terms.

As I argued above, this is ultimately all tied into the international politico-economic context in which Malawi and its CSOs find themselves. Being created to monitor a government which itself is structurally engendered to be non-transparent and predatory, and at the same time able to buy off certain and important portions of society-at-large (for instance by distributing free sacks of maize, as we saw Joyce Banda doing in Chapter Four), and lacking resources to develop their own constituencies to counter such actions, CSOs operate in a context where they are regularly either being co-opted or harassed by the government. These are themes which I addressed more concretely in Chapter Four, where I explored in more detail the ways in which the formal CSO sector has emerged in Malawi since the introduction of multiparty democracy in 1994. Far from monitoring government performance on behalf of Malawian public sentiment (however one would define that) I illustrated the ways in which important sections of the CSO sector have been selectively active in calling governments to account, and how their activism, or lack thereof has dovetailed with international pressure, or a lack thereof, against particular governments at particular times. As such, I put it that civil society organisations in Malawi act as an externally constructed domestic limitation on government meddling with the economy, although as I also argued, such a role is performed largely ineffectively, given the repeated episodes of patrimonialism, nepotism and theft which have characterised Malawian politics across different governments, even those, such as that of Joyce Banda's, considered exemplary in international opinion.

Although aware of their limitations as representatives of the 'body public', their physical and political distance from the majority of Malawian citizens - a structural necessity to chase

resources and patronage - and a revolving door of government co-option, means that in the rough-and-tumble of everyday politics in Malawi very few CSOs act in a politically imaginative or conscious manner. This leaves us with a potentially extremely depressing summation of the emergence and agency of the civil society sector in Malawi, and the lessons we can take from it for civil society in the region more broadly, where, as I argued in Chapter One, the civil society sector has been constructed in a very similar manner.

However, whilst being cognisant of the very many structural limitations of the civil society sector in Malawi and across Africa more generally, it is possible to draw out some tentatively more constructive conclusions. In part these conclusions rest on the very fact that it is the informalised, urban and rural poor, and thus fundamentally 'political', rather than 'civil' society, which has driven many of the protests which have rocked African governments since the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2008 (see for instance: Erkin and Manji, 2011; Dwyer and Zeillig, 2012; Branch and Mamphilly, 2015). This might lead us to conclude that the more formal, implanted civil society sector has no function^{xxix}. And yet it is this latter sector which, when imaginatively mobilised, can amplify public demands and mobilisation through the media and their international networks. This in itself is predicated however on the amelioration of a number of externally produced internal constraints, most notably the manner by which the civil society sector in many African countries is vertically sectoral. As I have noted in a number of places in this book, the bigger CSOs in Malawi for instance largely represent particular sectors of the population deemed central to the country's development i.e. women, agricultural producers, teachers, etc. Together they are supposed to form a network of CSOs, each bringing a particular and important voice to domestic public policy making. As well as being part of a network, these organisations are themselves based on a network model, with urban offices supposedly coordinating and responding to the activities of any number of network nodes around the country. However, the reality is that much of the resources attracted by these CSOs remain pooled in the central urban offices (James and Malunga, 2006). This means that many of the formal CSOs are often behind the curve of where politics in Malawi is (note the reticence of many CSOs to publically criticise the Joyce Banda government, despite ongoing strike action and the eventual loss inflicted upon her in the 2014 elections – Chapter Four).

The best perhaps that the formal civil society sector can do then is fall-in behind public anger at the effects of neoliberal macroeconomic policy (rising prices, joblessness, subsidy-cuts, etc), bringing their resources, contacts and public platform with them (one positive feature that CSOs have in countries like Malawi is an almost daily stream of media coverage, seeking their opinions on political developments in the country). In order to 'fall-in' effectively however, CSOs, like those found in Malawi, will have to transcend their vertically-constructed organisational form to create more horizontally-constituted political platforms. The ability to create horizontal platforms in Malawi is further complicated by the position of CONGOMA (Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi), membership of which is legally mandated if a CSO wishes, for instance to do anything so mundane but necessary as open a bank account. CONGOMA have proven notoriously resistant to political activism, particularly when targeted at the government, and participants at the workshop I jointly organised in Lilongwe in 2013 regularly vented their frustration at CONGOMA for generally lacking organisational competence. Indeed, at the UNDP meeting I attended in 2008 (see Chapter Three) it was the CONGOMA representative more than any other that attracted the ire of the UNDP officials at the meeting for lacking political energy in challenging the government to meet its MDG commitments. However, it would be mistaken to describe the CSO sector as champing at the bit, held back only by the lethargy of CONGOMA. Since 2011, the most horizontal platform created by CSOs in Malawi was that where they decided *not* to publically intervene in the train-wreck that the Joyce Banda government was rapidly becoming. Clearly it is possible then to transcend their individual constituencies to create political cohesion, even if in the past it has not always been done for particularly radical or publically resonant ends.

The pretence of representation implicit in the way in which civil society was conceived by the World Bank in the 1990s and 2000s, and then imbibed into the way that the civil society sector was constructed in countries like Malawi, is a pretence which must be overcome if more horizontally constituted platforms are to be effective. This is not the same as saying that CSOs need to work out ways of becoming *more* representative, for, fundamentally they cannot. The degree to which African CSOs 'represent' the opinions of their supposed members and constituencies is obviously different for each CSO, but it is also something used by governments to bash them with when they seek to air dissenting opinions. This only

serves to send CSOs scrambling back to their networks in an attempt to make them more representative. This is an endless, and impossible task. If CSOs in Africa want to know which way public opinion is blowing they simply need to observe the large numbers of strikes and other street protests which have been occurring across the continent since 2008, and then lend them their support. The agendas and outcomes of such protests will rarely be clear or straightforward, but then neither is public opinion, a diversity which should be celebrated and expanded in the face of attempts by international donors to turn everyone into self-maximising rational economic agents.

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ⁱ The following pages draw upon and expand reflections first presented in Death and Gabay (2014)

ⁱⁱ Incidentally, this is the place at which Foucault's work displays overlapping characteristics with that of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. The distinction would lie in the fact that for Foucault he saw these effects, which might otherwise be labelled as 'false consciousness', as emerging not out of a hegemonic centre of power, but instead from the culmination of different relays of knowledge, the cumulative effect of which might be quite unintentional. For instance, in a UK context, such attitudes towards benefits have taken on a distinctly anti-immigrant tone, pushing all of the mainstream political parties to the right and opening the door for outflanking parties to emerge on both the right and left, contributing to the fragmentation of the traditional British two-party political system.

iii The Afrobarometer question asked “In your opinion, how much of a democracy is your country today”. Positive responses included those who indicated that full or almost full democracy exists. The YouGov question asked “Would you describe Britain as a democratic country or not?” Answers were restricted to yes or no responses.

iv All shared many evenings in Banda’s London home when in respective exile from their British-ruled territories, but ended up espousing very different foreign policies, with Malawi being the only majority-ruled African country to establish formal diplomatic relations with Apartheid-era South Africa and Portuguese-ruled Mocambique and Angola.

v “There are civil society focal points in over 80 World Bank offices worldwide. These focal points are generally local nationals and senior professionals with longstanding experience within the civil society sector, many having worked in or lead CSOs before joining the World Bank. These staff carry out a variety of activities including: undertaking social auditing and stakeholder analysis for intended Bank loans; undertaking research on World Bank, government, civil society relations; disseminating information and promoting dialogue on Bank policies and programs; establishing and maintaining ongoing relations with local civil society; managing outreach programs such as the Civil Society Fund; and generally working to involve CSOs in World Bank-financed projects and programs” (See

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/CSO/0,,contentMDK:20113227~pagePK:220503~piPK:220476~theSitePK:228717,00.html>, accessed on 24th February 2015)

vi For a fuller discussion of the World Bank’s attempts to conceptually delineate civil society see Williams and Young, 2014

vii See <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/9424>

viii PREM Network, available at:

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/ORGANIZATION/EXTPREMNET/0,,menuPK:489967~pagePK:64158571~piPK:64158630~theSitePK:489961,00.html>, accessed on 5th February 2014

ix Available at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTABOUTUS/Resources/bank.pdf> accessed on 5th February 2014

x See for instance the list of demands issued at a Bank-coordinated meeting for African CSOs: “*They urged the Bank to increase funding for CSOs, support CSO knowledge sharing and networking, provide training and capacity building for CSOs to more effectively engage governments, and appoint a regional focal point for civil society engagement*” (World Bank, 2012: 53)

xi It is worth noting that one of the authors, former Africa Chief Economist Shanta Devarajan, has no doubt that Structural Adjustment Policies are the root of Africa’s current high economic growth levels (Devarajan, 2013). In some ways of course he is right, although only if we acknowledge the relationship between SAPs, jobless growth, rising inequality and elite enrichment which Africa has experienced in the past decade. This is something Africans themselves are certainly aware of, even if Shanta Devarajan is not (Dulani, Mattes and Logan, 2013)

xii It is important to note that in order to receive funds into a bank account in Malawi any non-profit organisation must be registered with CONGOMA. All information for the following analysis can be found at <http://www.congoma.mw/local-ngos/>, accessed on 14th January 2015.

xiii Parts of this section update arguments originally set out in Gabay 2011, and Gabay 2012

xiv The full text can be read here: <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

xv See <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml> . A full list of the eight MDGs can also be found at this site.

xvi Indeed, several years later this impression was reinforced by the negative opinions of CONGOMA expressed by a number of interviewees and workshop participants.

xvii The UK’s David Cameron, Liberia’s Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia

xviii Presentation at ‘After 2015: Development and its Alternatives’, held at the British Academy, 10th-11th September 2014: http://www.britac.ac.uk/events/2014/After_2015_Development_and_its_Alternatives.cfm

xix This had interesting ramifications for these CSOs when they spoke out against the criminalisation of two individuals, one a man, the other a self-identifying woman with male genitalia, who took part in a public engagement ceremony in 2009 (See Biruk, 2014). In effect their legitimacy to speak out was challenged in part on the grounds that it was not their job to do so, as they only worked on issues related to HIV/AIDS.

xx Malawi’s likelihood of meeting the MDGs at the time of writing was highly mixed. Even those goals which the country was reported to be likely to meet, at a statistical level, have proven controversial. For instance, the government reported that it was on track to meet MDG One, reducing the number of people living in extreme poverty by 50%. However, huge fluctuations in economic performance, and natural disasters (such as the early

2015 floods which hit Southern Malawi) have meant that any attempt to measure the headcount of people living in poverty has proven very inaccurate amongst what is an extremely precarious population group. This of course takes for granted that a measure of \$1.25 a day is a sufficient way to distinguish extreme poverty from more 'regular' poverty (see Selwyn, 2014). Other goals, such as goals two and three (on universal primary education and gender equality) have been reported as 'unlikely to be met' by government, civil society and donors alike. For an analysis see

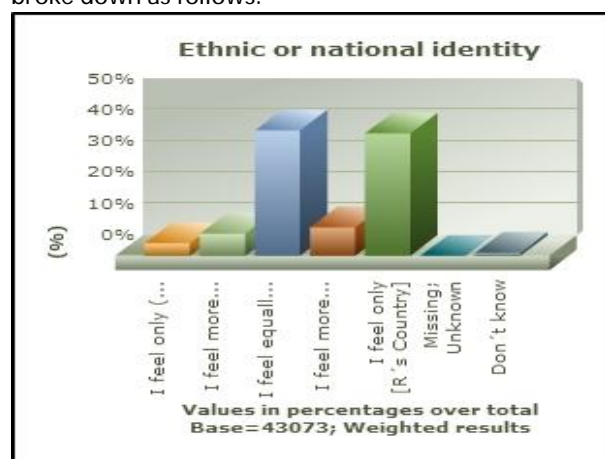
http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com/sites/cwf/files/downloads/MDG%20Reports%20Malawi_FINAL_1.pdf

^{xxi} For detailed accounts of this period see Power, 2010; Ross, 2009; Lwanda, 2010.

^{xxii} To put this in context, Bingu's brother, Peter Mutharika, was largely believed to have covered up his brother's death for two days, in order to give him enough time to stage a coup and block Banda's constitutional ascent to the presidency (Banda was vice-President at the time). Merely two years had passed since the deeply unpopular Bingu wa Mutharika's death, and his brother Peter's very public failure, and yet the latter *still* managed to trounce Banda at the polls.

^{xxiii} It is however interesting to speculate about whether donor hostility to Mutharika evolved more easily because out of all Malawi's democratically elected presidents he was the one to most evade/ignore neo-liberal World Bank-backed orthodoxy. In addition to refusing to devalue the Kwacha in 2011, the food surplus generated under Mutharika was a result of an agricultural subsidy programme which occurred against a backdrop of World Bank calls for further agricultural sector liberalisation (England, 2002: 145), and which Joyce Banda subsequently cancelled.

^{xxiv} Afrobarometer's question was "Let us suppose that you had to choose between being a [country x] and being a [ethnic group x]. Which of the following best expresses your feelings?" The pan-continental responses broke down as follows:



See <http://www.afrobarometer-online-analysis.com/aj/AJBrowerAB.jsp> for further breakdowns of these results.

^{xxv} See for example, 'JB Maize Saga, Subsidy' The Nation, <http://www.mwnation.com/105-the-nation-opinion/my-turn/17157-jb-s-maize-saga-subsidy> accessed 17th May 2013; 'Stories behind the maize story' The Sunday Times. <http://www.bnltimes.com/index.php/sunday-times/headlines/opinion/14006--stories-behind-the-maize-story> accessed on May 17th 2013

^{xxvi} If it had been paid for out of state coffers, Banda would have stood accused of using state funds for political gain. If it had been paid for from Banda's personal fortune, then she would have stood accused of buying the presidency with elections due 18 months later.

^{xxvii} The following quote from the director of the Malawi Economic Justice Network is indicative: "We are now paying the cost of the previous administration's policies but we have to stay the course to solve the economic problems" (Banda, 2013)

^{xxviii} For similar calls see Dwyer and Zeillig, 2012: 4, and Chabal, 2014

^{xxix} Just as importantly, I am not asserting some kind of 'pure' indigenous political society here either. This is not the place to discuss the various cleavages and co-optations which can pervade political society, it is simply to argue that political society, by the necessity of its multiple exclusions, represents more politically radical futures, even if they are contingent, than the civil society sector analysed in this book.