YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR ROLE IN THE
DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS IN MALAWI

BENTE MJØS
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Bente Mjøs

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bntemjos@online.no

Noragric
Department of International Environment and Development Studies
P.O. Box 5003
N-1432 Ås
Norway
Tel.: +47 64 96 52 00
Fax: +47 64 96 52 01
Internet: http://www.umb.no/noragric
DECLARATION

I, Bente Mjøs hereby declare that this thesis is my original work for a Msc. degree in Development Studies at the Norwegian University of Life Science. This thesis has not been submitted to any other institution than the Norwegian University of Life Science. I hereby declare that all work except that of my own has been acknowledged.

Bente Mjøs

Ås, May 2007
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Before going to Malawi people warned me that I was about to leave for one of the poorest countries in the world and that I would not have to expect too much from the surroundings. They were wrong; I fell in love with Malawi from the very beginning. Malawi is a beautiful country with gorgeous sceneries, and the people greet you with smiles wherever you go. Malawians have a genuine interest in other people and this interest made it possible for me to conduct my research. To all the Malawians that helped me, greeted me and met me with openness and interest; thank you, you helped me find the inspiration to write this thesis.

Conducting the research and writing this thesis is not a work of one person. There are many people in the supporting role making it possible to complete this work.

Due to privacy reasons I will not mention any names, but to all the people in NYD who assisted me with translations, access to information, to organizations, and to communication facilities and last but not least who taught me about Malawian culture and history, you know who you are and I owe you my greatest thanks. You all did a wonderful job.

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They say an acknowledgement is not complete without thanking the people who have assisted with the small things, so to all the ones I met in Malawi; thank you for all the help. You have left me with memories for life.

Last, but not least, I want to take this opportunity to thank my family and friends who have been there every step on the way. You have given me that little kick when it was desperately needed. Thanks for believing in me and keeping up with my frustrations.

Zikomo kwambiri
ABSTRACT

Youth are considered a separate group in most societies. Defining this group differs from society to society with the common notion that there are certain set criteria that a person needs to fulfill to be able to identify with the group. Researchers have argued that there is a mix of biological, social and cultural factors determining who the youth are. When youth has been identified it is important to understand their influence in society and identify how they are agents for change. This study will identify youth in Malawi and how they can contribute to an ongoing democratization process in Malawi.

This study set out to research five objectives; identify the organized youth, identify how Network for Youth Development is democratic, identify how the organizations are structured and how they are democratic, identify how the organizations can contribute to the democratization process in Malawi.

The research was conducted from October 15th to December 16th 2006. The data was collected using the qualitative methods of narrative interviewing and participant observation. The Annual General Meeting of Network for Youth Development was the main source of collecting data. Six organizations were visited and interviewed, and eight key informants were selected for interviews.

The findings of the study suggest that youth in Network for Youth Development are agents for change and are able to contribute to the democratization process in Malawi. Youth were identified through four indicators; age, gender, location and access to resources such as education, job, land and resourceful people. The NYD youth engage in organizational work due to personal experience, to achieve experience and because they have the freedom to do so.

The youth organizations presented in this thesis had an understanding of what democracy is in terms of organizational work, but it was evident that they did not have a clear perception of what democracy is and can be. Malawi has been a democratic state for twelve years and the democracy is considered weak. A strong democracy demands a strong civil society, which is not present in Malawi. Youth organizations are actors in the civil society. In this sense they can contribute to strengthening the civil society in Malawi and be drivers for change by educating people in their communities about democratic processes, values and standards.
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1 INTRODUCTION

‘Youth’ is a term that we in the western world often perceive as something positive; a state of mind that people will try to achieve. ‘Organizations’ is something we in the western world often perceive as a place where we can execute our interests together with people with the similar interests. ‘Democracy’ is something we in the western world often take for granted as it is embedded into our values, standards and everyday life. These three statements are very simplified for how we in the western world perceive the terms youth, organizations and democracy, but one aspect they have in common is the fact that they are present in our culture and societies. It is expected, accepted and normal that these three terms influence our lives in such a manner that we often take them for granted. These terms may however not be normal, expected or accepted in other countries. In Africa youth is in some cultures not present, organizations are not common and democracy is unknown. These statements set the stage for interesting discussions regarding the main goal of this thesis, which is to investigate how youth organizations in Malawi can contribute to the democratization process in the country.

Before conducting the research the basis for the thesis was the assumptions stated above. This chapter will provide a description for how I came up with the problem statement. I will also introduce the research objectives and assumptions which will be the basis for this thesis and the research that was conducted to complete the thesis.

1.1 Towards a Problem statement

My background as a student attending the Development Studies program at the Norwegian University for Life Science and an active participant in a youth organization, gave me an opportunity to follow up my interests in relation to development in Malawi. Norway was ranked as number one on UNDP’s Human Development List in 2005; Malawi was ranked as number 167 of 177 countries. This difference between Norway and Malawi indicates that youth organizations may have different aims, work areas and perspectives. Norway has a strong civil society dating back to the early development of democracy and democratic rule in Norway. Malawi has been a democratic state for twelve years; it is one of the poorest countries in the world and has a weak civil society. This research was conducted to investigate the relations between youth organizations, civil society and the democratization process in Malawi. As an active member of a youth organization in Norway I have arranged information seminars about different developmental issues in developing countries. During
these activities it became evident to me that I was a young person located in Norway,
influenced by media, school, peers and co-workers when trying to represent a situation that is
not familiar to me. I could only read about youth and development in Malawi and draw
conclusions about the situation based on assumptions. It was hence important to experience
what youth organizations in Malawi are contributing with in their own societies.

Identifying who is considered youth can be difficult. To define an organization as a youth
organization it is evident that there must exist a category or group of people defined as youth.
Christiansen et al (2006) explains that youth is a term with different aspects in relation to age,
traditions, culture, and external factors such as economical and political situations. When
defining youth, one defines a group of people in a society that satisfies certain set criteria that
makes them part of the group. Identifying these criteria can be difficult as they differ from
society to society, hence defining youth can be complicated. I experienced this first hand
when traveling to Malawi; I am in the end of my twenties and am considered part of the youth
in Norway. Being part of this group is only possible because I meet certain criteria such as
how I dress, how I speak, and my interests. In Malawi I was considered an adult, and people
questioned my life situation as a non married woman, with no job, and with my own home.
My age indicated to them that I should be an adult, and hence married, preferably with
children. When confronted with this one informant asked me bluntly: “are you ugly in your
country?” This indicates certain cultural and traditional assumptions that differ between me, a
Norwegian youth, and them, Malawian youth. It also indicates that traditions and culture can
contribute to my life situation as well as to the life situation of a young person in Malawi.
These cultural and traditional settings shape the social understanding of who the youth are,
and if an individual belong to that part.

Having identified what is considered being ‘youth’ in Malawi the next step would be to
identify the role of the youth. This research focused on youth in youth organizations and how
institutions like these can contribute to the development of civil society in Malawi and
influence the democratization process. Democracy in Malawi differs from democracy in
Norway and other countries and it was therefore important to identify what democracy is in
Malawi and how Malawians perceive democracy. Ribohn (1999) hold that how the concepts
of human rights and democracy have not naturally evolved in Malawi but rather been
introduced from external sources.
Malawians lack an educational background concerning the concepts of democracy and human rights and the ability to include it in their everyday life. Democracy and human rights are new to people in Malawi and learning, understanding and expressing these concepts are still an ongoing process.

This research was set out to investigate how a network of youth organizations could represent youth in Malawi and their ability to develop and understand democratic values and processes, their human rights and how do they contribute to an ongoing democratization and development process. The main question remained: What role do youth organizations play in the ongoing democratization process as representatives for the civil society in Malawi? To answer this question this thesis focused on Network for Youth Development, a national network of eleven youth organizations. There has been conducted little research on this topic in the past and there is little existing literature. Finding information about youth and organizations in Africa was difficult due to lack of research conducted on these topics. This meant that my study would be mainly exploratory.

1.2. Objectives and Assumptions to the Study

To achieve an understanding of the problem as stated above this study was conducted to attain the following objectives:

1. To identify who the organized youth are and why they participate in organizational work
2. To assess how Network for Youth Development is organized and how it is democratic in a sense of democratic principles, values and processes
3. To assess how the chosen member groups of the network are organized and structured to represent their members’ interests and the goals of the organization
4. Identify democratic values, processes and principles in the member organizations in relation to democracy in the network and in Malawi
5. Identify how the member organizations are components of the civil society in the democratization process in Malawi
These objectives are built on a set of assumptions:

1. The youth in Malawi are a group in society that there is little evident research on. This is also a group of the population that struggles with the adjustment to new political, economical and social changes.

2. Democracy in Malawi is instituted at a national level, but there is little notion of democratic features at local level. Implementation of democracy at a local level in Malawi is poor and an ongoing process.

3. A well functioning democracy requires a strong civil society which is still not present in Malawi, hence regular people’s influence on political actors and policies are limited.

4. Youth organizations are a component that contributes to strengthening the civil society as a whole. It is an actor where young people can mobilize their resources and contribute to change and development.

5. By strengthening the civil society, the democratic government will have an equal opposition in terms of strengthening the democratic perception and understanding among Malawians at a local level.

1.3. Organization of the Text

The thesis starts with general background information on Malawi. The background chapter focuses on the political history of Malawi with a following discussion about the concept of youth. The criteria to define youth are identified, as are the Network for Youth Development. Chapter three describes the theoretical approach to understand the concept of democracy, civil society and youth in a Malawian context. In chapter four I will introduce the methods used to carry out this research to explain how the information was collected and the results were worked out. Followed is a description of the research process identifying challenges and obstacles. Chapter five describes the findings and results from the fieldwork. The findings will be presented and discussed in relation to the objectives stated in the introduction. In the final chapter there will be a conclusion with the final results of the findings.
2 BACKGROUND

In this chapter a historic description of Malawi as well as social and political background related to the research will be provided. The background discussion focuses on the study area and democracy in Malawi and will provide a description and discussion about Malawian democracy. Following this will be a discussion and description of youth in Malawi and this discussion will be tied into a description of youth organization and Network for Youth Development in Malawi.

2.1. General Facts About Malawi

Landlocked in Southeast Africa, Malawi (see figure 1) is a relatively small country covering 118,484 square kilometers with a population of about 13 million people (CIA factbooks, 2006). In Malawi 80% of the population lives in rural areas and has agriculture as the basis for their income; tobacco, sugar and tea being the main income sources (Eidhammer, 2005). Africa’s third largest lake, Lake Malawi, covers about 20% of Malawi and is an important source of income for the people living along the shores of the lake. Malawi has no significant minerals and the state economy is based on agricultural produce which represent 36.6% of the GNP and 80% of all export (Wikipedia, 2007). Malawi has been classified as one of the poorest countries in the world with 41.7% of the country’s population living below the “A Dollar a Day” poverty line (UNDP, 2006).

2.2 Brief Description of Malawi’s Political History

This section will identify Malawi’s written political history by providing a brief description of Malawi’s early history, the colonial rule and the transition to the dictator rule of Dr. Hastings Banda. The section will end with a brief description of democracy in Malawi, which will later be emphasized in chapter three.

2.2.2. Brief Descriptions of Malawi’s Early History

The recorded history of Malawi as a country stretches back as far as to the first century A.D. when Bantu speaking people started migrating into the area (Pachai, 1973)). The Bantu speaking people established the earliest recorded Malawian state dating back to 1480 when
they declared the kingdoms in the Lake Nyasa region; the Maravi Confederation (Historyworld, 2007). The Bantu speaking people controlled this area until the 18th century when Arab traders moved in from the east. This caused conflicts and competition over ivory and slave trading.

Figur 1. Map of Malawi, by Relief web

1 Lake Nyasa is now called Lake Malawi
2.2.3. Malawi and the Colonial Rule

David Livingstone, a British explorer who had traveled through southern Africa for many years, entered the area in 1858 (Historyworld, 2007). Livingstone was against slavery because of all the cruelty he had witnessed while traveling through Africa and managed to draw the British’s attention to the slave trading that occurred by Lake Malawi. By the late 1870’s missionaries from Britain entered the country and established bases, one of which is now Blantyre city, to fight slavery. This again drew the attention of the African Lakes Company who was eager to legitimize trade in the area. Both the missionaries and the African Lakes Company found themselves in constant conflicts with the slave traders, and were soon accompanied by the Cecil Rhode’s company.

With the influence from the Rhode’s company, the African Lakes Company and the missionaries, the British government sent a consul to the area. By the year 1891 the British consul proclaimed full administrative control of Malawi and declared the area as the British Central African Protectorate (Historyworld, 2007). The name of the area changed to Nyasaland in 1907. During the colonial years the British built roads and railways, and introduced cash crops such as coffee and tobacco plantations in Malawi. The British did however not develop African agriculture and did little to improve the lives of the Africans in the area which led to great emigration to neighboring countries, especially Rhodesia² and Northern Rhodesia³ (Britannica, 2007). By 1951 The British protectorate saw this as an opportunity to combine Nyasaland, Rhodesia and Northern Rhodesia into one colony which raised strong opposition from the African inhabitants. The idea was that this colony would be self governed; however, there were few African representatives because the majority of people in decision- making power were still white representatives. During the 12 years this federation existed several countries in Africa declared their independence from colonial rule. In the 1960’s the wave of nationalism reached the federation and African politicians were able to win power in their legislative councils leading to a break up of the federation (Historyworld, 2007). Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda returned from abroad to lead Malawi towards full independence from Britain. In 1963 Britain declared the federation’s ending and Malawi gained full internal control with Dr. Hastings Banda as the first prime minister.

² Rhodesia is today’s Zimbabwe
³ Northern Rhodesia is today’s Zambia
2.2.4. Banda Becoming President

During the last decades of the colonial rule people in Malawi had established various local associations which they in 1944 united into Nyasaland African Congress (NAC) (Pachai, 1973). When Nyasaland became part of the federation NAC gained support from the African population and managed to bring about a group of young new leaders. This group of young men was ready to fight for freedom and independence, but felt they needed an older front figure. The person they selected for the job was Dr. Hastings Banda who then returned to Malawi after he was expelled from the area in 1915. Banda was the type of leader they needed as he traveled the country and made charismatic speeches to gain support from the population.

Dr. Banda became Malawi’s first prime minister in 1964 and by the time he became president, two years later, he had managed to turn Malawi into a police state. The young men who invited Banda to the country soon realized that the leader they had chosen had taken his leadership too far. He diminished and undermined the role of the young and dealt only with senior white civil servants. He defended his actions with the fact that he wanted to wait with dealing with the young Africans until Malawi was able to train them to take over for the white (Pachai, 1973). He also imposed policies that the young men opposed which lead to a dismissal of three Cabinet Ministers and the resignation of three others, this is also known as the minister crisis of 1964 (NSCU, and Pachai, 1973). Some of these young men, who had once fought for independence, tried to oppose. The opposition resulted in the young men fleeing the country. Banda became suspicious of Cabinet members and instead strengthened his own position. July 6th 1966 Banda became the president of a one party state when the Malawi Congress Party introduced the one party state system in the constitution (Pachai, 1973). This was the start of a 30 year strict rule by the person whom by 1971 had declared himself the life-long president of Malawi. The young people that Banda forced into exile were replaced by ill educated people who were eager to please the president (Pachai, 1973).

2.2.5. Banda’s Rule

Banda was the leader of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and introduced membership cards to control the people. People without membership cards were banned from markets and were not able to enter clinics (Wikipedia, 2007). Groups loyal to Banda emerged around the
country such as the League of Malawi Youth. It consisted of young people who would be the eyes and ears of the MCP (Pachai, 1973). The groups reported disobedience and disloyalty to the party and the Malawi Young Pioneer was the core. The League of Malawi Women consisted of women who had to perform dances and songs for the President whenever he appeared (Pachai, 1973). But most fearsome was Banda’s politics. Banda gained total economic control by establishing two companies; the Press Holdings and the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation that declared all agricultural prices (Free Africa, 2007). He also controlled the produce of the farmers by subsidizing fertilizers to make sure they produced for livelihood and not for export. Only certain people were allowed to produce for export and as mentioned he controlled the company that controlled the prices (New Internationalist, 2007). By controlling the agricultural section he was also able to control the rural-urban migration. By making sure that the people in the rural areas had enough to eat, and that their basic needs were met, he decreased the need for people to move into the cities to look for jobs. Banda knew that people living in cities had easier access to information and education, and this could potentially give rise to an emergence of critical thinkers. By controlling the population he was able to control the elite in the cities and ensured the elite population did not increase.

In order to control the elite population he in turn controlled the educational system. When Banda became president the new government passed the University of Malawi (Provisional Council) Act in 1964 (University of Malawi, 2007). This act introduced higher education in Malawi. By the mid 1970’s Banda began controlling the intellectual elite in the country by detaining lecturers and administrative personnel at the University in Zomba. He used regionalism and ethnicity control as the main justification for expelling students, detaining lecturers, and introducing a new quota system. This new quota system was introduced in 1989 (Chirwa, 1998). The system determined how many would be accepted at the university based on the number of districts in the region. By doing this the north lost many entrants as they had fewer districts than the central and southern region and Banda was able to control the intellectual elite that were already stationed in the South. He was able to control the elite from growing and could also control people from moving from rural areas (the north) to urban areas (cities in the south where there were universities).
Banda used several techniques to control the people in Malawi. Malawi consists of three regions, all with strong ethnic groups. Ethnicity can be an instrument for people when gaining political, social or economic control and advantages (Chirwa, 1998). Regionalism is the belonging people have to one territory while at the same time having discriminatory behavior for people from other territories (Chirwa, 1998). Both of these two concepts are present in Malawi, and Banda used these two components in his politics to control the people. Many will argue against this point saying that Banda had a political agenda focusing on unity as he stated in several speeches and addresses to parliament. But what Banda spoke and how he ran the regime were two different things. Chewa and the central region soon gained favored treatment and became the focus of development and aid at the expense of other regions, for instance; Banda moved the capital to Lilongwe in the central region. In addition, the northern region experienced harassment and marginalization on the account of the development in the central region (Phiri & Ross, 1998). This maltreatment of the north had several purposes such as making the people of north feel as the out group, and hence made them give in to the other regions. It also made the people in the central and southern region feel more Malawian and it created a distinct “us” versus “them” socio political situation in the country (Phiri & Ross, 1998). Banda made this treatment evident, especially when controlling the intellectuals in the country. Between 1973 and 1975 the regime detained several lecturers from the universities. Of the detained about 90 percent were from the north (Chirwa, 1998).

The Banda regime also used official history as a way to control the people. When describing Malawi history the history was re- enacted and expressed in such a way as to evoke people’s feelings about how they were before the minister crisis in 1964. A deliberate effort was also made not to mention the names of the young men who started the Nyasaland African Congress party and the Malawian movement for freedom and independence. Because of this effort, in combination with describing these young men as rebels, people saw Banda as the big redeemer from the colonial rule (NCSU, website)\(^4\). In addition, the Banda regime emphasized the importance of Chewa and Chewa culture and history, and promoted the Chewa culture as synonymous with Malawi culture (Chirwa, 1998). This became evident when Banda declared Chichewa as the official national language of Malawi.

\(^4\) The author of this article has chosen to be anonymous
2.2.6. The end of Banda’s Dictatorship

Many Malawians suffered under Banda’s dictatorship and by the 1990’s there were movements in the country signalizing that people had had enough. In 1993 Banda experienced both internal and external pressure from several sides to open up the political arena for a multiparty election. The battle between communism and capitalism was a “cold war” that was fought all over the world. In the late 1980’s and early 1990’s the western world saw the cold war come to an end and hence the international community now turned their interest elsewhere. Human rights and good governance became the major criteria for support and aid rather than anti communist or anti capitalistic attitudes and actions. This change also had an effect on Malawi and the transit process from dictatorship to multi party and democratic rule which occurred in a free election in 1994. In this election Banda lost to Bakili Muluzi who represented the liberal United Democratic Front Party. Even though Malawi was no longer repressed under a dictatorship the country, which now had a constitution stating that they would be a democratic republic, still experienced serious problems. Corruption, bribery and mismanagement of public funds have been allegations against the democratically elected government since 1994.

2.2.7. Democracy in Malawi; Political System and Political Actors

Malawi had its first democratic election in 1994 when Banda lost to Muluzi after ruling the country under a strict dictatorship for 30 years. The new government amended a new constitution based on English common law and democratic values such as freedom of speech, assembly and association (Britannica, 2007), and a new era was to begin for Malawi. The new president also put reduction of corruption and poverty on the political agenda and was reelected in Malawi’s second democratic election. Allegations against the government concerning corruption and misuse of public funds have been persistent since the introduction of democracy in Malawi. There have also been incidents of attempts to misuse the constitution. Muluzi tried to amend the constitution to allow him further terms in office; this however did not go through due to strong opposition from the civil society, but it has been argued to be the first big challenge for the democracy in Malawi.
The Malawi constitution states that the president will be elected every fifth year, the president is the head of state and chief of government. The vice president is elected during the same election as the president. Malawi has a National Assembly with 193 seats. The National Assembly is elected for a period of five years and has legislative power. It should also be mentioned that Malawi has stated, in the constitution, that they will have two separate chambers one which will be a senate and consist of 80 representatives. This second chamber is, however, not in effect but was intended to represent the traditional leaders and the districts (Wikipedia, 2007). Malawi has 28 districts within the country’s three regions (northern, central and southern) and there are elections every fifth year.

2.2.8. Democracy in Malawi Today

Since the introduction of democracy in Malawi, there have been three presidential elections which seem to have been successful. There are however issues and problems related to the elections, as well as to the execution of democracy, in Malawi that can be questioned and give the impression that the democracy has not acquired any depth (Chirwa et al.)\(^5\). Corruption is a big problem and the latest government has put the issue on the agenda. They have reduced the number of ministerial positions in the cabinet as well as investigated and arrested party officials accused of corruption (Britannica, 2007). The government in Malawi has put democracy and democratic values on the agenda, but there is still the question of whether democracy has been embedded into Malawian culture and every day life. The democratic system has been introduced and installed despite a weak background of supporting institutions, attitudes, and perceptions in the population (Tsoka, 2002).

Malawi has three major political parties (United Democratic Front, Malawi Congress Party and Alliance for Democracy) and six smaller parties that are not represented in the National Assembly. The alliances and oppositions between these parties have been questioned as there are political actors who tend to move back and forth causing confusion in the political arena. There seems to be a tendency for some politicians to use social and socio-political behavior to influence the masses during election periods (Phiri & Ross, 1998). This kind of behavior causes confusion when mapping the political arena and can be seen as a threat to democracy.

\(^5\) [http://www.idea.int/publications/sod/upload/Malawi.pdf](http://www.idea.int/publications/sod/upload/Malawi.pdf)
2.3. Organized Youth in Malawi

The youth are the future, without young people in a society the society will cease to exist. Because of this, the youth need to adjust to a future as adults, and in order to do so they need to know what adulthood is about. During their period as youth society is preparing them for adulthood. At the same time, society is dynamic and in constant change. This change depends a lot on the youth and on how they are able to contribute to development and change for their societies in the future (Stafseng & Frønes, 1987).

2.3.2. Who are the “Youth”? 

The concept of youth has been researched in social, cultural and psychological perspectives to identify what constitute “youth”, but none have succeeded to give a definition as to who the youth are. Most researchers conclude that youth is the stage between childhood and adulthood, in other words adolescence, but this doesn’t indicate any limitations for when one moves from one stage to the other (Christiansen, Utas and Vigh, 2006). Biological factors can determine when one goes from being a child to an adult, but at the same time there are many cultural and social settings that influence people and how they see their lives. A life stage model with social and biological indicators can be one way to interpret who the youth are, but at the same time this model doesn’t take into account movements from when a person identifies as being an adult and when a person identifies as being young (Christiansen, Utas and Vigh, 2006). Instead of trying to identify youth as a time period some researchers identifies youth with culture, meaning that youth is a cultural entity itself (e.g. Christiansen, Utas and Vigh, 2006). If the youth is identified as a cultural entity the youth will identify with world views, language, practices and perspectives instead of an age limit or a social status, thus making it up to them to identify whether or not they are youth. It is important however not to see youth only as a separate cultural entity or as a life stage, but to combine these perspectives to get an understanding of who the youth are and why certain individuals have identified with this group.
2.3.3. Youth in Malawi

It has been argued that Malawi is a young and growing country in the sense that the population consist of mostly young people. The CIA fact books (2006) states that 50.8% of the population is between the ages of 15 and 64 years old. Of these 50.8% about 26.1% are in the age group 15-29 (The Republic of Malawi, 2004). Based on these numbers I got an impression of how many in Malawi are considered youth when based on an age limit. However looking only at an age limit is a poor indicator of who the youth in Malawi are.

When identifying what youth is it is also important to look at what the youth can do (Christiansen, Utas and Vigh, 2006).

Malawi is not only a country consisting of a young population, but it is also a very poor country. When access to resources are scarce and hard to come by it can also be more difficult for youth to change their social status (Christiansen, Utas and Vigh, 2006). Instead of going through the set life stages youth in Africa do not have the resources to be young, meaning that they do not have resources to take part in a higher education, to live outside their parent’s home or to get a job. In a situation like this the youth will stay in the stage of childhood and not move into adulthood. Adults in the North desire youth and the concept of being young, while youth in the South seems to want a status of adulthood (Christiansen, Utas and Vigh, 2006). Looking at it this way, less access to resources will hence make youth in the south less capable of entering adulthood as they are not able to care for themselves. This discussion will be presented further in chapter 3 and chapter 5. Some will say that this is a situation of powerlessness in the sense that the young are not powerless because they are young, but they are powerless in their societies (Stafseng & Frønes, 1987:60). A way for the youth to gain power is to organize and get involved, as did the youth who are members of the Network for Youth Development.

2.3.4. Network for Youth Development; the Members and the Work

Network for Youth Development, formerly known as National Young Voices Malawi, was created based on an initiative from the Youth Hearing that took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Young Voices was to be an international network consisting of networks of youth.
organizations in countries all over the world. The concept was introduced in Malawi in 1995 by the Norwegian People’s Aid who visited Malawi through a UNICEF program. They discovered that there was a group called Blantyre Committee on the Rights of the Child, a youth movement under the Save the Children Fund of Malawi. When the concept was introduced to the committee the members decided to change the name of this committee to Blantyre Young Voices. This was a one first youth movements/organizations in Malawi after the 1994 general elections. Young people started appreciating what Blantyre Young Voices was doing and achieving in terms of children’s and youth’s rights, as well as introducing a concept that allowed the young the right to participation. These young people decided to form their own groups bearing the name of Young Voices in many districts all over the country i.e. Lilongwe Young Voices, Zomba Young Voices, Dedza Young Voices, and Phalombe Young Voices.

These organizations then formed one committee that would coordinate the activities which was how the National Young voices were formed. By the time the committee was organized youth organizations had been established all over the country and wanted to join the committee. It was then decided that the committee would change the structure and become a network. In 2002 the Norwegian People’s Aid appointed a member from one of the original Young Voices organizations, to be the coordinator for the network. It was part of the original idea that the member organizations would be named Young Voices as to create a sense of belonging and relationship between the member organizations. After short time in existence it became clear that other youth organizations with no relation to the name Young Voices or the network wanted to be part of the network. Hence rules and regulations for membership requirements were introduced. In addition the network later faced a new problem in relation to the name. In Malawi all youth organizations can be members of the National Youth Council which is the governmental network for youth organizations, but only one organization or network can register with one specific name. To solve this problem the network decided to change their name Young Voices to Network for Youth Development. By doing so they avoided that all member organizations had to change their names to become members of the National Youth Council.

8 The information in this paragraph is based on interviews with the secretariat of the network.
2.3.5. Members of the NYD

The network has in 2006 11 member organizations\textsuperscript{9} from all three regions in the country from both rural and urban settings. There are set requirements for joining the network the main one being that the organization is run by and for young people. Network for Youth Development states in their constitution that “youth refers to men and women from the age of 15 to 25 years” which is a statement that can be identified with a life stage model. Both member organizations and members of the secretariat did not fulfill this definition indicating that the age limit was mere a target group rather than a set requirement. Hence looking at only a life stage perspective did not give an answer to who the youth in Network for Youth Development are. Social and cultural factors, as well as access to resources, are all important perspectives to identify the youth.

The eleven member organizations have different work areas and goals. However they all have in common that they work with children’s rights based on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child\textsuperscript{10}. This work includes education, drug and alcohol abuse, food security and problems related to HIV and Aids such as the issue of orphans due to HIV/ Aids. In the organizations there are young people from local communities who have identified issues and problems that they want to see resolved. They have used the resources they have access to and established organizations to be able to apply for funding, and seek cooperation with other organizations to implement projects that will resolve the identified issues in their communities. The eleven organizations range from small local organizations with only a few members working in a small area, to larger organizations with international donors and projects aiming at larger areas. The organizations all have in common that they have young members, their work is aimed at young people and they manage to pull together their resources such as education, status and knowledge to help in their communities.

\textsuperscript{9} This number differs a little due to dormant and non active members, but the network tries to operate with a constant number of 11 member organizations

\textsuperscript{10} The declaration was established in 1959, Malawi has signed and ratified the declaration
3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Civil society and participation are important factors in a democratic society. To understand these two components and their relation to democracy, key concepts such as democracy, participation, civil society and youth will to be examined and put into context. A basic assumption in this study is that youth participation is essential to develop a well functioning democracy in Malawi.

3.1 Perceptions on Democracy

The term ‘democracy’ derived from the Greek words *demos* meaning people and *kratein* meaning rule (Zafari, 1983). In other words democracy means a government by the people and governance run by the people. The Oxford dictionary describes democracy as “a system of government by all the people of a country, usually through representatives, whom they elect, thought of as allowing freedom of speech, religion, and political opinion” (Oxford, 1998). There are several aspects and criteria that need to be fulfilled for a government to be a government by the people. These aspects and criteria are a discussion of identifying who the “people” are, how they are elected, and how they will rule.

3.1.2. Democracy; How the Term Evolved and Developed

The explanation and definition of the term democracy has been explored and developed for centuries, but all the definitions have in common the notion of power to and for the people. Plato and Aristotle started the debate about democracy by expressing the importance of a government that was a benefit for the people (Midgaard, 2004). During the further discussion these two Greek philosophers went in somewhat different directions when describing in more detail what a democracy consist of and can do. Plato saw efficiency as an important component in democracy while Aristotle saw stability as the major component in democracy (Midgaard, 2004). Following Plato and Aristotle there has been many philosophers that have developed the concept of democracy such as Montesquieu, Rousseau and Locke. These philosophers represent the enlightenment movement using reason as the primary basis of authority (Wikipedia, 2007) and were important theorists in the development of democracy in European terms. All though the main concept of democracy being power to and for the people, these philosophers have been able to give a broader definition of how a democratic
rule should work and what a democratic rule should consist of. One of the theories is Montesquieu's who defined democracy by separation of power; juridical power, legislative power and executive power (Montesquieu, 1998). This method of dividing power into three units is one of the major components of a democratic rule in the modern world.

**3.1.3. Competitive or Participatory Democracy?**

Democracy can be either direct or indirect when electing representatives. In an indirect democracy there have been selected a group of representatives which will compete for the majority of the voters (Rasch, 2004). A direct democracy is when everyone is active participants in the election and hence everyone has an equal opportunity to be selected and everyone is competing with everyone for the votes (Rasch, 2004). Direct democracy is also referred to as pure democracy because democracy is exercised directly by the people (Webster, 2007). Identifying the election process in a democracy is important, but it is also important to identify what the main goal of a democracy is at a state level. Rasch argues that there are three main ideas of democracy; competitive democracy, participatory democracy and discursive democracy (Rasch, 2004). These three ideas are very often connected and mixed as they each represent a process within democracy. Competitive democracy is when the representatives of the people have to compete against each other for the votes and hence need to defend their position (Midgaard, 2004). Participatory democracy is when participation is a goal in itself. To achieve this goal the representatives are trying to get the citizens involved in political activities and decisions and by doing so they can increase the citizen’s effect on decisions (Rasch & Midgaard, 2004). Discursive democracy focuses on the open forum where the process of decision-making is a discussion of views and possible solutions where everyone can express their opinions. This method values the “argumentation” when reaching decisions (Rasch, 2004). It is important to know these differences in participation in democracy in decision-making processes as most democratic states have a mix of these theories and ideas when reaching decisions. The reason for this is that when defining who and how people shall be involved in a decision-making process one will also have to rule out who can not participate in the process. In this sense the definition of the democratic process can be seen as being either too broad or too narrow as one has to consider more aspects and perspectives to understand the meaning of democratic rule. Another important aspect to consider is how the elected people will rule and if they will rule in the interest of the citizens.
It is important to remember that “a democratic rule may not necessary be a legitimate rule; people can misuse their power” (Midgaard, 2004:47)\textsuperscript{11}. 

### 3.1.4. A Constitutional State

When representatives have been elected to a decision-making power position it is important that they do the job they have been elected to perform. As Montesquieu defined in his explanation of democracy; there needs to be a juridical power unit in a democracy that can supervise the laws and rules executed by the government (Montesquieu, 1998). In this sense, there is an institution in the democracy that has the power to supervise and charge sanctions if there are any violations. The main principle of a constitutional state is that “an institutional frame is set as to prevent that the elected political leaders will misuse their power and take advantage of their position for own or others gain” (Gloppen, 2004:51)\textsuperscript{12}. The institutional frame consists of two aspects; one that can uncover illegal actions, and that there are sanctions against these illegal actions (Gloppen, 2004). It is hence important that the state is able to include the rights of all their citizens.

Civil and political rights for all the citizens are essential aspects to be able to execute democratic processes in a state. Dahl argues that “rights are necessary elements in democratic political institutions” (Dahl, 1998:43) hence there needs to be institutions that supervise these rights and are able to control violations and perform sanctions. Institutions that perform such roles are often juridical and in most democratic states it is the court system that performs the duties of controlling and punishing violations. However, many philosophers have questioned the relationship between the individual rights of the people, the juridical power institution and the executive institution. Locke is a good example when he argued that the juridical power and the executive power need to overlap each other, and that the executive power will be held responsible to the juridical power (Midgaard, 2004:30). In some states the question is often how to combine the rule of law with traditional customary law. In Malawi the word “law” refers to both traditional customary laws as well as state law, but in times of conflict between the two bodies of law, traditional customary law often prevails at the local level (Phiri et al, 2000). This can cause conflicts in terms of protecting human rights of the citizens.

\textsuperscript{11} My translation from Norwegian
\textsuperscript{12} My translation from Norwegian
3.1.5. Election Processes
In a democratic state a representative election process is essential to include the democratic principal of governance and power to the people. Democratic elections have two major functions according to Rasch: one is to elect the political leadership in a representative way, and the second is that the people are able to make the political leadership responsible for their actions by either re-elect them or by dismissing the existing leaders and replace them with the approval of new leaders (Rasch, 2004). The question that then emerges is what classifies as a democratic state; is it a state that holds regular representative elections, or is it a state that focuses greatly on having a perfect representation of the people? Participation is essential, but who are to participate?

In most democratic states there are certain regulations for who are allowed to participate in the election and who can participate as voters. There are restrictions and regulations to keep the electoral process fair and secure for the voters. For instance the question of citizenship is an important aspect, whether the voters need to have a citizenship and for how long (Phiri, 2000). Rasch raises the question for number of voters to determine whether an election is democratic or not (Rasch, 2004). In this sense, it is not only the regulations towards voters, but also the aspect of needing a set percentage of participation for an election to be democratic. This can be worked out in the electoral system as to be able to get an election with the best representation in the people.

3.1.6. Democratic Processes
So far this discussion has looked at democracy with the focus on general views that need to be present for a democracy to be well functioning. In the world there are a large number of democratic states and yet they are all very different with varying governmental systems, electoral systems and juridical systems. Dahl argues that there need to be certain set criteria for a state to be qualified as a democratic state. He has a list of five criteria (Dahl, 1998:37-38):

1. Effective participation meaning that all have equal opportunity to express their views
2. Voting equality, meaning that all will have an equal opportunity to vote
3. Enlightened understanding meaning that all will have the opportunity to learn about policies before deciding upon them
4. Control of the agenda meaning that all can decide what matters to put on the agenda
5. Inclusion of all adults meaning that adult permanent residents should have the full rights of the citizens of the first four criteria.

This list includes the three power units in a democratic government as well as freedom of expression (media); in addition it makes all members politically equal when determining the policies of the association (Dahl, 1998:38). By having these set criteria all have equal opportunities to express themselves and the chances of producing elites will decrease. As Globben (2004) argues, the citizens must be able to contribute in political decisions, either directly through elections, or indirectly through media, organizations and lobbying. It is important that the citizens have an influence on the policy making as they are the ones being affected by the implementation of policies. Gaventa (2004) argues that participation is a right for the citizens on the same line as basic human rights.

Looking at Dahl’s five criteria one can argue that it requires participation and knowledge from the citizens, but on the contrary it merely states that participation is voluntary and that the opportunity must me present (Dahl, 1998). In many democratic states the opportunities for the citizens to be part of the decision making by influencing the outcome is not as present as in other democratic states. In Malawi about 64% of the adult population (15 years and up) are illiterate, 80% of the Malawian population live in rural areas, and for the past 30 years Malawi has qualified as one of the ten poorest countries in the world (UNDP, 2006). With numbers like these and a democracy dating back 12 years it can be difficult to involve all citizens in the decision making. However, this not being an excuse, it should merely be an indicator for what policies the Malawian government need to focus on and how they can get the Malawian people involved in politics. Dahl also argues that for a country to be democratic the required practices, institutions and political arrangements must be met (Dahl, 1998).

3.2. Democracy in Malawi

Since the introduction of democracy in Malawi there has been conducted several studies about the process from dictator rule to democracy as well studies about democracy in Malawi. In this thesis I will use the work of Kaunda and Kendall who in 2001 conducted a research about the Prospects of Educating for Democracy in Struggling Third Wave Regimes: The Case of Malawi. In their research they interviewed people about their perceptions of democracy and
how democracy was functioning in Malawi between the years of 1996 to 2001. Meinhardt and Patel researched democracy in Malawi from 1994 to 2003 by looking at four main aspects; human rights, rule of law, civil and political pluralism and political participation and competition. Tsoka completed a research in 2002 about Malawians view on democracy and Ribohn studied human rights implementation in Malawi in 1999 for her dissertation. These studies will be part of the discussion in this thesis.

3.2.2. Democracy in Malawi; Transition from Dictatorship to Democracy

Malawi is a newly founded democratic state and has yet to create a clear definition of what democracy will mean and be defined as in Malawi. Life long President Dr. Banda ruled the country with strict hands for 30 years and it was not until 1994 that Malawi had its first free multi party election and Banda lost. Malawi was “considered one of the stars of democracy in Africa following its first multiparty election” (Kaunda & Kendall, 2001:1) but the process of democracy has stalled and even lost ground according to Kaunda & Kendall. Malawian’s view of democracy differs a great deal from what the international community and the national government perceive as democracy in Malawi (Kaunda & Kendall, 2001).

When Banda lost power to the United Democratic Front and Bakili Muluzi in 1994, the process was peaceful, but still there were several severe problems to be handled. For instance; Malawians wanted change in a sense that they did not want the Banda Regime, but there was little notion of what this change was to consist of. It has been stated that the democratic rule in Malawi, as well as many other African countries, has been implemented and installed despite of a weak background that can support the institutions, attitudes and perceptions of a democratic state (Tsoka, 2002). According to Ribohn “human rights and democracy has been introduced by the international community and originated outside of local context” (Ribohn 1999:20), meaning that democracy and human rights has not naturally evolved in Malawi, it has been introduced from outside and imposed on the “normal” Malawian citizen. A new democracy like Malawi is hence rather fragile as democracy has been imposed on the country rather than evolved and developed from the civil society during a long process.

In the 1994 election the alternative to Banda was democracy; when people no longer felt comfortable living under Banda and saw an opportunity for change, the alternative seemed
better. During a survey conducted in 2002, 66% of the informants answered that “democracy was always preferable to any other kind of government” (Tsoka, 2002). There has been, and are, arguments however stating that democracy in Malawi is unstable and fragile due to severe problems such as corruption, food security, poverty, and HIV/AIDS. Some also argues that ethnicity and regionalism are possible threats to democracy in Malawi (Phiri and Ross, 1998). This supports the argument that many African countries move to a democratic state can be said to be a move from one party to a multi party ruling system (Phiri and Ross, 1998). In the case of Malawi, the government has implemented democratic processes such as free elections both at national and regional levels, Malawi consist of 28 districts which all have their own official representatives. Malawi has a constitution where human rights are central, and democratic values such as freedom of speech are embedded into the document. Yet research by Kaunda and Kendall, Tsoka and Ribohn has indicated that democracy in Malawi is still not executed in satisfactory ways.

3.2.3. Regionalism

Despite the government’s efforts to establish a democratic Malawi they are facing problems. Not only poverty related issues, but also internal issues such as regionalism. During dictator regimes regionalism are controlled because the oppressor will use the tension to their benefit, as has been the case in Rwanda (Chirwa, 1998). In Malawi however, many will argue that there are no regional tensions as Malawi is a peaceful country where no fights have been reported. Malawi has three regions and it has been evident in research that people will vote in official elections on the person or party closest to their ethnic identity (Tsoka et al., 2002). In Malawi there are certain indications of regionalism in relation to politics. A good example of this is that after the first election the Northern and Southern districts were more open for a multi party system than the central region where Banda was from (Phiri and Ross, 1998). The voting pattern from the 1994 election also showed that people voted for the candidate that was from their region, rather than for their policies.

3.2.4. Democracy Among Malawians

According to Kaunda & Kendall, Malawians view of democracy differs a great deal from what the international community and the national government perceive as democracy in
Malawi. In their research conducted from 1996 to 2001 they interviewed people about their perceptions of democracy and how democracy is functioning in Malawi, the general conclusion being that Malawians did not understand what democracy is and could be. This conclusion does not give any information of how Malawians define democracy, but it provides an indication of what democracy is perceived as among the people in Malawi. In Malawi according to Kaunda & Kendall defining democracy as freedom was a misunderstanding “because it appeared to cause so much social dislocation and appeared opposed to existing cultural and social norms” (Kaunda & Kendall, 2001:3). In this sense democracy meaning freedom has led to changes in people’s behavior and conception of actions.

It is also important to emphasize how democracy has developed and evolved in Malawi since it was first introduced in the election of 1994. The main course of Meinhardt and Patel’s study was to research democracy in Malawi from 1994 to 2003 and conclude what had worked and what was still lacking in order to make the Malawian democracy well functioning. Certain aspects of a political democracy were emphasized and given attention when analyzing the democratization process in Malawi. People’s opinions and functions in relation to democracy were not analyzed. The result of the research was both positive in a sense that the democracy has an emphasis on all aspects of what constitutes a democracy according to the researchers, but also negative in a sense that there were great “holes” in the system that make everyday life in Malawi seem undemocratic. The authors made a summary point saying that “democracy demands democrats” (Meinhardt & Patel, 2003: x), meaning that democracy is not embedded into the Malawian culture and at the grass root level in the society. In order to have a democracy there need to be willpower in the Malawian people to promote this democracy, meaning all people from the grass root level up to the high political level as Kaunda & Kendall also argues; people in Malawi don’t have a clear perception of what democracy is and hence are not in relation to the government (Kaunda & Kendall 2001).

3.3. Participation Theory
The participatory approach gained popularity in the mid 1980’s when development theorists saw a need to change development approaches in Africa as many development projects had failed. They agreed that the top-down approach was no longer working and the idea of the
new approach was to empower the people and use local knowledge in development projects (Hickey & Mohan, 2004). As more countries in Africa changed their political system, the approach took a different turn in the late 1990’s. It required that development needed a liberal or social democracy to be successful and the state needed to be responsive to a strong civil society. This new take in the participation approach also emphasized the importance of separating political and social participation with the main goal of strengthening the civil society (Hickey & Mohan, 2004). The participation approach also appeared at a time where the state as a development agent was in decline.

The idea behind the participatory approach is to mobilize people at local levels in development countries to be agents for change in a democratization process, by having them participate in the local governance (Gaventa, 2004). For this to happen and to be evident there needs to be circumstances that allows this transformation to occur. Hickey and Mohan argues that the participatory approach requires a transformation in the society where the existing development practice will need to coexist with new approaches, new institutions and politics to avoid social exclusion (Hickey and Mohan, 2004). This means that the participatory approach will have to work at a local level and adjust to already existing institutions. At the same time the approach will involve the local people and encourage participation in these existing institutions as well as creating new ones. In many development countries there is a problem of social exclusion in the political sphere in a sense that ordinary people feel distant to their governments. As in the case of Malawi; according to Tsoka, “people are risk averse and may not see themselves as agents for change, able to shape or direct the government’s economic and development agenda” (Tsoka, 2002:3).

The participatory approach in a sense of getting the civil society involved in the political sphere poses two problems; on the one hand one needs to get citizens to raise their voices through new forms of institutions as to influence policies. On the other hand one need to strengthen the accountability of these institutions and policies by focusing on the structure for good governance (Gaventa, 2004). In other words it is important to introduce and encourage participation, but equally important is to make the participation mobilization institutions to be agents for change that will govern in a democratic sense.
Civil society is evident to have the ability to influence and affect governmental policies. It is however important to emphasize that for the participation approach to be successful there need to be a presence of the citizen’s right to participate. Gaventa argues that participation right needs to extend that of political activities and open up for participation in other arenas also, such as organizational activities (Gaventa, 2004). In the Malawi constitution it is stated in Chapter IV that it guarantees the right to freedom of expression, freedom of opinion and freedom of association (Chirwa et al.).

3.3.2. Civil Society

Civil Society is a term that relates to the citizens of a country that are not connected to the armed forces or the church (Oxford, 1998). The civil society in this sense is non-state organizations, media, and associations who are able to express themselves and advance their interests and balance the states power (Haynes, 1997:16). The theories concerning civil society can be divided into two main views: the liberal and the Marxist. These two theories differ in many aspects, “the liberal see civil society as a buffer against the state while the Marxist view see civil society as a step towards facilitating strong state development” (Minnis, 1998:130). But they both have in common that a strong development of civil society is necessary in any society.

3.3.3. Civil Society in Africa

Haynes wrote about civil society and democracy in the third world. He argues that political and economical change demands and encourages the development of new groups in societies in the third world. This book was written in 1997 and focuses on changes in the 1980’s and 1990’s. Gaventa wrote in 2004 an article about participatory governance describing how participation needs space to develop a civil society. Minnis in his article from 1998 describes “prospects and problems for civil society in Malawi”. NORAD hosted a seminar about civil society in 2001 producing a report. Alison Van Rooy participated at this seminar and her work will be used in this discussion. There is a lot of existing literature about civil societies and participation, but little about this subject in Malawi. Hence these three articles will be the subject for the discussion in this research as they are all related to Africa.
The term civil society can be used differently to describe different situations. Van Rooy lists five approaches to civil society within one model, meaning a model that lists civil society as one of three components in society, the other two being the market and the state (Van Rooy, 2001). One of the approaches is that it is a collective term, meaning that it describes a group outside of the state and the marked. Another approach describes civil society as an antithesis against the state, meaning that civil society is a group of organizations that controls the government making sure the government does not have too much power (Van Rooy, 2001). Van Rooy also argues that the strengthening of civil society has become evident in development work and that the term civil society has received the status as new actor within development work.

The transition from dictatorship to democracy and from state dominated to market driven economies are not always coexisting peaceful processes. In this period of transition it is important to have a civil society that will protect the interest of citizens together with the state (Haynes, 1997). According to Haynes (1997) civil society is not directly involved in political parties, but the civil society can still influence political decisions both at local and state level as well as work as a counterpart to political actors and monitor the democratic government. This notion of civil society demands a strong civil society that can work as a counterpart to the government, which is evident in many western countries. However, this is not the case in many democratic countries in Africa as the civil society is weak as are the democratic state (Gaventa, 2004) or as Minnis argues: “In much of Africa the strength of both civil society and state is limited to demonstrate the weakness of the other” (Minnis, 1998:133). In Malawi the government expresses democracy in a sense that they have free multi party elections, a constitution that governs human rights and the claim to promote transparency. Despite this, people in Malawi are still poor and they are still suffering under human rights violations. This situation indicates that strengthening of the civil society may not seem like the immediate solution and hence the interest among Malawians to encage in civil society is not present. Haynes argues that there are four components that a civil society depends upon to be efficient and strong (Haynes, 1997:18):

1. Its cohesiveness
2. A country’s level of economic development
3. The length of time a country has been independent
4. The extent of ethnic or religious schisms in the society
In the case of Malawi, it has only been 12 years since their independence from the dictatorship, they have low economic development, there are ethnic schisms present in the country and its cohesiveness can be questioned in relation to regionalism. The overall conclusion being that civil society in Malawi is struggling for its presence. Gaventa argues: “what are the possibilities or moving towards a more pro-poor participatory governance in the vast number of societies in which these conditions are absent” (Gaventa, 2004:33). As in the case of Malawi, developing a strong civil society can prove difficult due to the absence of these set criteria. Minnis argue that “the state needs to be made more responsive, flexible and supportive of civil forces which can and should contribute to democracy” (Minnis, 1998:129) meaning that there should be an encouragement to the government to support activities that will strengthen the civil society.

In Africa in general it has been argued that civil society can be difficult to establish because of the severe problems that many African countries are facing such as poverty, illiteracy, famines and diseases. The obstacles can make it impossible to mobilize people to establish associations (Minnis, 1998:132). It is important to emphasize that in theory the state and the civil society are co-existent and related. A state without relation to the civil society will rule in isolation from the civil society, in other terms the state mirrors the problems within the civil society. In the transition from dictatorship to democracy many African countries experienced just this, that the state and the civil society is connected and in a democratic state one can not have one without the other (Minnis, 1998). It has been mentioned that the rights to association is expressed in the Malawian constitution and hence the invitation to a civil society has been put forward by the government. But as Minnis (1998:144) says, “rights do not exercise themselves, people do”, and this requires that people know of their rights. As most Malawians are illiterate and live in rural areas, their knowledge about their rights is poor. Ribohn (1999) in her dissertation on human rights implementation in Malawi in 1999 writes about this issue as well. Democracy and western values in terms of human rights, freedoms, equality, transparency and opportunity to change and take control has lead to changes in the society that interferes with cultural conceptions and traditional behavior (Ribohn 1999). Ribohn argues that for Malawians human rights “are associated with uncertainty, increased criminality, cultural change, deterioration in the economy and weakened sovereignty” (Ribohn 1999:110). There are no evident educational facilities teaching Malawians about human rights and how they can fit into already existing cultural and traditional methods.
3.3.4. NGO’s and Civil Society

NGO’s has been argued to be the commonly used form of association in civil society in a sense that they are non political, non governmental and not related to any church or armed forces. They can also be said to be in opposition to the government, meaning that they do not have the same restrictions as the government. This gives the NGO’s greater ability to meet the needs and interests of the civil society (Nustad, 2003).

NGO’s are often the link between democracy at local level and democracy at a higher official level. Dahl argues that association autonomy, meaning the right for citizens to engage in political parties, organizations and interest groups must be present for a country to be identified as democratic (Dahl, 1998). So far the understanding of democracy in Malawi is that it is in adaptation in the higher political levels in the society, but implementation and understanding is lacking at local level in Malawi, meaning the average Malawian. It is, however, important to emphasize that all institutions and aspects of democracy can not be implemented into a country at once as history has shown that this takes time. For a young democratic state like Malawi there will have to be a natural development of democracy among the Malawian population.

Youth organizations can be a solution to implement democratic values into the society in Malawi. In this sense the democratic structure, features and values in the organizations can be transferred to the societies and people affected by the organization. It is important to emphasize that democracy at state level is somewhat different than democracy in organizations and institutions (Dahl, 1998) as the difference in size leaves more room for transparency in the smaller organizations and hence the need for several different elected officials is not present. The differences does however only involve the structure of the performance of democracy, it has no effect of the values of democracy. In this sense, implementing democratic values in societies can still be present.

3.3.5. Defining the Term ‘Youth’

Existing literature about youth is not hard to find, but literature about youth in Africa is rare. This discussion will focus on the work of Christiansen, Vigh and Utas who edited a book in
2006 about youth issues in Africa. The book focuses on the situation of youth in relation to the coexistence of traditional settings and new economic development. Durham wrote an article in 2000 about youth and social imagination in Africa identifying youth in an African context and how they are struggling to identify themselves in relation to their societies. Boyens and Crause completed a research in 2003 concerning youth employment in southern Africa and used a case study from Malawi identifying organizational structures and youth initiatives. The Norwegian foreign affairs department developed in 2005 a strategic plan concerning children and youth in developing countries identifying issues of concern that these groups are facing. This literature will be used in this discussion to provide an understanding for how youth can mobilize and be agents for change in Malawi.

The term ‘youth’ often refers to an age group within a population which is relational and culturally structured (Durham, 2000). Defining the term has been tried for centuries by seeing youth as part of a biological stage process, as an established age group related to socio cultural aspects in the society, or as a separate group from the rest of the society, in this sense a group that has its own culture, language, values, rules and standards (Christiansen, Utas and Vigh, 2006). Defining youth can be difficult in a sense that the definition can be either too broad or too narrow, in addition to being too general. Durham has defined youth as “a stage of early adulthood, in which people have many of the characteristics of adults but are still not accorded all of the rights and possibilities” (Durham, 2000:116). This definition leaves room for defining who the people is and what the rights and possibilities may consist of in relation to what situation the definition will be used in. When defining youth it is important to understand that youth are defined differently in different countries, societies and cultures making it important not to generalize the definition in such ways as limiting it to a certain identified group.

3.3.6. Defining Youth in Africa and Malawi

Malawi is said to be a young state, not only in sense of years in existence, but also in the sense that they have a large population of young people. In 2006, 26 % of the Malawian population was in the age of 15- 26 (CIA factbooks, 2006) indicating that a great part of the population is considered young according to an age indicator. It is however not indicated who
these youth are. Youth in Malawi has not been defined in relation to cultural and relational settings.

In Africa it can be difficult to define youth as there are many strong cultural and traditional settings that indicate stages in life defining who you are in what stage. Vigh tells a story of young men in Guinea-Bissau who goes through a circumcision ceremony which gives them the authority as adults (Vigh, 2006). Traditional settings like this example from Guinea-Bissau may interfere with countries experience with rapid social, economical and political changes. Durham argues that youth in Africa see themselves as “unable to attain the promises of the new economy and society” (Durham, 2000:113), meaning that the youth in Africa are not able to keep up with the political and economical changes that are occurring and hence may be perceived like a group on the outside. Vigh argues that many young people will see themselves trapped between the traditional settings and expectations of being young, and the new national changes that are threatening their ability to go through with the traditional settings as well as the new modern settings (Vigh, 2004).

Malawi is a poor country where 41, 7% of the population in 2006 lives under a dollar a day poverty line (UNDP, 2006). Being poor in Malawi means that access to resources are poor and people struggle everyday to get by. Vigh argues that this lack of resources is particularly evident with the young population because it requires that they stay with their family for longer than before, and are not able to move into the settings of adulthood when they were supposed to according to traditions (Vigh, 2004). In other words the youth lack the resources to enter the next traditional stage of social belonging, yet they also lack the resources to be in-between stages. Young people end up transferring between life stages at a slower pace without the possibilities to adjust to the new economical, political and social changes in the society. In this sense they are youth but have no relation to what this identity refers to as they fall outside the traditional definition.

When there are economical, political and social transformations in the society the activities and ambitions of the youth also change (Durham, 2000). A problem the youth then face is that political leaders often fail to address their situation. When ignored and left in despair these young people can often turn their frustration and exclusion to join groups of either criminal character or with a social or political aim (Haynes, 1997). In other words, the lack of
resources and ability to follow either traditional or modern expectations of youth can generate an opening to introduce civil society actions. One such action can be associations to mobilize the youth in settings where they can use their abilities as young people to influence the source of their situation, mainly the politics.

3.3.7. Youth and Organizations in Malawi

Youth and organizational participation in Africa is a study area where little research has been conducted. The reasons for this may be many: it is a rather newly developed issue, and also there might be a lack of initiative from the youth. It is however important to identify the link between youth and the ability to mobilize and organize. Booyens & Crause (2003) studied four different examples of youth initiative to work employment in southern Africa. The example from Malawi was Andiamo Youth Cooperative in Blaka. This organization was started in 1978 by a local priest and ten band members and has grown to consist of 27 members who employ 400-500 young people in the surrounding area by providing them with skills and experience (Booyens & Crause, 2003). The success story lies in the fact that the organizational structure has managed to be structured in a democratic way. It is the youth who are the stake holders, the initiative takers and the main contributing factor to make this organization well functioning, as well as the beneficiaries of the initiative and the work conducted by the organization.

The Norwegian Government has developed a plan for development strategies for children and youth in the South called *Three Billion Reasons* (2005). In this plan they emphasize the importance of focusing on youth in the South as they are often the larger part of the population and often suffering from great poverty (Utenriksdepartementet, 2005:15). The research by Booyens & Crause (2003) concluded that youth in the South are often neglected and ignored when it comes to basic human rights such as the ability to conduct work and achieve an education. Youth organizations and youth initiatives can be an opportunity for youth to be able to achieve education and experience and hence be able to achieve employment and join the workforce of the country. In Three Billion Reasons the Norwegian Government writes that “people are poor because they lack power and ability to influence” (Utenriksdepartementet, 2005:19) as is the case in Malawi. Young people do not have any real power or power to influence their government. It is therefore important that an
organizational structure can provide an institutional setting where young people can stand together and raise their voice. Malawi is a formally democratic state, but need strong driving forces and a strong civil society to build a strong democratic state. Meinhardt & Patel argues in their research that one of the greatest weaknesses of the democracy in Malawi is that it is unstable and has no strong foundation (Meinhardt & Patel, 2003). Youth organizations and initiatives can help build this foundation and reduce the risks that make the Malawian democracy seem unstable. The Norwegian Government sums up this point by declaring on the basis of the Children’s Human Rights Declaration that: “Since practical training is the best learning process in democracy, the rights of the young to participate is essential to the process of the development of the democracy” (Utenriksdepartementet, 2005: 47). A basic assumption in this study is that youth participation is essential to develop a well functioning democracy in Malawi.
4 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The focus of this thesis is Network for Youth Development (NYD), their member organizations and their relation to democracy in Malawi. The research was set out to investigate NYD and identify democratic processes and values. A fieldwork to Malawi was required to complete this study, to get an understanding of the situation and to be able to put the findings into context. This chapter will describe the methods used for collecting data for the study. The description will give an overview from the initial stages of this research, the study area, the interactions with informants, and finally a description of the fieldwork.

4.1. Qualitative Research Method

The research was conducted by using qualitative research methods as the research focused on words rather than on numbers. Bryman writes: “qualitative research emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data” (Bryman, 2004: 266). This research focused on the stories, the perspectives and the views of the informants. By using qualitative sampling methods I was able to go deeper into the stories and collect data and information I would have been unable to collect by only using a quantitative questionnaire. Qualitative method has been argued to be a research method to test out theories as well as develop theories from the data collected through research (Bryman, 2004). During the research I was able to investigate my research objectives as well as come up with my own concluding remarks. This research was not conducted by only confirming already exciting theories, nor was it conducted to only develop a new theory. The qualitative methods I used in this research to gather information was based on interviews using semi- and unstructured interview questions, participant observation, as well as focus group discussions.

4.2. Description of Study Area

I traveled all over Malawi to cover the three regions; northern, southern and central. This enabled me to get a sampling representative of the whole country and not just one region. Blantyre and Mzuzu will be presented as the main study areas as most of the research was conducted in these cities and the surrounding areas. I also went to Chikwawa located in the southern region and Dedza in the central region (see figure 1). In these two towns I was not able to conduct any research in terms of interviews or written material, hence I will not
describe these two cities. The network’s Annual General Meeting will be described as a study area as a lot of the information was gathered during this meeting.

4.2.2. Blantyre

Blantyre is the largest city in Malawi with a population of 650,000 people (Britannica, 2007). Blantyre is located in the Southern Region and both the Presidential Palace and the Supreme Court are located in this city. Blantyre also holds the Headquarter for the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation which is the only Malawian TV station. Although Blantyre is not the capital of Malawi it is said to be the economic capital as major NGO’s and other economical facilities are located here. The city is very modern and has facilities such as communication in terms of transport, Internet and cellular phone access. Together with easy access to accommodation and other resources conducting organizational work may be more accessible in Blantyre.

Most of the research was conducted in Blantyre city due to NYD’s Annual General Meeting. I also visited one organization located in Blantyre city, as well as one organization located in one of the townships. Conducting fieldwork in Blantyre did not impose many problems as the facilities needed to conduct the research were present. The people I met all spoke English so the use of translator was not necessary. This made my work easier as the information flow was based on a direction line of communication.

4.2.3. Mzuzu

Mzuzu is said to be the capital of the north and the turning-off point for all areas in the North. In this sense the city had been characterized as a trading city with large markets where everything is available. Mzuzu is relatively small and less developed compared to Lilongwe and Blantyre. There is also less NGO workers present in Mzuzu compared to the bigger cities in the south. Mzuzu is the third largest city in Malawi with a population of 119,592 people (Wikipedia, 2007). The city is also known for its agricultural based society where tea, rubber and coffee are essential products. I found that Mzuzu had lesser resources in terms of communication and accommodation than that of Blantyre and Lilongwe. My informants explained this saying that their location in the north had excluded the city and its people from
many benefits that were evident in the south. In Mzuzu city I visited a youth centre where one of the member organizations was located. I spent some time at this youth center talking to other organizations and groups. I also visited another organization located in Mzuzu city, as well as one located in a township outside of Mzuzu. All the organizations worked in areas surrounding Mzuzu, and the two organizations located in Mzuzu also worked with issues in Mzuzu city.

4.2.4. The Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is NYD’s highest decision-making organ. It is held once a year with representatives from all of the member organizations of NYD. This meeting was held in Blantyre in the end of October and lasted over the course of a weekend. During this meeting the participants lived, ate and worked together. The participants decided on the future of NYD and planned the next two years. They elected a National Executive Committee, also called the board, amended the constitution, and established a workplan. The participants had social arrangements every night and spent a lot of the time networking, bonding and exchanging ideas and knowledge.

4.3. Data Collection Method

In Qualitative analysis there are many available data collection methods. I used narrative interviewing with semi-structured and open structured questions, participant observation method and focus groups.

4.3.2. Narrative Interviewing

Narrative interviewing is a method that focuses on the stories told by the informants in order to get more information and different aspects of one story (Bryman, 2004). This permits for a more holistic picture of the interview subject. Unstructured and semi-structured interviewing provided the benefit of not having to stick to a set of questions and get more than one answer to a question. I used the method of narrative interviewing with a semi-structured interview guide to be able to comprehend the different aspects of youth organization in the different parts of Malawi. Using an interview guide of subjects to be covered during the interview
allowed me to have conversations and discussions with my informants which gave me information that I could not have expected had I used a set questionnaire. These methods were also helpful during group discussions because it provided multiple answers to a question.

4.3.3. **Participant Observation**

My research and data collection was impossible to conduct based only on interviews. Participant observation was an important method to gather data during NYD’s Annual General Meeting (AGM) as well as during group discussions and visits with organizations. Participant observation is a method where “the researcher immerses in a social setting for an extended period of time, observing behavior, listening to […] conversations between others and with the fieldworker. [It] usually includes interviewing key informants and studying documents” (Bryman, 2004:542). During the AGM the method provided the opportunity for me to get involved to the point where I was accepted as a participant, but not as an active participant. I never interfered in discussions and I never took the leading role in group workshops. By standing on the side line I was still accepted as a participant; a situation that enabled me to see and understand actions and statements made by the other participants. Bryman (2004) describes the participant observation as a situation where the researcher will use a mix of different methods. Participant observation gave me an opportunity to get involved in the organizational culture and hence understand the organizational structure, language and work scene. At the same time I had access to documents concerning the network and the organizations throughout the research making information more accessible. This method was very essential as it gave me credibility among the participants. I created a relationship between them and me which made it easier to communicate. I also experienced that the trust relationship between me and the informants increased as did the level of respect.

In the beginning of the research I had problems with my credibility as a student who did not represent any donors and that there was no money related to my visit. After the Annual General Meeting I experienced that the participants understood my agenda as they had gotten to know me and my background. This helped me later when collecting data through group discussions and interviews with individual organizations. The informants saw me more as a friend they wanted to assist and help, rather than a donor they felt obligated to help thinking it might lead to money.
4.3.4. Focus Groups
During my interviews with some of the organizations I used focus groups. Focus groups are a method where one can use homogeneous or mixed groups to obtain information (Mikkelsen, 2005). Focus groups have been said to be a useful tool when “the dynamics of the group situation is considered to provide useful information” (Mikkelsen, 2005:89). By using focus groups or group meetings I was able to initiate discussions among the members and use participant observation technique to understand communication within the organization. Focus group discussions were also helpful as a tool to gather information as it provided for the representatives in the group to talk freely and express their opinions and concerns. Bryman (2004:539) describes focus group as an interview group where the focus is on the construction of meaning and the interaction with the group. In this sense the interaction between the members of the group and the topic of discussion is important. In the focus groups the informants were able to discuss opinions among themselves. This discussion presented information, opinions and views that would not have been presented to me had I only interviewed individual informants.

4.4. Sampling Techniques
The Annual General Meeting was one of the major opportunities to gather information as all the member organizations of NYD were gathered at one place. To some degree I used the snowball technique (Bryman, 2004), meaning that I used one or more persons to get in contact with the organizations and the key informants I wanted to talk to. To implement this technique I had the coordinator and the assistant coordinator in NYD introduce me to the different organizations. It was necessary that these two people helped me implement this technique as it would increase my credibility with the member organizations. By having established a trust relationship with people they were familiar with, the informants approved of me. The unofficial coordinator in the northern region assisted me when using this technique to get in contact with organizations. The snowball technique can also imply problems in terms of the members that have been contacted may not be representative for all (Bryman, 2004). To avoid this problem I chose to talk to several of the member organizations of NYD, individuals from the already selected organizations, and members in the secretariat. I was able to get a broad selection of people and organizations and hence decreasing the problem of generalization.
4.4.2. Structure of the Research

The research was conducted by dividing it into several sections. To begin with I based my research on visits with seven selected organizations, but events beyond my control made this complicated. I visiting six organizations; Mzuzu Young Voices, Society for the Improvement of Youth Affairs, Mzuzu Youth Forum Organization, Blantyre Young Voices, Children’s Development Promotion, and Chikwawa Young Voices. I started the research by spending time with the secretariat of NYD. By doing so, I was able to collect written and oral information and data that was necessary to get a background understanding of NYD and the member organizations.

The second section was spent with one organization where I got to test my questions, my research methods and the use of a translator. Most of the time was spent interviewing informants at the office using narrative interviewing. I also visited one of their projects where I interviewed a focus group. This section was important because the findings regarding my research methods would be essential for the continuation of the use of these methods in the research. In the third section I participated at the Annual General Meeting where I was able to meet all the member organizations and observe them in their element of decision making. During the Annual General Meeting I was able to use participant observation and observation techniques which gave me some practice for how to use these two methods efficiently. In this section I also had four key informant interviews with representatives from the member organizations. The fourth section started after the Annual General Meeting when I visited six individual organizations and was able to conduct the research using my sampling methods after “testing” them earlier in the research. In the fifth section I conducted interviews with key informants in the secretariat to complete the data collection. I also had the opportunity to analyze some of the data and get a holistic picture before returning to Norway.

4.4.3. Avoiding Traps

Qualitative analysis has been argued to be too subjective as it only allows for the researcher to decide what information is important and how to interpret that information (Bryman, 2004). To avoid this to some degree and achieve a perspective that allows for more than one view, the last part of the research was conducted by discussing and comparing some of the results. The people I discussed with were the coordinator of NYD and other members of the
secretariat. I also had the opportunity to consult with the Norwegian donor organization and representatives from this organization who have visited NYD in the past. I collected available written information about the member organizations and about the network before, during, and after my research. The written information consisted of the organizations constitution and workplan. This allowed for information such as number of members and whether or not they are paying members, background information about the organization, its history, rules and regulations and future goals. This information was very useful when preparing for interviews, when doing follow up interviews, as well as when analyzing information by comparing written statements with oral statements.

4.5. The Informants

The research was conducted by interviewing organizations, focus groups, individual members, members of the secretariat, as well as interacting with these people by using participant observation. I visited six organizations and was able to have larger group discussions with three of these. In two organizations I spoke in groups of two and two, as well as with individuals. When I visited one organization I was not able to conduct an interview with the organization due to circumstances beyond my control. I did however walk with them to see their projects and was able to have conversations with essential people in the organization such as the leader. During group discussions the size of the group varied from four participants to fifteen. This did not represent a problem as I managed to adjust my questions and topics as to include more people.

I interviewed two key informants in the secretariat, two of the assistants during the AGM, and five key informants from the member organizations. Of the five key informants there were both members of organizations I had interviewed and members of organizations I did not interview. I also had conversations with members of the Norwegian donor organization, and people I met in Malawi. These informants provided important background information and some of the information in this research is based on conversation and discussions with these people.
4.5.2. Use of Translator

Before traveling to Malawi I had been in contact with the coordinator of NYD and discussed the question of having to use a translator. The coordinator ensured me that most understood English, but that they would translate for me when needed. Having the secretariat as translators was not an option as these people are too subjective. By using people who are too subjective it may influence the translation and hence the information may not be correct. I decided that I would try to get by with using English as this would give me first hand information. If it was necessary to use a translator I would find one when in Malawi.

During the individual interviews I did not have to use a translator as they all spoke English and were comfortable communicating with me in English. During the Annual General Meeting it was decided that the people who wanted to communicate in discussions in their local language could do so. If there were any objections to a speaker speaking in English they would translate into Chichewa which is one of the official languages in Malawi. Chichewa was not the mother tongue of all the participants, but there was an agreement that everyone understood Chichewa. When the participants spoke in their local language one of the members of the secretariat would translate for me when necessary. I did not experience this as a problem because I was there as an observant. It was more essential to me to see the interaction and structure of the meetings than merely understanding what was being said.

During my meetings with the organizations in the south I did not need a translator as everyone was able to communicate well in English. In the north however, I needed a translator to accompany me as not everyone felt comfortable speaking in English. Understanding my informants was usually not the problem; the problem was for the informants to understand me. I have an American accent to my English and very often I experienced that my informants did not understand what I was saying. During conversations I had to pay close attention to body language to understand if the informants understood me. If not, I would slow down and change my language; meaning that I spoke in simpler terms, used fewer words and tried to use British English phrases and accent. In the situations where I had a translator, I would ask the translator to translate what I was saying to my informant. I also experienced that in group discussions it was often easier and more efficient to have me speak in English and then have the translator translate what I said to the local language. By doing so the ones who did not
understand my English did not have to come forward and admit it. Thus I saved time and effort by having everyone involved in the conversation from the beginning.

The translator I used when being in the northern region was the unofficial coordinator. This person was a previous member of a NYD youth organization. His position as an unofficial coordinator will be discussed in chapter five. I also asked informants that I had established contact with during the AGM to assist in the translation. During group discussions this was interesting as the translation provided by the translator was confirmed by the informants. I did not experience using a translator with relation to NYD as a problem because others were correcting him if they experienced the translation as incorrect. All the written material presented and gathered during the research was in English; hence I did not need a translator for this.

In this study the concern of anonymity in relation to the informants was presented.

4.5.3. Ethics
Bryman (2004) lists four ethical principles that a researcher needs to be aware of when collecting data. These four principles are: whether there is any harm to participants, lack of informed consent, whether there is an invasion of privacy and if deception is involved (Bryman, 2004:509). Before every interview I informed the informants about my intentions and background to the study, and made sure that the informants wanted to be interviewed for the purpose of this study. I chose to keep my informants anonymous due to several reasons:

During the research I asked the informants if I could quote them in my thesis. The impression I got was that some of the informants were proud to be interviewed and have their name mentioned, while others felt uncomfortable.

This study has discussed findings based on data collected from people from the Norwegian donor organization and others that I met in Malawi. I have chosen to anonymous these people because I felt that it was not necessary for the outcome of this study to mention these people by name.
Because I had so many informants from different places, it can be difficult for me to provide all with a copy of this thesis. I discussed this with the informants making sure they were comfortable discussing with me despite the chance they might not see the final results. None of the informants rejected being interviewed but, some did not want be quoted. Due to this and the different level of the informant’s willingness to be quoted I chose to keep all the informants anonymous.

The findings and discussions are based on the information collected from the informants through interviews as well as written information provided by NYD and the organizations. The discussions and the result are based on my interpretations of the information. I am responsible for any errors in the presentation of my findings.

4.6. Data Analysis

Since my research was basically qualitative I only have a few numbers and simple statistics to analyze. Therefore I have not used any data package to analyze the data. In qualitative research a problem one may encounter is the large amount of information. Meaning already existing literature as well as newly gathered information, and it may be difficult to include everything in the analysis. I therefore used grounded theory as a method to analyze my data as I was gathering it. Grounded theory is according to Strauss and Corbin “theory that has derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:12). In grounded theory data collection, data analysis and theory will be an ongoing process during the research and the components will stand in close relationship with each other (Bryman, 2004). By using grounded theory I went go back and forth between data collection and data analysis, indicating a process where the data analysis and the data collection referred to each other. During the research I used existing literature to develop the checklist and questions for the interviews. By doing so I was able to back up my questions with background information. I also experienced that being able to discuss literature and theory with informants and relate these components during the research was important to achieve a holistic picture. By achieving a holistic picture where all components worked in relation at all times made the data analysis less complicated.
4 The research process

4.7. Field Experience, Expectations and Obstacles

Fieldwork presents interesting obstacles, experiences and events. It is important to be prepared for physical and emotional challenges when going on a fieldwork (Nielsen, 1996). This fieldwork did not include as many challenges as I had expected. Before arriving in Malawi I knew that the rainy season would start while I was there which could cause problems in relation to traveling. I was prepared for communication challenges in relation to language and getting in touch with people. One can only be prepared for personal problems to a certain extent, but before arriving I had mentally prepared myself that there might be periods of loneliness. Before going on the fieldwork I also had expectations for what I found out and how I would collect the information, these expectations were challenged.

The research was conducted from October to December 2006. Arriving in Malawi in October was interesting as it was the start of the rainy season and I got to see the changes in the landscape. I also got to experience how the rain affects the people in terms of agriculture, household activities, and illnesses such as cholera outbreaks. The rain did not cause any problems during the research expect from extending meetings at some occasions.

I was amazed at how willing people were to communicate with me. Establishing a trust relationship with the informants was my major concern when arriving. This was not a problem and I experienced having to set boundaries in the relationships rather than trying to create relationships. My major problem during the fieldwork was to access the organizations and communicate with them. Internet and phone access was not available for all organizations making it hard to communicate and make arrangements with organizations in the different regions. Due to this problem I was not able to meet with two organizations and had to make adjustments to achieve the number of organizations I wanted to visit.

When arriving in Malawi I wanted to contact the National Youth Council of Malawi (the official network for youth organizations), but was not able to do so. Again I experienced that internet and phone communication failed. Due to geographical differences and time limitation I was not able to speak to any representatives from the council. This did not cause any problems for conducting this research, but it would have been a good component to understand the official structure of youth organizations in Malawi.
Personally I experienced some setback in terms of events occurring in Norway and the use of the malaria medicine Lariam. This combination did cause some obstacles as it made me immobile and less social for a short period of time before I was able to solve the problem. It did not have any major affects on the research process or the outcome, but it did cause for changes during the research.

Before arriving in Malawi I had expectations for what I would find out based on my research objectives and assumptions. However, during the fieldwork there were many subjects and issues with no direct relation or impact on my research objectives that became evident.

Gender related issues were discussed several times and some of the findings in this study are related to gender issues. This research was set out to investigate the youth and their perceptions of democracy. When gender issues appeared in discussions and findings I made an effort not to pursue the subject any further. I did so because I felt that the subject is too immense and that I needed to limit my research to my research objectives. Due to this, gender issues are not discussed in this study as a separate subject, but there are some discussions including gender based issues.
5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter identifies who the organized youth in NYD are by studying the youth organizations, then follows a discussion about the youth organizations and their work. This chapter will focus on the relations between democracy and the NYD youth and youth organizations. Followed is a discussion about how the NYD youth organizations can both contribute and be an active actor in the strengthening of civil society as well as the democratization process in Malawi.

5.1. Identifying Network for Youth Development and How They are Structured

Network for Youth Development (NYD), formerly known as National Young Voices Malawi, was formed based on an initiative from the Youth Hearing that took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Young Voices was meant to be an international network consisting of networks of youth organizations in countries all over the world. The Norwegian People’s Aid started the initiative in Malawi by encouraging formation of organizations that would have the name Young Voices as well as the name of the region or town they were based in. The organizations saw it necessary to establish a network and with the assistance from The Norwegian People’s Aid they contacted a member in one of the original Young Voices organizations to be the coordinator for the network. This was in 2002 and it was part of the original idea that the member organizations would be named Young Voices to create a sense of belonging and relationship between all the member organizations. After short time it became clear that other organizations with no relation to the name Young Voices or the network wanted to be part of the network. These new developments lead to membership requirements as well as rules and regulations.

5.1.2. The Structure of NYD

After October 2006, the structure of NYD consists of a secretariat, a board called the National Executive Committee (NEC), an Annual General Meeting (AGM) and member organizations. There are eleven registered member organizations from all three regions in Malawi set in both rural and urban areas. To become a member the organizations have to submit an application to the secretariat consisting of a completed registration form, a constitution, a plan of action, list of members, and a bank account number. It is also preferred that the organization has an
Office. The secretariat will evaluate the organization based on this information and when possible they will visit the organization. Based on this information it will be decided whether the organization will be accepted as a member. According to the coordinator many organizations want to become members, but due to limited resources NYD are unable to accept all. During my research it became clear that the secretariat tried to stay in touch with other youth organizations. A member of the secretariat said that this was necessary because of networking and because of the member rotation in the network. Some of the member organization becomes dormant or are not capable of responding to the membership rules and hence they lose their membership, making it possible for other organizations to apply.

![Figur 2. The structure of NYD, by Bente Mjøs](image)

### 5.1.3. The Annual General Meeting

In the networks constitution of 2002 it is stated that there will be an Annual General Meeting (AGM) with representations from all the member organizations. At least two thirds of the member organizations have to be present at the AGM for it to be valid. The AGM is the highest decision-making organ in the organization and will be held once each year. During this meeting, exchange of knowledge, experience and ideas as well as networking between the organizations is central. The AGM will perform duties such as elect the National Executive

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This research was conducted from October to December 2006 and will use the constitution that was valid in 2006.
Committee, also called the board, amend the constitution, select themes and projects for the coming year, and define the policies of the network. The secretariat introduced participation regulations in the 2006 AGM to have an equal and fair representation from the member organizations. The intention behind this was to have equal representation of female and male participants. This was based on the secretariat’s wish to include gender issues in the program of the AGM as well as in the participant level of the organizations. Gender issues and especially women’s rights are on the agenda for many of the member organizations and according to the secretariat it was important to include this issue at the AGM.

![The participants at the Annual General Meeting in October 2006](image.jpg)

**Picture 1. The participants at the Annual General Meeting in October 2006**

5.1.4. The National Executive Committee

Since 2002 there has been several changes and development within the network. In the constitution it is stated that there will be three official institutions of power in the network; the general assembly (Annual General Meeting), the coordinator and the National Executive Committee (NEC). NYD has a secretariat of three members, one is the original coordinator; the second is the assistant coordinator and the third an assistant. When arranging and executing projects the secretariat will hire extra help for the duration of the project. During the AGM of 2006 the members elected the NEC consisting of a president, vice president and eight regular members, which differs from what is stated in NYD’s constitution. The members of the NEC are elected members of NYD and represent different organizations. Due to this the NEC is not located in one place, but will arrange quarterly meetings. These meetings will
5 Results and discussion

take place where it is most convenient for the members to travel. This was the second NEC since 2002 and it will work as a board and have the decision making power in NYD. The coordinator with the rest of the secretariat will care for the daily running of the network and act upon the decisions made by the AGM and the NEC.

5.1.5. Communication and Regional Coordinators

Communication between the coordinator, the secretariat and the organizations seems to be difficult and complicated. It is stated in the constitution that the member organizations have to submit a quarterly report about their completed activities. If two quarterly reports are missing in succession then there will be consequences such as determination of the membership. There was some confusion about this issue among the member organizations; some informants said that the organizations had to submit quarterly reports, while other organizations had never submitted anything and apparently either did not know this or did not care about it. The coordinator collects these reports and makes a newsletter which will be sent once a year to the member organizations. This communication was conducted using regular mail services as internet access was not available for all organizations. Among the organizations there was some confusion related to this newsletter. Some claimed that they had never received one, while others claimed they had received one each year. This can be due to duration of membership in NYD, as well as changes within the organizations such as change of leadership. The newsletter and the quarterly reports seem to be a goal regarding communication within the network, and hence it is stated in the constitution. This goal may however be difficult to achieve as there are challenges such as access to communication and adaptation to membership changes in the network.

Due to the number of organization localized in all regions and the communication problems it has been suggested that NYD will have three regional coordinators. There is a person in the north that can be called a coordinator for the northern region but it has not been defined what this person’s role is, nor to the organizations in the north or to the person in question. According to the coordinator the question of dividing NYD into regions and have regional coordinators in addition to the national coordinator will be discussed and implemented by the NEC. At present stage this system does not exist, but there seems to be an attempt to introduce this system in the northern region.
5.2. Identifying the Organized Youth

Youth is a group in society that is identified through age, biological factors, social settings and cultural settings (Christiansen et al, 2006). In Malawi the concept of youth is defined and determined through a mix of all these factors. As Malawi is a poor country struggling with poverty related issues as well as traditional settings versus modern settings, youth have to redefine who they are and what qualifies as being ‘youth’. Youth organizations are popular in Malawi as it generates a channel where youth can mobilize and share common issues. It also gives the youth an opportunity to define who they are and what role they represent in the society. NYD is as an example where youth organizations from all over Malawi have gathered their resources and their abilities to initiate changes and make a statement in their societies. This thesis will study NYD to get an understanding for the concept of who the youth are and what role they place in their local societies.

In the constitution of NYD it is stated that “youth refers to men and women from the age of 15 to 25 years”. During the research however it became clear that members differed from this age, hence the age limit in the constitution is acting more as a target group rather than a set requirement. This assumption was confirmed by a member of the secretariat saying that organizations with members outside this age limit was not restricted by this when applying for membership, but it was evident that the majority of the members would be in this age group. This statement is according to the constitution where it is stated that member organizations need to have “a minimum of 60 % of youth in the age group of 15- 26 in leadership”. This statement indicates that age is not the only indicator to identify youth. Christiansen et al (2006) argues; youth can not merely be determined by one factor but one need to see the relation between the different factors to identify who the youth are in any set society. In Malawi there were several factors and indicators to identify who the youth is. Through interviews, discussions groups and observations four indicators to determine who the NYD youth were identified; age, status, gender and location.

5.2.2. Age of the Participating Youth

Asking the informants with membership in an organization for their age I discovered that most of the NYD youth was between 18 and 22, but that the answers ranged from 10 to 32. This confirmed the statement in the constitution of NYD that the targeted member would be
between the age of 15 and 26. The informants were confronted with this assumption and they confirmed that this age group represents a group of young people in Malawi who would participate in organizational activities. Why this age group would be involved in organizational work is due to several factors according to the informants. One factor was that this group of young people has resources and abilities to initiate and work in organizations for and by the youth. Vigh (2006) argues that youth do not have access to resources making it possible for the youth to adjust to new economical, political and social changes in the society. Based on his findings it was therefore interesting to investigate what is being identified as a resource among the NYD youth.

5.2.3. Access to Resources

Most of the NYD youth in the member organizations claimed they did not have resources in terms of money or physical assets, but they had other resources that were evident for them to be able to contribute in organizational work. Most had finished school, were in school or had some higher education. Some had paid jobs in addition to their work in the organizations and was able to make a living. All of the youth spoke English and was able to communicate with me by using English. From my understanding English is taught in school and hence a person speaking English will normally have some educational background.

Visiting some of the NYD youth in their homes made it apparent that these youth came from well established households that was considered good standard in Malawi. There were often relations between resourceful people in the communities and members of the local youth organizations. This relation made resources, such as land plots for agricultural purposes, more accessible for the organizations. These two points support the assumption that some of the youth who participate in youth activities and organizations have resources or a background with resources. These resources according to informants could be education, having a job, access to land, market places, capital and access to communication and knowledge. One organization had involved the chairman of the village by asking him for a plot of land where they could build a school. This was possible because the leader of the organization was the nephew of the chairman. This is not to say that all the youth who are active in organizations comes from a background with resources. From my observations it seemed that the initiators of the organizations most likely had a background with access to one or more of the resources.
mentioned above. This observation supports Durham (2000) findings that youth will adjust to social, economical and political changes. During the process of adjustment the youth will use accessible tools, such as relations and education, and join groups to raise their voices and be present in the society.

5.2.4. Gender

During the Annual General Meeting (AGM) the member organizations had to participate with equal gender participation. In many of the member organizations, equal gender participation were not the standard, but during the AGM gender participation and gender related issues was stressed by having gender exercises. During an exercise about women’s involvement in society one female participant stated that “[in Malawi] most women are not respected and men are prioritized”. By this she meant that men are more visible than women leading to situations where women will often be neglected.

Most active members were male, but during interviews and visits it seemed that there was an interest in involving more females in the organizational work. An important factor that influences this suggestion is the cultural gender differences that exist in Malawi. Most women between the age of 15 and 26 are married. I was informed that many young women quit participating in organizations when they get married which was considered a dilemma in most organizations. The reason for this, according to several informants, is that the husbands do not allow the women to be active in organizational work after entering marriage. One female informant said during a gender exercise that women in Malawi allow for men to be decision-makers in the household and that this was a challenge for women.

During the meetings with the organizations and conversations with the female members it became evident that many of the females were single. They confirmed that being married and still an active member might be a problem if the husband does not agree to the activity. There might be many reasons for why there is not a higher female participation in youth organizations in NYD. This research was not set out to investigate gender issues and hence will not draw any conclusions regarding women’s participation. It was however interesting to observe that the subject of gender and women’s rights seemed to be evident in the work of many of the member organizations. This indicated that there is awareness and a wish for
change among the NYD youth when it comes to gender based issues and especially women’s rights. During the discussions following the gender exercises at the Annual General Meeting there was an agreement among both the male and the female participants that women’s rights and gender issues needs more awareness.

5.2.5. Urban and Rural Participation

NYD has both urban and rural member organizations with four organizations based in cities, three in townships and four in rural areas. The difference in location also showed differences in the area of interest and projects between rural and urban organizations. There were also differences in gender participation between urban and rural organizations. Not in the sense that there were more females participating in urban or in rural. Most female who were participating in organizations in urban areas were older and more of them were single, than the female participants in the rural areas. This might be explained with indicator such as the urban females have higher education, access to more resources and less pressure from cultural genders settings, than the women living in rural areas where access to education and other resources are limited. Another reason might also be that women in rural areas marry earlier than the women in urban areas. This assumption was difficult to confirm as most married women were not present in the organizations investigated in this research. There was also stronger female participation in the urban areas in a sense that they were more present in the organization. They had higher positions in the organizations and participated more in decision making processes. They were also more present in group discussions by raising their voices and answering question. Saying that this is purely due to urban and rural cultural differences might be very limited as there are other factors such as age and personal experience that may also influence these women’s behavior patterns.

5.2.6. Identifying the Organized Youth

Based on the discussion; identifying the youth who would most likely be an active participant in an organization would be a person who is a male or a single female in the age group of 18 to 22. The person has a background with access to one or more resources. These resources were identified by the informants as being; education, having a job, access to land, to market
places, to capital and access to communication and knowledge. There are no distinctions between a member living in an urban or a rural setting. This description eliminates many of the members and it does not credit social and personal settings. There were many different people with diverse backgrounds and personalities that were active members in the different organizations in NYD. The NYD youth had a drive and a wish to change the life situation of themselves as well as fellow citizens, neighbors, family, friends and countrymen, and very often this drive had its foundation from personal experiences. This description of the NYD youth supports Dahl’s (1997) assumption that youth can generate their resources and join organizations. Vigh (2006) argued that youth lack resources to be young, meaning that they are not able to mobilize between the phases of childhood and adulthood. This assumption was not apparent with the NYD youth and can indicate that the NYD youth is able use the resources they have available to benefit themselves and their communities.

5.3. Identifying Why the NYD Youth Become Members of an Organization

There are eleven member organizations in NYD working with different issues concerning their local communities. When asking the informants directly about what they wanted to achieve in an organization many of them said they wanted to help and assist in their communities. Three main reasons for joining an organization were identified; personal experience, personal gain and because they have the opportunity. These reasons functioned as motivating factors for the youth to get involved in organizational work and contribute to positive changes.

5.3.2. Personal Experience a Reason for Joining an Organization

Personal experience was for many of the informants a major reason for joining an organization. Haynes (1997) explained that youth who experience frustration over their own situation may join groups. In a group a person does not stand alone and will relate to others with similar experience. One informant in an organization located in the south told a story of her father dying from AIDS and her mother, who was infected, remarried and infected her new husband. The informant was very disappointed in her mother because of this, but she felt that it was lack of information that caused the situation. Based on this experience she wanted
to contribute by informing people in her community about HIV and Aids, how it spreads and what one can do to stop the epidemic.

This informant was not the only one who told personal stories as their reason for joining an organization. Another informant told a story of her family having to take care of two children whose parents had died from Aids. This put the family in stress as they did not have enough resources to care for this now extended family. Due to this the informant wanted to contribute to changes in her community making it easier for families in the same position as her family to take care of the extended family.

Stories like these two were told during every interview with an organization. All organizations worked in their local communities and the members were personally affected by the situation. Most of the NYD youth had a personal reason for why they wanted to be active in an organization working with issues related to development, human rights and problems in their local communities.

5.3.3. Joining an Organization to Get Experience

Personal experience was not the only reason for the NYD youth to participate in organizational work. Many wanted to assist their local communities because they were able to identify problems and wanted to contribute to a change for the better. Most of the informants had some educational background primary school. Many of the informants knew the poverty and underdevelopment situation in their country and they identified the need for change.

During interviews with the secretariat it was stated that “NYD is enlightening young people by bringing them together. [Organizational participation] gives opportunities to the young, one example being a former member who is now working in an official governmental council”. This statement also leaves room for people who want to gain work experience and practical experience that can later help them get a job. Booyens and Crause (2003) argued that having youth learn skills and getting experience can help them to get a job. In this research it was evident that youth organizations can be an institution where youth can learn skills and get experience beyond what is being thought in school or in the socialization process.
5.3.4. Joining an Organization Because They Can

Many of the active members were very opinionated about democracy and human rights. It was emphasized that a democratic Malawi meant that they could raise their voices and be heard. During the Banda regime, organizations or groups were allowed to have meetings, but they were controlled by representatives from governmental institutions. Subjects and actions during these meetings were restricted; if someone broke the rules they were subjected to punishment. One informant stated that “the fear of being beaten or arrested during these meetings made many young people to keep silent about issues they saw as unfair and changes they wanted to see done.” Many of the NYD youth were happy that they under the democratic rule can arrange free meetings, raise their voices and perform actions without any restrictions and controls. Freedom of Association is stated in the constitution of Malawi, WHICH represents an opportunity for youth in Malawi to raise their voices and contribute to changes in their communities.

5.3.5. Are the NYD Youth an Élite?

The discussion has identified four main indicators for who the NYD youth are and three indicators for why the NYD youth join organizations. Having access to resources was discussed as one of the indicators. In the research the informants explained that the members of the organizations did contribute with assets such as money, but the informants did include access to capital as one of the resources. The informants also informed that the organizations did require a membership fee from their members. If the membership fee was not paid the member would be excluded from meetings and arrangements. This information indicates that the members would have access to money to be included in the organization. From the experience of identifying the NYD youth the subject of whether these youth were part of or forming an élite appeared. This assumption indicates two situations: first, that a group of people with resources has come together to form an organization and hence exclude others who do not meet their standard. Second, that the organizations have formed based on the initiative of one or more people with access resources and then others wanted to join. During the study it became evident that it was the second situation that was common, excluding the assumption that the NYD youth were part of an élite. But this supports the assumption that the NYD youth are forming an élite of youth who are capable of joining organizations based on
set requirements that are related to access to resources. This situation poses for an interesting assumption whether this is positive or negative.

In this study it became evident that the NYD youth are involved in organizational activities because they have a genuine interest in improving their own living standard as well as that of their fellow citizens. During the AGM the informants stated that being involved in an organization who was member of NYD gave these youth a sense of belonging and the ability to contribute to positive changes in their country. By participating and being an active member of an organization and of NYD the youth was able to contribute to addressing issues concerning their lives, they were able to come together and join forces to be stronger and to be heard. Most importantly they were able to develop their communities and assist people in improving their livelihoods. The NYD youth has a drive for change and development and they are able to initiate this by being active in organizations. Haynes (1997) and Durham (2000) argues that political leaders often fail to address the situation of the youth. In this study it was evident that the NYD youth joined organizations to address their own situation and be able to contribute to positive changes. Being ignored in the political sphere was for some an indirect argument to join an organization and be an active member in their society.

Identifying the reasons for why the NYD youth join organizations indicates that having an élite of youth forming and joining organizations is positive in a sense that they have assets and can use these to make changes. It is also negative in the sense that it excludes youth who have the drive, but not the assets. These two aspects leave room for interpretation. The organizations visited to complete this study did not consist of wealthy youth with the intention to join organizational work for personal gain. Rather it was youth who were interested in using their assets for the benefit of others. When confronted with the issue of having a membership fee one informant explained that it was important because the organization needed the money to be able to conduct their work. Another informant emphasized that by having a membership fee they would encourage their members to find work to be able to pay. This information indicates that the NYD youth may form an élite as it enables youth to achieve a better standard. By wanting to satisfy the membership requirements, the youth also want to acquire a better living standard by for instance getting a job.
5.4. Issues That the Organizations Are Working With

The study was conducted by visiting six individual organizations, interviewing the secretariat as well as participating at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). All eleven registered member organizations were present at the AGM. During the AGM the organizations introduced themselves as well as gave an introduction to the work they are doing. According to the secretariat this was done because “NYD is a body for young people to speak on behalf of young people […] and exchange ideas and experience”. During these presentations it became obvious that the organizations are working with similar issues but they use different methods in achieving their goals. HIV/AIDS were an issue that all organizations were involved in. Children’s rights, orphans, agriculture and education were also issues and subjects present in many of the organizations. Drug and alcohol abuse seemed to be an issue that was important for NYD and during the AGM it became clear that many of the organizations have had projects aimed at drug and alcohol abuse among young people in their communities.

Even though many of these organizations worked with similar issues it was interesting to see during the visits with the six organizations that they worked in different ways and with different aspects of the problem at hand. For instance, most organizations said that they worked with HIV/AIDS; one organization were growing food to give to households affected by HIV, another were building schools for orphan children whose parents died of HIV, one organization worked with women and women’s rights to raise awareness of HIV in relation to sexual behavior.

![Picture 2. An organization showing their fishponds](image1)

![Picture 3. An organization demonstrating the water pump and irrigation system](image2)
During interviews with informants the issue of funding was discussed. All of the organizations explained that getting funding was difficult. Most of the organizations had discovered that there were certain subjects and issues that were easier to get funding for than others, for instance HIV/Aids related issues. One organization in the northern region informed that their work plan, which included networking, drug and alcohol abuse and children’s rights, did not include subjects that was easy was to get funding for. To solve this issue they had refocused some of the initial projects to include an HIV/Aids aspect. This situation indicates that the NYD youth organizations do not have enough resources to allocate their projects and programs and need to search for external sources for funding. These sources are often international NGO’s present in the country working on certain issues. This situation indicates an obstacle for the NYD organizations; they have a vision and engagement towards issues in their communities, but are hindered due to conflict with the interests of the donors. One organization in the south was frustrated as they were not able to get funding for their agricultural project as it was not related to HIV/Aids.

5.5. NYD and Democracy

The structure of the network indicates a democratic organizational structure. In 2007 the network has an elected board that possesses the decision-making power in the organization. The AGM is the highest decision-making unit in the network where the member organizations possess the power to elect the board, to amend the constitution, and define the policies of the network. There is a non-elected secretariat that works on behalf of the board and are in charge of the daily running of the network. This structure signifies a process of representative democracy where the members have the indirect power to decide the position of the decision-making power by electing representatives they see fit for the job (Rasch, 2004). In addition the members have the power to decide whether they are satisfied with the job performed by the elected people by re-electing them or elect new representatives during the next AGM. This is an open process in the organization and leaves room for transparency and active members. The AGM is an open forum for the member organizations indicating a process of discursive democracy (Rasch, 2004) where it is the member organizations that during open discussions reach important decisions concerning the network, for instance amending the constitution. The network also has a participatory approach to democracy as the participation of the members is essential and important for the network when reaching
decisions (Rasch & Midgaard, 2004). During the AGM there are open discussions regarding the networks political platform and workplan and decisions are reached based on the results of these discussions and elections.

5.5.2. The Constitution of NYD

In 2002 when the NYD gained their status as a network of youth organizations a constitution was amended. This constitution was amended by the member organizations during the first AGM in 2002 and hence, according to democratic values, the constitution is valid. However, since 2004 there has not been a NEC in existence or an AGM to amend the constitution, meaning that the constitution as it was in 2002 is valid during this research in 2006. This poses for some interesting issues concerning the structure and the running of the organization. According to Gloppen (2004) a constitution is set to include the rights of the members as well as prevent elected leaders to misuse their power. A constitution in a democratic system will account for the members in the democracy. Division of power and decision-making power is essential as to prevent misuse and neglect of the member’s rights.

In the network’s constitution of 2002 the role and work area of the executive committee as well as the coordinator is described in such terms that the coordinator works on behalf of the decisions made by the executive committee, which have been elected at the AGM. The coordinator is also in charge of the daily running of the network including the administrative part of the network. It is stated in the constitution that “the national coordinator shall be the secretariat of the [name]14 network and shall be an independent person”. This statement indicates that the coordinator is a person with no relations to NYD, but it does not indicate how this person will be elected or appointed. The coordinator of NYD was appointed by the previous donor organization and has since 2002 been in charge of the running of the network. This person is not independent from the network as he has been an active member of a member organization. The coordinator has also been involved in forming a new member organization, where he is now a member of the organizations board of trustees. The coordinators involvement in the past and present member organizations indicates a situation that contradicts NYD’s constitution.

14 The network has changed name since this constitution was written
NYD has an identified democratic organizational structure. This structure can be questioned to be more theoretical than practical. This research was conducted from October to December in 2006 and during this time an executive committee was elected and implemented based on a strong initiative from the secretariat. NYD had an Annual General Meeting where representatives from all the member organizations were present, and there existed a constitution that was followed to some degree by the secretariat. The coordinator had in the period 2005-2006 extended the secretariat with two additional people before the new executive committee had been elected.

The Annual General Meeting in October 2006 was the first to be held in two years, meaning that there had not been conducted an Annual General Meeting in 2004 or in 2005. This does not correspond with what is stated in the constitution of 2002. When confronted with this the secretariat explained that there had not been any funding during these two years and hence they had not been able to arrange an Annual General Meeting. The Norwegian People’s Aid withdrew from the project in 2004 and the new donor organization spent the next two years examining NYD, not sponsoring it. During the period without an AGM the coordinator has been responsible for running the network, indicating that the coordinator has been in charge of all decision-making power.

5.5.3. Democratic Challenges in NYD

The AGM and the election of the National Executive Committee (NEC) are good examples that there are democratic features embedded into the network. A member of the secretariat stated that “the network is democratic, but not as democratic as we want it to be”. This statement relates to findings during interviews and observations at meetings. The secretariat of NYD is trying to introduce and embed democratic processes in the network that have strong values in a western model; such as the issue of gender balance, equality and transparency. NYD has after five years in existence managed to establish a democratic organizational structure with a constitution indicating the decision making power units in the network. In theory NYD has an equal balance distribution of power and has given ‘the power to the people’. Meaning that it is the member organizations that elect the NEC, and it is the AGM that have the final decision making power in central questions concerning the running of NYD. As NYD does not have any money or donors for daily running the question of
corruption which is a big threat to democracy in Malawi, is not evident in the network. Despite these democratic features there are certain features that are appearing as less democratic.

During the years 2004 and 2005 there was not held an Annual General Meeting and a new NEC was not elected until 2006. However, there was an annual general meeting in 2002 as well as in 2003 and according to the coordinator a NEC was elected in 2002 to be in office for two years as according the constitution. However, due to lack of resources the NEC was not able to meet or implement planned activities during this two year period. The result was that the NEC dissolved. The network did not find resources to arrange an Annual General Meeting until 2006 and hence electing a new NEC was not possible. This situation indicates that there has not been a representative democracy in the network since 2003.

5.5.4. The Secretariat
The constitution does not indicate how the secretariat is elected or appointed. The present secretariat have not gone through an application process where they have been elected based on their qualifications. The first coordinator, who is still in position, was appointed by the previous donor organization and his role is based on what is stated in the constitution. During the years without a NEC or an AGM the coordinator has been in charge of running the network. This is not to say that this person is in the position due to personal gain or undemocratic conditions. The situation merely indicates a system failure where the decision-making units in NYD failed and the remaining functioning unit –the coordinator - was left with the decision-making power.

The secretariat consist of three members, all three being friends with personal bonds extending that of organizational cooperation. The initial coordinator has hired two members of the secretariat with no support from the member organizations or the NEC. The fact that the members of the secretariat are friends were confronted, but the secretariat did not see any problems. They justified it saying that they worked well together, they had the same vision for NYD and the three of them possessed more resources than one person. The process of expanding the secretariat happened before the present NEC was in existence, and there are no indications that the question of the secretariat has been an issue for the NEC to deal with. This
can indicate that the members and the NEC are satisfied with the secretariat and their work. It can also indicate that the secretariat has too much decision-making power in NYD and hence others do not dare to question their position. This assumption was not confirmed during the research, it is merely an assumption based on information analyses.

5.5.5. The Name Conflict

In 2004/2005 NYD had a conflicting situation concerning the name of the network and the member organizations. The initial idea was that the network would be named National Young Voices Network and that each member organization would bear the name Young Voices as well as the name of their location. NYD then experienced a development where youth organizations with no relation to NYD wanted to become member. The National Youth Council, a governmental youth network, is a network that many youth organizations wants to be members of as a membership includes benefits, networking and a direct link to governmental officials. In this council there are regulations regarding the names of the organizations in the sense that only one organization can registrar with a name. Since National Young Voices Network had registered in the council their member organizations were not allowed to registrar with the name Young Voices. This conflict started in 2004 and a solution was reached in early 2006 when the network changed the name to Network for Youth Development. By doing so the member organizations did not have to change their names.

The presence of a democratic process during the changing of the name can be questioned. The member organizations were never part of the name chancing process. Both the discursive and participatory approach to democracy has been identified in NYD’s decision-making processes were undermined. It was the secretariat who made the decision to change the name and came up with the new name. It is stated in the constitution of 2002 that “the name shall be National Young Voices Network”, but it is not mentioned anything about regulations or procedures regarding changing the name. According to democratic values identified in the NYD’s constitution, this would be a decision regarding the network and hence the members should be part of this decision. As the network did not have a NEC or an AGM in 2005 the name changing decision never reached outside of the secretariat. In this case the secretariat was the highest decision-making power indicating that a democratic process was undermined and that the power had shifted from the members to the non-elected secretariat.
The name changing incident was an issue that had troubled NYD and its member organizations for a long period of time and it was external factors that called for a solution that would benefit all. The process within the NYD to change the name has not been identified as democratic, but at the same time the decision made by the secretariat benefited all the member organizations and was not inconvenient for NYD. During the research some of the informants were asked about the new name and there were no indications regarding dislike for the name or for the process of changing it. On the contrary; the informants referred to the name conflict with the National Youth Council and was pleased that NYD had changed the name making the situation convenient for their organization. There were no indications that the secretariat was running NYD for their own benefits, on the contrary; they seemed very engaged and presented visions for how NYD would develop in democratic manners, without the presence of the present secretariat. This supports the assumption that without the presence of the NEC and an AGM the secretariat was left with the decision-making power. During this name conflict the secretariat executed this power, but did not misuse it. A decision was reached to benefit all, and there were no indications of the contrary.

5.5.6. Election of the NEC

In the constitution of 2002 it is stated that the elected NEC will consist of 7 members. During the Annual General Meeting the members will elect six members and a president who will then appoint the other elected members to their representative positions in the NEC. During the Annual General Meeting in 2006 there was elected 12 members to the NEC. The person with the highest vote was elected President and the person with the second highest vote was elected Vice President. The 2002 constitution does not state that a vice president is to be elected. During interviews with the secretariat the question of number of members in the NEC was discussed and one informant said that “they [the secretariat] had discussed that a number between 8 and 12 would be acceptable. The reason for this is that less than 8 can lead to a problem if someone drops out and they don’t have any to replace this person. More than 12 can lead to the fact that there are too many and decisions and such can be difficult to assess as there are too many voices.” The secretariat, without referring to the constitution, made a decision regarding the structure of the NEC without consulting the members. The secretariat executed decision-making power beyond their constitutional right indicating a non-democratic structure of decision-making power in the network.
According to both Rasch (2004) and Gloppen (2004) an important aspect of a democratic rule is the voter’s ability to punish representatives that are misusing their power. In this situation the members did not have the opportunity to use their power as the perpetrator was not democratic elected by the members. This can indicate two situations; the members do not have the ability to protest because the perpetrators are not elected by the members and hence are not subjected to the threat of not being re-elected. Or the members approve of the decisions made by the non elected secretariat and do not see any dilemmas with the secretariats process of decision-making.

The name changing process and the NEC election process indicates that the knowledge concerning democratic processes and approaches among the member organizations may not be clear. It was apparent that the member organizations did not relate the constitution to the happening events. This assumption causes for some interesting interpretations; either the member organizations did not know what was stated in the constitution or they did not see any objections to the changes. They also appeared as not being able to recognize the present democratic approaches in the network allowing for the members to be part of the decision-making. As there were no indications of member’s involvement in the decisions it can indicate that they do not know, they do not care or that they allow for decision-making power to be with the non-elected unit in the network. Whatever the reason it was apparent that there was a trust relationship between the member organization and the secretariat, and the informants made it clear that they were pleased with the efforts of the secretariat. This can also indicate that the members did not identify the decisions made by the secretariat as misuse of power. In both situations decisions were made to benefit the member organizations and NYD. The secretariat did not have any personal gain by reaching these two decisions. In this sense the members have executed their electoral right by keeping the secretariat in position as they have acted in satisfactory ways.

5.6. The NYD Youth organizations and Democracy

During the AGM it was evident that some of the members were not completely aware of the democratic election process when electing the new NEC. In addition to me there were two representatives from NYD’s Norwegian donor organization. We did not vote in the election because we are not members of NYD. According to Rasch (2004) there are regulations
regarding who are competent to participate as voters in a democratic electoral process. After the election three people from three different organizations and in three different situations asked me if I had voted and whom I had voted for. I talked to the two Norwegians and they had experienced the same. It seemed that the youth present at the AGM did not have a complete understanding of how a representative election was executed and what rules and regulations follows such an election in an organization. The fact that three individuals representing three different organizations included me as a legal voter in the election provides an interpretation of incomplete knowledge around the election process among the informants. One can draw conclusions from this saying that these youth included us as part of their network and that there is a difference in the perception of inclusion. From another perspective one can say that these youth are not aware of how a democratic electoral process functions because they have not experienced being part of such a process before, or that they lack education about the issue. All of the three people were above 18 years of age and hence legal to vote in a governmental election. All three had some educational background and one of them was studying at the University. This information can indicate that electoral processes are not part of the educational system or that common knowledge about the issue is not present. Explaining to these three people why I did not vote was difficult as it made me having to explain a democratic process which was not familiar to them. Kaunda and Kendall (2001) argued that Malawian’s view of democracy is different of that of the international community and that Malawians do not have a clear perception of what democratic values are. One of them confided to me that this had been the first time she had ever voted. I asked her if she had not experienced an electoral process in her organization, by which she explained that they did not have elections in the organization she represented. In her organization people were hired or appointed to positions. This incident indicated the level of common knowledge about democracy among the NYD youth. It also gave an impression of what to expect when visiting individual organizations and interviewing key informants.

5.6.2. “Democracy is Power to the People by the People”

Of the six individual organizations I visited I was able to have a group discussion about democracy with five. After the first interview I realized that the method of narrative interviewing helped as it allowed for the informants to freely tell what they associated with democracy related issues (Bryman, 2004). It was however difficult to initiate a conversation
about democracy as most were reluctant to discuss this issue. The informants were more eager to talk about their work and about me. After the first interview I discovered how to structure the interview to gain the necessary information. The discussion would start by letting the informants tell me about their work, and then followed a discussion about democracy. The interview would end with the informants asking me questions and have me talk about Norway.

During the discussion about democracy the informants were asked to define or describe the word democracy. This question was often met with silence. Ribohn (1999) in her dissertation on human rights in Malawi described that often when she asked her informants about human rights they were not able to answer. In her dissertation she concludes that the term has not evolved and developed among Malawians, rather it has been introduced in the society and people are not educated to know the term. During the interviews I experienced some of the same as most of the informants were not able to answer the question.

To get an answer I reformulated the question and asked the informants to describe what democracy is, without emphasizing that they would define the word. Four informants independent of each other from both the south and the north answered the exact same sentence; “democracy is power for the people by the people.” It was obvious that this sentence must have been used in some official relation as four different informants used the exact same words. When confronting one of the informants he denied this assumption saying
that it was his own words. This informant was working with an organization in the northern region. When the sentence was expressed again by an informant from another organization in the north the informant was asked to explain the origin of the sentence. This informant explained that this particular description of democracy had been introduced by a USAID\textsuperscript{15} project. This was also confirmed when I confronted the informants in the south who had used the sentence. It was not confirmed whether these informants had been involved in USAID projects or that their organizations had been sponsored by USAID.

5.6.3. “Democracy is Human Rights”

When being asked to describe or define democracy the statement “democracy is human rights” was mentioned by many informants. Human rights was by many seen as a component of democracy which in a sense is correct as a democratic ruling system takes into account for many of the human rights as they are declared in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights. A constitutional democratic rule will, according to Gloppen (2004), account for the civil and political rights of the citizens. At the same time, one can have a democratic ruling system without counting for all human rights. Midgaard (2004) argues that a democratic system may not be a legitimate system as people in power can misuse their power. In this sense one can have a democratically elected government that can execute human right violations by misusing their power. One informant said that “human rights are an example of democracy. Freedom of speech and expressions are human rights and they are important in a democracy”. It was interesting that so many identified democracy with human rights before identifying democratic processes such as electoral processes or governance. This argument was later explained by informants from two organizations saying that the organizations that identified democracy as human rights had external donors funding projects and programs related to human rights aspects. During the process of developing the projects and programs they had received education and knowledge about human rights and were able to identify many of these rights in a democratic rule. This explanation supports Ribohn’s (1999) theory that external sources are introducing human rights in Malawi.

\textsuperscript{15} The United States Government Organization responsible for most non- military foreign aid
Ribohn (1999) concluded in her dissertation that lack of education and knowledge was the main reason for why people in Malawi were not able to comprehend the term human rights. In this research it has been discovered that all the informants had some educational background, yet many of them were not able to describe the word democracy. Ribohn conducted her research in 1999. Seven years after I experienced some of the same problems that was evident in her concluding findings. This can indicate that democracy and human rights education is not manifested in Malawi and that people in general have incomplete knowledge about these terms. One informant said that he had never been taught about democracy in school. Later this statement was confirmed during conversations with four different people working at three different primary schools in Malawi. Not one of them had received a syllabus where democracy as a political system was included. This can indicate that democracy, democratic values, and democratic processes is not part of the lower levels of education in Malawi. Since most people are not able to complete higher education they will not learn in school about democracy. This assumption was difficult to confirm as I was not able to research the syllabus for lower level education in Malawi. Based on the information presented in this research the assumption may provide an explanation for why so many of the informants were reluctant and even unable to define or describe democracy.

5.6.4. Definitions of the Word Democracy

The informants were asked to describe how their organization was democratic and identify democratic processes and values. The informants did not have problems answering this question. Due to this the informants were asked to describe democracy again after identifying democratic values and processes in their organization. Again the informants were reluctant to give a description or definition of the word democracy. One informant in the north said; “Democracy is human rights, it’s a new thing just like human rights, it is not familiar, but we have the knowledge”. All informants were able to identify democracy in their organizations, yet they failed to define the term. Kaunda and Kendall (2003) argued that Malawians do not have a clear perception of what democracy is. As the informant in the north said, they understand the concepts, but it is not familiar to them and hence they have problems.

These were people I met who had volunteered as teachers in different districts in Malawi: Nhokotoka, Dedza and Blantyre
describing it to others. This can indicate that they don’t have a clear perception as they are not able to relate actions and events to the word and hence define the word.

Lack of education or knowledge about the word democracy was not the only reason why the informants were reluctant to answer; according to two different informants it was the fear of answering wrong. Most of the informants knew what democracy was in terms of processes, and the impression was that all wanted democratic values and processes in their organization. Providing a definition of the term democracy to me was difficult because they knew that I knew the answer and answering wrong would be embarrassing and humiliating, especially in front of the whole discussion group. This explanation was provided by an informant who explained that it was a common assumption that white people came from rich democratic countries. Despite of this the informants, after some time, managed to produce some answers to define democracy. An informant in an organization in the north said that democracy is “freedom to take part in the affairs of our country”. This statement implies that the informant knows the possibilities to influence national policies. Another informant said that “democracy is about division of power and decentralization. Malawi used to have a one party rule with all the power in one place, now we have democracy and power is decentralized. This [decentralization of power] can help development in Malawi because more power is given to the people and people are poor.” The informant explained that it is the people who have the power and since people are poor they are given the power to elect representatives that can improve their living standard and decrease the level of poverty. The informant also explained that with democracy; if the elected person is not doing a good job then they can vote for someone else in the next election. This implies that this informant has understood the concept of an electoral process. Electoral processes consist of two major components: electing a representative, and making an elected representative responsible for their actions, which is done by re-electing or dismissal of the representative (Rasch, 2004). The informant emphasized that by having the power to not re-elect a president who has not done anything to decrease poverty or increase development was important for development in Malawi. The importance of having the power to elect a representative to possess the decision-making power was argued to be a big benefit for the people in Malawi as it could improve their living standard.
Saying that all of the informants had problems defining democracy is not correct. About 80% of the informants struggled with the question, but one informant surprised me when he answered the question saying: “Democracy is the government controlling the people in a fair way making the people able to understand the government. Democracy means that you can stand up for yourself and your opinions and meanings, and together the people combine their forces and stand against oppression. Africa is just recovering from dictators and is still adjusting to democracy and democratic values, especially Malawi.” The informant did not have any higher education, but had worked with youth organization for many years and had a genuine interest in reading. He expressed frustration with the government and their ability to implement democracy in Malawi saying that the government needs to redefine democracy according to Malawian culture and values. This supports Ribohn’s (1999) theory; democracy is not a natural part of a Malawian life. When there is a lack of democracy in the education the average Malawian will not know what democracy means other than what is presented to them through other sources. In Malawi the sources educating people about democracy is presented in relation to free multi party elections and the work of NGO’s.

5.6.5. The Organizations and Democratic Structure, Processes and Values

NYD has a democratic organizational structure; the Annual General Meeting is the highest decision-making unit, the National Executive Committee is elected by the AGM and working on behalf of the members, the secretariat is non-elected and work on behalf of decisions implemented by the NEC. NYD has identified democratic processes such as free representative elections as well as identified democratic values such as equality and human rights. During the Annual General Meeting it was evident that many of the participants were surprised and impressed by the presence of democratic values and processes. This indicates that some of the organizations were not as democratic or did not acquire as many democratic values as NYD. The secretariat of NYD argued that they wanted to be more democratic in terms of gender balance, democratic values, electoral processes and decision-making power. The secretariat had a vision for NYD on how to implement more democratic values and processes in the structure of the network. A member of the secretariat said during the Annual General Meeting that one of the goals of the meeting was to introduce democratic processes and values as to teach it to the participants. When the participants returned they would introduce this to their organizations. In this sense NYD is an educational institution teaching
the members about democracy. The informant also said that “the organizations need to implement their values on their own”, meaning that the member organizations need to have a willingness to implement democratic values. The network will not be responsible for implementing these values in the individual organizations. This statement supports Kaunda and Kendall (2001) argument that a democracy demands democrats. By this the researchers meant that to be able to implement a democratic rule, there need to be democrats who are willing to implement democratic features. The secretariat can not force the member organizations to implement democratic features if the member organization is not willing to do so.

During interviews the informants were asked to identify democracy in their organizations. Informants in all five organizations answered that freedom of expression was present in their organization. Elaborating on this an informant in one organization explained that “anybody is free to express what they want; this is working even in the government. We can’t be arrested for talking out loud”. The freedom to express and associate was mentioned by many informants as one of the most important aspects of democracy in Malawi and in their organization. During discussions it became apparent that during the Banda regime organizations were not allowed to associate freely as meetings were monitored by governmental officials. Fear of punishment kept many silent. Having the opportunity to raise their voices was very important to the organizations and their members.

The five organizations had different organizational structures and democratic features. Free elections were emphasized by four organizations. One organization emphasized that free elections also meant that the members were able to “sack” the people that were doing a bad job. As Rasch (2004) argued; in a competitive democracy the voters has the power to ‘punish’ representatives who have failed to act in a satisfactory way by not re-electing the representative. This organization hence practices a competitive democracy by having a structure that allows for the members to express their dissatisfaction with elected members if they are doing a bad job, hence the elected people will compete for the votes (Midgaard, 2004).

Another organization did not have any elections rather the people in decision-making positions were employed based on their qualifications and skills. The board of trustees in this
organization had been appointed and consisted of previous members. It was the board’s job to hire the director. The informants in this organization argued that it was democratic because they have separated the decision-making power between the board of trustees and the appointed members of the secretariat. The director can not perform decision affecting the organization without consulting the secretariat and the board. “Decisions don’t come from one head. We need to have democracy [in the organization] to have accountability, transparency and honesty. The structure of the organization is built on this, without this there will be no democracy.” The informant who stated this explained that all voices in the organization were heard and that this was important for the organization. This structure resembles that of a more competitive direct democracy where all participants have an equal opportunity to be elected (Rasch, 2004). Everyone had the opportunity to apply, but the best qualified would be appointed hence the participants were competing against each other for the positions.

The five organizations ranged from having a strong representative structure with a participatory approach to democracy, to having a representative structure where a direct competitive approach to democracy was exercised. What was evident was that all organizations had an emphasis on democratic values in terms of freedom of speech, freedom of expression and an open and transparent election process.

All six organizations were constitutional organizations meaning that they had a constitution stating rules and regulations as well as punishment for disobedience. Institutions were present in the organizations to supervise the use of the rules and regulations and monitor for possible violations (Dahl, 1998). In the organizations the secretariat and the board of trustees had the function as this supervisor.

5.6.6. The Organizations and Identified Non-Democratic Qualities

It has been identified that NYD has certain undemocratic features that can be questioned. At the same time, this research was conducted to identify democracy in NYD and its member organizations based on the Malawian conception of democracy. It became evident that many of the informants perceived democracy as a human right. This may also be explained from a right base approach, meaning that development theory and development work in the past years has had a right based approach. When introducing development projects and programs
there will be an emphasis on human rights, hence people involved in these projects will be introduced to a human rights perspective.

Human rights were mentioned as a component of democracy when asked what democracy is. Democracy is a ruling system that takes into account for human rights, but saying that human rights is democracy or democracy is human rights indicates that the understanding of what democracy is might be simplified. It is evident in this research that some of the organizations do not have a complete understanding of democracy and hence are not able to educate their members about this. The informants were eager to demonstrate that their organization was democratic, but the lack of knowledge for the concept of democracy indicates that their knowledge might be second hand. The secretariat made an effort to influence the member organization to adapt certain democratic features, but did not set any requirements for implementation of these features. During the research there were no indications that there are institutions except NYD teaching these organizations more about democracy.

Democracy practiced in the organizations in this research was very basic. The main ideas and features were present, but other issues such as equality, gender issues and cultural rights were not evidently present. As mentioned earlier, there are more male members than female members. The secretariat emphasized the importance of gender at the Annual General Meeting, but they have no set requirements for how the member organizations are to implement gender issues and equality in their organization. One informant in an organization stated that female members who became pregnant could not be members as this gave the wrong impression of the organization. The organization worked with HIV related issues and informed about sexual behavior and abstinence, hence a pregnant woman would distribute the wrong message. It was only women not the men that were punished when it became clear that they had participated in sexual acts, which is discriminatory towards women. The act was defended with a statement in the constitution stating: “as human rights activists and responsible youths any behavior that may destroy or tarnish the image of the organization shall not be conducted. Such behavior may include: [following ten points]”. In these ten following points there was not one about pregnant women or about participating in sexual behavior. This indicates that the sentence stated above is freely defined according to whom is defining what can be perceived as a threat to the organizations image. The constitution only states ten points that ‘may’ be included in bad behavior, not leaving out other situations not
stated in the constitution. When confronted with this the informant stated that they had not dismissed members for being pregnant, it was merely an example. Yet this example shows that the understanding of women’s rights being part of human rights is not accounted for in the organization. I was also informed that there was a pregnant lady working in the organization, but she was married so the rule would not account for her. Dahl (1998) argued that in a democracy there needs to be civil and political rights as well as cultural rights. In this situation it was evident that the women’s human rights were not accounted for.

All though democracy practiced in the organizations were basic with a focus on the larger democratic features such as electoral processes; some organizations mentioned the smaller issues when confronted with different democracy related questions. One organization when asked to identify democracy in NYD answered: “Yes, the network is democratic because they chose people from the rural areas as well as the urban, both for membership as well as for the board of trustees”. The informants in this organization did not mention any democratic features such as free elections, transparency or decentralized decision-making power. This indicates the informant’s ability to relate the term to different aspects and situations. As mentioned earlier, many informants was not able to define democracy but had no problem identifying democracy in their organization. This indicates that the comprehension of democracy is rather fragile and incomplete, when asked to relate it to different situations many were not able to do so. As with the case of the pregnant women being dismissed from the organization, the informant was not able to relate democratic concepts to the situation and see how such a rule was against democratic values. In this sense democracy among the NYD youth organizations was basic and generalizing with little room for new concepts and relations.

5.6.7. Organizations and Their Relations to NYD

Malawi has a weak civil society that does not have a strong influence on local or national policies. Local NGO’s is one method to strengthen civil society, influence local and national policies as well as educate people in local communities. The member organizations in NYD have taken this a step further by creating a national network and hence expanding their influence. The eleven member organizations in NYD stated at the Annual General Meeting that exchange of knowledge and ideas was one of the major reasons for meeting and being
part of NYD. The six organizations that was selected for this research all indicated that receiving funding and resources was one reason for joining, but emphasized that the idea of being part of something larger and stand together was one of the major reasons for joining NYD. An informant from an organization stated that “the network is for rural rather than just urban organizations and it opens up opportunities for rural organizations, we can exchange ideas beyond regional boundaries”. This informant emphasized the point that many organizations did; that ideas and knowledge was exchanged beyond regional and cultural boundaries. During the Annual General Meeting all the organizations introduced their work and there were often discussions about certain projects and ideas.

Another feature that was emphasized, especially by the organizations in the north, was that of including the three regions in Malawi in one network. Many informants were talking about how the northern region felt neglected by the government and how they were also less developed. The economical and political power is concentrated in the southern cities of Blantyre and Lilongwe. One organization in the north felt that it was important for them to be part of this network as it allowed them direct contact with the south where they felt that the factors for development was located. Some will argue that regionalism is not an identified problem in Malawi, but this shows that there are certain indications of regionalism regarding development and economical and political influence. The north is located away from the political and economical centers and hence the NYD youth located in the north felt neglected. This situation was also confirmed during interviews with members of the secretariat. Tsoka (2002) and Phiri and Ross (1998) both argues that regionalism is present in Malawi in terms of electoral patterns in the population. The NYD youth confirmed that regionalism is present in term of development factors and access to resources. This study has stated that Dr. Banda used regionalism to control the population. Phiri and Ross (1998) argued that the northern region experienced less development during the Banda years than the southern and central region. This argument supports the findings in this study that the youth in north feel neglected and left out of the political and developmental sphere in Malawi.

Networking was important to the member organizations. Communication in Malawi can be difficult as facilities such as Internet and phone access are limited in many places. Many organizations also have limited economical ability to access such services when present. An informant stated about the organization that “we are members of the network because we
want the same thing: to develop the youth”. By this the informant meant that to develop youth in Malawi one cannot emphasis on youth in only one area. One has to develop all youth in Malawi. Being a member of a national network the development of youth can be adjusted as to benefit all youth in Malawi.

5.6.8. The Youth Organizations and Their View on Democracy in Malawi

The informants were encouraged to talk about democracy in Malawi and identify whether democracy was functioning or not. An informant from one organization said that “democracy in Malawi works well in theory but the government has problems with the practical part of democracy, such as implementing it into the society”. This represents a view that was presented by many of the informants; in theory democracy in Malawi is good, but in terms of practicing democracy the NYD youth feels that the government fails. Another critique was that of the government’s efforts to include the youth in policies and politics: “Young people take part in politics, but they don’t have any real power. The politicians are using the young people, the officials think they know democracy better than the young people and are therefore not interested in hearing the voices of the young. For instance in schools; the teachers are not hearing the voices of the students and they are not doing a good job in educating the young.” This statement by an informant in the northern region confirms the assumption that the educational system in Malawi does not provide a good education and democratic background to the young. It also indicates a view that youth are not accounted for as possible actors in the political sphere in Malawi and that youth affairs are not a pressing issue for the government. Haynes (1997) and Durham (2000) argues that political leaders often fail to address the situation of the youth. The statement is also interesting as the informant argues that the youth knows a lot about democracy, but that official governments are not interested in the youth and their knowledge. During this study it has become evident that the NYD youth did not have a lot of knowledge about democracy. It was therefore interesting to meet an informant that claimed that youth have good knowledge about democracy but are being disregarded as serious political actors. This also indicated that the youth feel that the level of knowledge they have can contribute in the civil society in other terms than just as active political actors. Most importantly was the fact that youth feels neglected by the government. Another informant stated that “young people in Malawi are
often overseen when it comes to governmental issues” thus supporting what Haynes’ (1997) argument that political officials fail to address the situation of the youth.

5.6.9. “Democracy is Being Free to Decide How to Dress”

The issue of dressing was very important to many of the informants. There were two organizations who discussed this point as an important aspect of democracy and what democracy meant to the members in the organization. Many informants also talked about this issue during informal conversations, interviews and group discussions. It discussed this issue with a group of females during the Annual General Meeting. These situations indicate that the issue of having the ability to express freedom through clothes was very important to the NYD youth. During the Banda regime there were restrictions concerning the appearance of men and women: women were not allowed to wear shorts, trousers and short skirts and they were restricted to wear a draped cloth around their waste covering their legs. Men had one restriction concerning hair growth and were not allowed to have long or braided hair. In discussions about identifying youth; culture has become more and more present as youth are often identified as a group sharing their own culture, hence being a sub culture in the society (Christiansen et al, 2006). Youth in Malawi during the Banda regime was not able to express their own culture through clothes, associations, appearances and expressions. It seemed very important to the NYD youth that they now were able to express who they are through clothes, appearances and expressions. One young man during the Annual General Meeting had braided his hair. During the meeting he started the process of removing the braids which became a comical situation creating a lot of laughter and funny comments. One girl said to me that it was not that common that men had braids and therefore they had teased him for being a girl. Another person said that even though men could braid their hair it was not that common as they were afraid to be associated with ‘rasta boys’, an expression referring to boys with Rasta hair who were associated with drugs and reggae. When discussing these two views with the young man with the braids he said that he liked doing different stuff with his hair because it represented a part of who he was. His explanation supports the assumption that youth are creating their own culture where expression of personal self is important.
When discussing the dressing situation with the girls I noticed that some girls were wearing the draped piece of cloth covering their legs. A few were wearing jeans or trousers, but most wore long skirts. Explaining this observation, one girl said that wearing short skirts or shorts were associated with whores as it indicated that the person revealed so much skin that they invited men to be interested. Another said that wearing jeans or trousers were allowed for girls, but that it was not very common where she lived so she did not feel comfortable wearing it; she lived in a village in a rural area.

Observations during the Annual General Meeting was that most of the girls from rural areas were more concerned to keep the old traditions whereas girls from urban areas were more modernized and wore jeans and trousers. When traveling to urban and rural areas I noticed that this was evident among women in the places I traveled. When going to rural areas I felt uncomfortable wearing trousers, and during my first visit in a rural village I was handed the draping cloth from a lady. After this first incident I tried to wear long skirts whenever going to rural areas. I can not say if this increased the villagers respect for me or if they might have behaved different if I had wore different clothing, but I felt less at display when following the expected behavior in their societies.

During the Annual General Meeting I observed that the male and female representatives did not judge each other based on appearances. For the girls who chose to wear trousers there were no comments from other girls or from the boys. After making observations in the villages and during this meeting it seemed apparent that among the NYD youth it is more accepted to wear what you want and look how you want than what it is among older people.
This can be explained with the fact that the NYD youth experienced the Banda regime when they were very young and have had the opportunity to grow up with democracy and democratic values. Their parents and older people know the Banda regime better than the democratic regime and hence can be reluctant to change.

5.6.10. Youth Organizations and Their Influence on the Democratization Process in Malawi

Youth organizations are part of the civil society; hence developing youth organizations indicates building a stronger civil society. According to Haynes (1997); in a democracy a civil society will protect the interests of the citizens meaning that without being part of a political party the civil society can still influence political decisions and policies. The civil society is to work as a counterpart to the government, hence a weak civil society merely windows a weak democratic government (Minnis, 1998). In Malawi there is no strong civil society present, but NYD youth organizations are part of a growing civil society. It is therefore interesting to identify how the NYD youth organizations claim that they can influence democratization process in Malawi.

Of the eleven member organizations in the network, 1/3 evolved in the mid 1990’s as a reaction to the democratic freedoms of speech and association that emerged with the new democratic government. This shows that democratic values reached out to a group in the society that was ready to see changes and development. The NYD youth embraced the concept of democracy and its features and started organizations because they could and because it allowed for the youth to be active actors in the development of Malawi. The fact that so many of the NYD organizations has ‘survived’ for more than a decade shows that there is long term commitment and determination among the NYD youth. This study has identified democratic values, processes and features in NYD and in the member organizations and investigating how this can impact the democratization process in Malawi is important.

“By having democratic values in our organization we are able to teach this to our friends and other people, and then they again will teach this to their friends and family. This way; democratic values will be spread and be embedded into the communities and people’s lives.”

This view stated by an informant was representative for what many of the informants said about this issue. To influence the democratization process in Malawi they had to start with
their local communities. One organization emphasized the importance of youth learning about democracy at an early age to be able to use it later; “people will learn at a young age which they can use later when they get jobs. Young people are the future and if they can exercise democracy and democratic values they can use this to get involved in the government later on and contribute to democratic processes there.” Earlier it was stated that the government tends to ignore youth and youth initiatives, but if the youth are educated about democracy they can later get involved in politics and contribute to changes at higher official levels. Youth organizations are important, not only for experience, but also as an educational institution teaching youth about politics and political processes. By doing this they are strengthening the civil society and the voice of the civil society to influence policies and contribute to change.

It has been identified in this study that there are indications of lack of education about democracy in Malawi. The NYD youth learn about democracy from donor organizations, present NGO’s in their communities, through free elections, through the notions of freedom of associations and freedom of speech, and through NYD. The NYD youth identified these institutions as the primary source regarding democracy education, but they also identified themselves as an educational institution. This study identified that the NYD youth engaged in organizational work to achieve experience. This experience includes skills and knowledge. This knowledge is important as it educates the NYD youth about issues they are not learning elsewhere. In this sense the NYD youth can teach this knowledge to others such as their friends and family. This indicates an unofficial educational facility teaching Malawians about democracy, democratic processes and values.

One organization emphasized the importance of networking when influencing the democratization process in Malawi stating that “the process of spreading democratic values is ongoing through networking”. Through the network the organizations can learn about democracy, democratic values and processes. The secretariat did this at the Annual General Meeting and stated that they hoped that the organizations introduced these values to their organizations. Based on the statement from several of the organizations it seemed that the idea of using the network to gain democratic knowledge was evident with many. This way networking is a channel to spread new knowledge, democratic values and knowledge about
5 Results and discussion

democratic processes despite of boundaries both physical and psychological such as regions or gender.
6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The preceding chapters in this thesis have discussed democracy in Malawi and youth in NYD and their relation to democracy. The discussion is based on the assumption that youth organizations are an important actor in a civil society and organized youth can impact their communities and social settings. This thesis has investigated how democracy is practiced in Malawi based on existing research and literature. The main goal of the thesis has been to identify how youth organizations can contribute to the ongoing democratization process in the country.

This thesis concludes that Malawi is a country with a weak civil society. Human rights and democracy are not conditions that have naturally evolved over time in the Malawian society; it has been introduced from external sources (Ribohn, 1999). Kaunda and Kendall (2001) argue that a democracy demands democrats and that this is not evident in Malawi. Research conducted to investigate the influence democracy has had on the average Malawian concluded with the perception that Malawians do not have a clear vision of what democracy is and could be (Tsoka, 2002). With information provided by previous research as a basis, this thesis points towards the following conclusions:

Identifying youth in a society may be difficult as the perception of youth changes. In this study it was essential to identify the NYD youth to get an understanding of the concept of youth in relation to NYD and Malawi. The NYD youth were identified with four indicators; age, gender, location and access to resources such as education, land, money, work and knowing resourceful people. This can indicate that the NYD youth is forming an élite, meaning that the NYD youth have assets making them able to join organizations. This assumption was also based on findings that the members had to pay membership fee, and thereby excluding members who did not have the ability to allocate resources to meet the membership requirements in terms of a membership fee.

The NYD youth joined organizations based on three identified motivating factors; personal experience as a motivation to contribute to changes, to achieve experience and skills, and joining an organization because they had the freedom to do so.
Democracy in Malawi has been categorized as weak, not only in terms of governments, but also in terms of its political impact on Malawian society (Kaunda and Kendall, 2001). Youth organizations are active actors in the civil society and will act as a counterpart to the government. Electoral processes, democratic approaches to electoral processes and democratic values such as civil and political rights were identified in the youth organizations. The NYD youth organizations were enthusiastic to demonstrate a democratic structure featuring democratic processes and values through their constitutions and workplans. The findings did however indicate that theory differed from practice and that the democratic processes and approaches were often undermined in decision-making processes. This can be due to several factors, one being that there are few identified institutions teaching the youth organizations about democracy. Access to knowledge concerning democracy might be limited to NGO’s such as NYD’s Norwegian donor organization.

This study identified that democracy practiced in the NYD youth organizations was basic. This was due to several factors. The informants had problems identifying democracy as they were not familiar with the term. Being able to embed democracy in their organization may then prove difficult. The perception of democracy was often limited to human rights, freedom of expression and free elections. NYD practices democracy in terms of free elections, being constitutional and concerned about human rights and gender balance. Other components of democracy was not identified and not embedded into the organizational structure and culture.

Investigating the impact youth organizations in Malawi have on strengthening and building civil society is important as civil society is an essential component in a democratic state. This study was exploratory as there is little existing literature and research conducted on the issues presented in this study. Due to this, the findings represented here should be further investigated to be able to see the impact youth have in Malawi.

It has been argued that a strong and well functioning democracy needs a strong civil society. By developing a clearer perception of democratic processes and values the NYD youth organizations can embed this into their work and communities. When introducing projects and programs it is important that they can use democratic processes and values more consciously and educate the people involved in the projects. In this sense the NYD youth organization can
be agents of change and provide an institutional setting for educating Malawians about democracy, democratic values and processes.

The analysis presented in this thesis made a connection between youth organizations as a representative for civil society and the ongoing democratization process in Malawi. Youth are the future and as members of the civil society their actions can contribute to changes in the political sphere, and thus strengthen the democratization process in Malawi.
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