Accountability and citizen's organisation in a peasant and poverty context

a critique of the empowerment approach

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Accountability and Citizen's Organisation in a Peasant and Poverty Context: A Critique of the Empowerment Approach.

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ABBREVIATIONS

APRM – Africa Peer Review Mechanism

CCHP – Comprehensive Council Health Plan

CHMT – Council Health Management Team

CHSB – Council Health Service Board

CSO – Civil Society Organisation

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

HFGC – Health Facilities Governing Committee

HIV/AIDS – Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

LC – Local Council

NAADS – National Agricultural Advisory Service

NEPAD – Partnership for Africa's Development

NGOs – Non-Government Organisations

DNMC – Non-Governmental Monitoring Committee

NRA – National Resistance Army

NRM – National Resistance Movement

PRSP – Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

RC – Resistance Councils

SACCO – Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisation

UPDF – Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces

UPE – Universal Primary Education

UWEP – Women Entrepreneurship Programme

YLP – Youth Livelihood Programme

DEFINITION OF TERMS

NGOs – Donor-funded non-membership organisations.

Voluntary organisations or associations – Membership in associations at the local level whereby people organise by themselves, motivated by the particular issues that matter to them. The members in voluntary organisations can scrutinise and expose the policy failures by the public officials, since they have the professional expertise, including research, communication, leadership, and analytic skills.

Civil society – a sphere of social interaction between the economy and state composed of voluntary associations, social movements, and forms of public communication. The study emphasises the political influence of this sphere on the state, i.e. a sphere where individuals organise themselves and articulate interests to the state, and an important source of information for citizens, and monitoring and influencing the actions of elected leaders.

Social services delivery/community development projects – NGO and local government-funded projects at the local level, to provide access to social services in the rural areas.

Empowerment Approach – It problematises the socio-economic inequalities and the fact that the poor are excluded from public decision-making. It suggests that the poor can challenge unequal power.

ABSTRACT

Citizens' organisation (both voluntary organisations and spontaneous community organising), while a necessary condition to foster accountability, is absent in a peasant and poverty context. The thesis problematises the theory and practice of fostering accountability in this context, using the case of Uganda.

We know from political philosophy that voluntary organisations have emerged from the context of the middle class, characterised by a political culture of liberal democratic values; the citizens' capability for analysis (public intellectuals), which is attained through education; and economic prosperity (the market), which enables membership in organisations. Therefore, members in voluntary organisations provide analytic, research, and communication skills, and are socialised into a political culture of liberal democratic values. Similarly, spontaneous community organising requires organic organisers who are educated, with the capability to organise, mobilise, provide political learning, and raise community leaders to spearhead advocacy for the local communities. However, the structural conditions for the growth of associational life are absent in the developing countries. The peasant and poverty context is not a fertile ground for voluntary organisations and the cadre of community organisers and leaders is equally missing.

Therefore, the study questions the theorisation to foster both accountability and citizen's organisation in the poverty and peasant context. The thesis identifies the following gaps in the theorisation: First of all, while it promotes non-membership organisations (the NGOs) to support communities to hold government to account, it also envisages that the NGO service delivery/community development projects would foster associational life. The study questions the extent that the project groups foster associational life and accountability. Secondly, the non-market concept of poverty by the NGOs, i.e. social service delivery /community development projects ignores a peasant context. In political philosophy, poverty is conceptualised in relation to the citizens' position in the market economy, so that poverty and associationalism exit in tandem. By focusing on the social service delivery indicators,

the theorisation ignores the significance of the systemic preconditions for associational life. The study questions the extent that the idea of poverty, in terms of social service delivery indicators addresses the peasant context, and how the liberal democratic values are learned in this context. Finally, while the theorisation promotes representative local government, it ignores the problem of unequal power caused by poverty. The thesis critiques the capability of the unorganised, poor and illiterate citizens to influence and hold their political representatives in local government accountable. The democratic theory of representation suggests that organised citizens check the power of the elected leaders. How then does the lack of citizens' organisation hamper local government accountability?

The study findings on the NGO community development project groups, show that the groups disintegrate at the end of the project cycle, and are often mechanisms for clientelism by the state. The community project groups play no role in accountability. In addition, the NGO idea of supporting unorganised citizens to undertake accountability changes the meaning of political accountability, which presupposes the self-organisation of citizens to limit the state. Secondly, the empirical research identified that poverty targeting through social service delivery/community development projects does not respond to the challenges of a peasant context. The peasants' priorities are distinct from those identified by the theorisation on poverty by the NGOs. For the peasants, the social service community projects are not only scanty, they do not respond to peasants' core priority, which is to gain an income and integrate into the market. Thirdly, the findings show the absence of voluntary associations that would put pressure on the local government representatives. Therefore, the influence of the communities through their local government representatives is minimal. It is also clear from the research that local governments are appendages of the state. Finally, the beneficiary projects hardly offer political learning of the liberal democratic values.

1. Introduction

The study problematises the absence of voluntary organisations and community organising, in the context of poverty, i.e. a peasant citizenry, low levels of education and political learning, as a key challenge to fostering accountability. It traces the problem to the gap in the literature on how to foster citizens' organisation and accountability in this context. The lack of questioning on why the poor are unorganised is a major gap in the literature. The study asks: how conclusive is the theorisation on fostering accountability and citizens' organisation in the context of poverty and a peasant citizenry, low levels of education and political learning? The empirical study derives from this critique.

The idea that citizens can foster government accountability through membership in voluntary organisations was particularly elaborated by Alexis de Tocqueville. However, this idea thrives in the context of the *middle class, the market, public intellectuals,* and *political learning* (Jobert and Kohler-Koch, 2010). Scholars show that the preconditions for voluntary organisations, i.e. the middle class, the market, public intellectuals, and political learning are non-existent in the developing countries (Jobert and Kohler-Koch, 2010). These preconditions are attained through structural transformation. At the same time, the state-led approach to involve the poor in decision-making, implies that spontaneous community organising (activism), is increasingly "de-legitimised by governments…whose expansive consultative gestures come to constitute preferred channels for citizen voice" (Cornwall, 2002 p. 22). Therefore, the theorisation to foster accountability and citizens' organisation in the peasant and poverty context is questionable.

Endogenous development of civic capacity and the emergence of the preconditions for voluntary associations are slow processes (Jobert and Kohler-Koch, 2010). Mansuri and Rao (2012, pp. 32-33) argue that:

> "the organic development of civic capacity is a complex process that is deeply embedded in a country's history, its internal conflicts, its conception of nationalism, its levels of education and literacy, the distribution of education and wealth, the nature

> of the state, the nature of economic and political markets, and a variety of other conditions".

Adam Smith and Tocqueville "recognise that the extension of the market depends upon technological innovation and change" Hurtado (2019, p. 1189). Undoubtedly, lack of technological innovation in the low-income countries, particularly in Africa, means that "capitalism…has not been able to pave way for its own expansion…Precapitalist social formations survive because the economic structures that give them life are still at work" (Hyden, 1980 p. 4). Hyden (1980, p. 6) adds that "in fact, the primary development challenge in Africa is the small peasant". What is particularly striking about the Ugandan case is the prodominance of a peasant population, as discussed in Chapter six. Forty years on, after Hyden's research, these insights continue to be relevant. Hence, Shankar (2014, p.25) argues that associational life in Africa is '*poorly developed*', while (Lewis, 2002 p. 575) posits that it is "*hitherto missing"*, and Parekh (2004, p. 14) suggests that it should be "*fostered"*.

Therefore, the study identifies the lack of citizens' organisation in the poverty context, i.e. a peasant citizenry, low levels of education and political learning, as a major constraint to achieving accountability. The evidence from Africa shows that:

> "most of the population, particularly those in the countryside are *unorganised* and have no direct incentives to change that situation. It is far harder to organise in Africa….Since fewer interests have emerged, leaving most of the population unorganised, the organised enjoy far greater access to policymakers. That is, on any given policy there simply is no welter of competing interests to whom an African policymaker needs to listen" (Kasfir, 1998 p. 133) (emphasis mine).

Similarly, Darnolf (1997, p. 21) argues that:

> "there is an increase [in Africa] in the number of farmers' cooperatives, women's organisations and human rights associations, but a differentiated civil society in which individuals organise themselves outside the family and articulate interests to the state does not, to any large degree, exist".

Voluntary organisations foster accountability, which is the essence of democracy. "Without accountability, what is left is a political structure that has absolute power to act

without conscience or atonement" (Contini, 2008 p. 2). Voluntary organisations provide the professional expertise, including research, communication, leadership, and analytic skills to scrutinise and expose the policy failures by the public officials (Wu et al. 2018). These organisations "serve as 'schools of citizenship' where individuals learn the habits of co-operation that would eventually carry over into public life" (Fukuyama, 2001 p.11). Thus, it is established in literature that voluntary organisations are "causally related", an "independent variable" or "a necessary condition for democracy" (Kasfir, 1998 p. 124) i.e. making government accountable, and "democratisation must grow, at least in part, from civil society" (Kasfir, 2008 p. 136).

Achieving accountability is a key goal in policy discourse and practice in the low-income countries. For instance, practitioners and scholars refer to the Worldwide Governance Indicators by the World Bank (2017), which are the most widely used indices comprising six key indicators: government effectiveness; control of corruption; political stability; regulatory quality; rule of law; and *voice and accountability*. Similarly, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was endorsed in July 2001 by the African heads of state with a declaration that "development is impossible in the absence of true democracy, respect for human rights, peace and good governance" (Murray, 2004 p. 243). The NEPAD commits African leaders to promoting these principles in their own countries and regionally through the Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which was an initiative to use peer pressure to achieve agreed goals for democracy. Uganda's national development plan prioritises the institutional frameworks for accountability (Republic of Uganda, 2015). Donors have supported the building of democratic institutions, i.e. building a capable state, although this is ideally a bottom-up process of democratisation (Carothers, 2004).

While the subject of accountability is a central theme in policy discourse at national and international levels, the study focuses on the citizens' role in accountability at the local government level (sub-national level). The empirical study questions the supposition that state policy actions for an institutional-led approach – through the *NGOs, social service projects*, and *political representatives in local government* – can engender critique of the

state by the poor. In the absence of voluntary organisations, Uganda's national development plan envisages citizen engagement in social service delivery projects in the rural areas in form of village assemblies. Uganda's national development plan envisions "people participating in making decisions that affect them, right from the village level" in social service delivery (Republic of Uganda, 2015 p. 73). The development plan refers to this engagement as "social accountability" (Republic of Uganda, 2015 p. 73).

Social Accountability

The idea of social accountability is problematic, since the village assemblies cannot substitute voluntary organisations. The empirical study (chapter five) examines the extent that the village assemblies, at the receiving end of the state-funded projects, can critique the state. This is because *social accountability* misses the idea of *political accountability*. Political accountability envisages voluntary organisations playing the role of watchdog, so that the politicians (who oversee the bureaucrats) are responsive to the citizens. The absence of voluntary associations in the predominantly peasant population in Uganda, puts on hold political accountability.

As a state-led and sponsored process, social accountability is envisioned as the 'opportunity' for inducing the poor to engage with government. Mansuri and Rao (2012, p. 32) argue that, "rather than wait for the slow process of the endogenous development of civic capacity, can policy interventions harness the capacity of citizens to help themselves and improve the quality of government"? Nevertheless, Mansuri and Rao (2012 p. 33) recognise that "these policy initiatives are based on an inherent irony: the government is creating institutions structured to resist failures in government...It must act against their self-interest". Therefore, the thesis challenges the tendency to take the state-led and sponsored approach to participation as axiomatic and its positive role in democratisation as self-evident. I argue that the approach gives an illusion of democracy. It is clear that "achieving participatory governance and building civic capacity has historically been an organic rather than a state-

led process – a process spurred by civic groups acting independently of, and often in opposition to, government" (Mansuri and Rao, 2012 p. 31).

Therefore, social accountability depicts the gap in knowledge on how to foster accountability in the context of poverty, i.e. a peasant citizenry, low levels of education and political learning. In contrast, voluntary organisation is informed by civic republicanism, which assumes abridged socio-economic inequalities and the self-organisation of citizens. As discussed in chapter two, the deliberate targeting of the poor in democratisation is suggested by the concept of empowerment. Empowerment was originally theorised by the Marxist school of thought, and it envisaged an activist approach by the marginalised groups, with the help of a critical community organiser. The empowerment approach also draws on civic republicanism, which emphasises challenging power through deliberation. The work of the feminist scholar (Rowlands, 1997) on the empowerment framework (discussed in chapter two), is significant in the discourse on empowerment, as it integrates activism and deliberation.

The study identifies key problems in the theorisation on empowerment as summarised in Table 1.

Theorisation on empowerment	**Civic republicanism**
Peasants, Poverty	Middle class (educated, socialised to democratic values)
State-led and sponsored approach to participation	Associational life is organic and sustained by membership fees
Unorganised citizens -Village assemblies of project beneficiaries unable to balance power of the unresponsive state	Voluntary organisations to balance the power of the state
Community is apolitical	Community as a political unit
Promotion of NGOs, community development projects, and political representatives in local government.	Preconditions for voluntary organisations, i.e. structural transformation

Table 1: Key problems in the theorisation on empowerment

Table 1 shows the absence of organised interests (voluntary organisations) by the poor, which is a key problem in the empowerment approach, since the village assemblies cannot substitute the work of voluntary organisations. Secondly, the empowerment approach locates the deliberative space for the poor in the social services project space, although this space focuses on needs rather than politics. It is questionable whether the project space is suitable for questioning the government. Thirdly, since the study identifies the absence of voluntary organisations in the rural areas as a constraint to fostering accountability, the theoretical critique questions the *preconditions* for associational life as paramount. As noted above, the idea of voluntary associations thrives in the context of the middle class, the market/economy, high incomes, education and political learning. Therefore, from the civic republican perspective, the structural preconditions for associational life are paramount. However, the proponents of empowerment consider these preconditions irrelevant, yet they do not question *why the poor are unorganised*. Rather, the empowerment approach suggests the role of *elected representatives* in local government, *social service delivery / community development projects*, and *NGOs* to foster accountability. By ignoring the relevance of structural transformation, the empowerment approach disregards the problem of a peasant population for the emergence of associational life.

The proponents of empowerment devise an alloy of theorisation. In summary, the empowerment approach draws on: a) the critical theorists using the concept of power; b) the social constructionists, using the concept of agency; c) the communitarian concept of social capital, which itself embeds a fusion of discourses; d) the rights-based approach with the concept of rights; e) the diverse non-market concepts of poverty; and (f) the post-modernist notions of localism, decentralisation, non-government actors, and community projects. These ideas will be further elaborated in chapters two and three. The theoretical critique identifies that the empowerment approach portrays gaps concerning citizens' organisation as summarised in Table 2.

Questions for the theoretical critique	**Theorisation**	**Concepts**	**Empirical Chapter**
Can unorganised citizens challenge their elected representatives in local government? How does the lack of citizens' organisation hamper local government accountability?	Rights-Based Approach	Decentralisation Poverty (non-market idea) i.e social services	Chapter Five: case study on ***Political Representatives***
To what extent does the conceptualisation of poverty, in terms of social service delivery indicators address the challenges to citizens' organisation, posed by a peasant population? Do community projects foster voluntary organisations? How do citizens learn liberal democratic values?	Social Capital Theory	Poverty (non-market idea) i.e social services	Chapter Six: case study on ***Social Service / Community Development Projects***
To what extent can NGOs enhance the organisation of the poor?	Rights-Based Approach	Social Accountability Capacity-Building Strengthening civil society Participatory governance	Chapter Seven: case study on ***NGOs.***

Table 2: Summary of the concepts in the theoretical framework

As noted above, the study explores three key themes, i.e. role of *elected representatives* in local government, *social service delivery / community projects*, and *NGOs* to foster accountability.

Key themes of the study

First of these themes concerns the role of elected representatives in local government. The empowerment approach suggests that the poor can influence the government through their elected representatives in local government. The approach draws on the democratic theory of representation, i.e. "political representation occurs when political actors speak, advocate, symbolise, and act on behalf of others in the political arena" (Dovi, 2018). The representative is the individual that is held to account (Pitkin, 1967) and "should be responsive to what people want" (Arnesen and Peters, 2017 p. 873). However, the democratic theory of representation hinges on elite representation, which questions the extent that elite power is challenged by the poor, as they are unorganised. Therefore, the study critiques the extent that unorganised citizens challenge their elected representatives. The study findings discuss the relationship between poverty and unequal power between the citizens and their political representatives in local government. The non-market conceptualisation of poverty, which focuses on social indicators/service delivery community projects, disregards the relationship between lack of incomes and unequal power between poor and their political representatives in local government. The literature shows that "if the marginalised groups are unorganised, poverty is internalised…the interests and views of the marginalised remain excluded from the process of governance" (Webster and Engberg-Pedersen, 2002 p. 11). The poor do not easily exercise the right of the "constituents to punish their representative for failing to act in accordance with their wishes (e.g. voting an elected official out of office)" (Dovi, 2018). They are unable to oppose the self-seeking elite representatives. The citizens' interactions with their elite representatives are asymmetrical, unlike the egalitarian interactions with the representatives in voluntary organisations. The power of the political representatives must be checked through the analytical capacity of the voluntary organisations, before they can be voted out of office. This challenges the rights-based approach which suggests the concept of social accountability, i.e. that the poor, in the project beneficiary space, can put pressure on the local government to be responsive (Offenheiser and Susan, 2003).

In the case of the second theme, we question the idea that social service delivery/community projects foster associational life. The proponents of empowerment theorise on replicating the idea of voluntary associations through social service delivery /community project groups. Social capital theory, through the concept of community capacity building, suggests an 'empowerment' continuum "from individual empowerment; small groups; community organisation; partnerships; and political action" (Laverack and Laverack, 2001 p. 134). Social capital theory envisages the long-term goal of the community development projects to foster political networks and voluntary organisations (Fukuyama, 2001). It is also questionable how citizens learn the liberal democratic values through the community projects. The contradiction that the project approach is a mechanism for both political accountability (associational life) and social accountability affirms the gap in knowledge on how to foster accountability in the unique poverty context, characterised by low levels of education and political learning, and a peasant population.

Moreover, the theoretical critique on social service delivery/community development projects problematises the non-market conceptualisation of poverty which prioritises the social indicators of poverty. It questions the extent that the conceptualisation of poverty, in terms of social service delivery indicators addresses the challenges of a peasant context. Poverty (marginality in the market economy) is a constraint to associational life. The political philosophers were cognisant that associational life was inextricably linked the citizen's position in the economy (Walzer, 1991; Varty, 1997). Thus, it is economic prosperity, not philanthropy, or social service delivery programmes that links the citizens to the market, and in turn lifts them out of poverty. It is integration into the market economy that breaks the isolation from associations. The political philosophers were unmistakable that the citizens' political interests resulted from their position in the economy. However, peasants are outside of the market/economy. The peasant approaches the market as a consumer. Thus, "the incorporation of the peasant into the capitalist economy essentially has the effect of making him purchase some of the items which were formerly produced within the household" (Hyden, 1980 p. 13).

Finally, the role of NGOs in accountability emerges as an important theme in the empowerment approach. The key question that guides the critique is: To what extent do the NGOs foster accountability? The analysis questions the approaches through which the NGOs attempt to create linkages with the local communities to challenge their political leaders. One of these approaches is social accountability, by which the NGOs claim to question the local government budgets. Secondly, NGOs opt to mobilise communities for activism, in response to identified government failures. Since NGOs act as the link between the local government and the citizens, the theoretical critique questions the conceptualisation of accountability by the NGOs. Through social accountability, NGOs as capacity-building organisations, fill the gap for the absent voluntary organisations. This suggests the temporary role of the NGOs as substitutes. The theoretical critique examines the extent the activist approach in the empowerment framework, informs the NGO role of mobilisation and organisation of the poor for accountability. The study questions the extent that NGOs foster the organisation and mobilisation of the poor.

Summary of the findings

The study findings show that the theorisation on empowerment fails to foster the citizens' opposition to the state. This is because the theorisation does not address the key problems faced by the poor, i.e. democratic values, which are attained through socialisation; the capability for policy analysis, which is attained through education; and citizens' organisation, which is derived from a vibrant market.

With regards to the extent that the community development project groups are mechanisms for associationalism, the findings of the study show that the groups disintegrate at the end of the project cycle, and are often mechanisms for clientelism by the state. The community project groups play no role in accountability. The projects hardly offer a space to debate on the democratic values. In addition, the empirical research identified that poverty targeting through social service delivery/community development projects does not respond to the constraints of a peasant context. The peasants' priorities are distinct from those

identified by the theorisation on poverty by the NGOs. For the peasants, the local social services are not only scanty, they do not respond to their core priority, which is to gain an income and integrate into the market. Secondly, the findings show the absence of voluntary associations that can put pressure on the political representatives in local government. Therefore, the influence of the communities through their local government representatives is minimal. It is also clear from the research that local governments are appendages of the state, since they depend the central government funding. This encourages patronage.They lack a revenue base due to the peasant context. Although decentralisation presupposes economic independence and economic prosperity, the design of the decentralisation reforms ignored the question of resources. This questions the relevance of decentralisation without revenue.

1.1 Research Questions

As indicated above, the study sets out to examine how conclusively the poor can influence the state through the *NGOs, social service projects*, and *political representatives in local government*.

The study uses the capability approach, as an analytical framework to examine the organisational capabilities for accountability in the local communities, fostered by the NGOs and the local government. The capability approach is a suitable analytical framework, to understand the organisational constraints at the local level and the influence and choices that the poor make through the state-led approach. The capability approach prioritises the capability of people to choose, decide, and do what they have reason to value (Sen, 1999). "The core characteristic of the capability approach is its focus on what people are, in fact, able to do and to be; that is, on their capabilities" (Robeyns, 2005 p. 94). The expansion of capabilities emphasises the enlargement of people's choices and capacity (Sen, 1999). Powerlessness and voicelessness were particularly identified by the poor as key aspects of marginalisation in Narayan's et al. (2000) study, 'Voices of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us?' Thus, the study provides empirical evidence on the *choices* and *influence* that the

unorganised poor communities can make through the NGOs, political leaders, and the community development projects. The capability approach is particularly a bottom-up deliberative process to identify capabilities (Pham, 2018) from the perspective of the communities. It is important to identify the constraints posed by the absence of citizens' organisation. The approach enables this analysis.

Therefore, drawing on the capability approach, the study examines the communities' organisational capabilities for accountability through their relationships with the NGOs and the elected leaders in local government. The social service/community development projects are the link through which the NGOs and the local government interact with the communities. The main field research question is: ***To what extent do the local governments and NGOs enhance the organisational capabilities of the local communities for accountability through social service delivery/community development projects?*** The specific research questions are:

i) ***How do the NGOs organise communities to foster accountability?***

The theoretical framework emphasises NGO linkages with the local communities to foster the responsiveness of local government. The theorisation posits that through the *rights-based approach,* the NGOs can connect the communities to their political representatives. The theorisation also envisages the NGO mobilisation of the poor (*activism)* to oppose the failures of the state.

Therefore, the field research explores the organisational role of the NGOs in the local communities through both the rights-based approach and the activist approach. It examines the organisational structures in the communities through the NGOs, and the communities' capability for local accountability through these organisational structures. In addition, the study examines how the NGOs engage with the political leaders in local government in this NGO role.

ii) ***How do the social service/community development project groups foster accountability?***

The field research derives from the theoretical critique on the political role of the social capital theory. Social capital theory originated in a middle-class setting, and analysed the political function of organic social networks and associations in challenging the state. The theory was not intended to target the poor, as rationalised by the empowerment approach, to catalyse associational life through projects that target poverty.

Therefore, the field research examines the project groups and the extent that they foster political networks or voluntary associations. The empirical study examines the communities' organisational capabilities through the projects. The study draws on Stewart (2005) on the functions of groups (efficiency and claim functions) for the understanding of the capabilities of groups. Stewart (2005) distinguishes between the instrumental and intrinsic goal of groups in collective capabilities. Further, the study examines political learning through the projects.

iii) ***How do the communities organise to question their elected representatives to be accountable?***

The theoretical critique notes the absence of citizens'organisation that would counterbalance the power of the political representatives in local governments, which was not identified as a constraint in the decentralisation reforms.

The field research examines the extent that unorganised communities can question the local government, i.e. the local government plans, budgets, and expenditures. The study examines the communities' role in the project space in terms of questioning the local government. It examines the communities' perceptions on their role in the project space to influence the government to deliver on its promises. The research explores the extent of the community interactions with the political representatives for social service delivery projects.

1.2 Research Methods

Uganda was identified as a suitable case study for several reasons. First, it depicts the context of poverty and a peasant population, which impact on citizen's organisation. Uganda has a high percentage of people living below the poverty line, and the majority of the country's poor live in the rural areas as subsistence farmers (Republic of Uganda, 2015). Secondly, Uganda is a good case study to examine the role of the elected representatives in local government. After three decades of implementing the decentralisation reforms, the country provides a relevant context for understanding the relationship between the citizens and their political representatives. Thirdly, both the local government and the NGOs have funded community development projects in the rural areas of Uganda under decentralised governance. Since the 1990s, the country has witnessed the proliferation of NGOs to about 14,000 NGOs (Okello, 2019).

The field research was conducted in 2019 in the rural areas in Uganda. The field research aimed at understanding the interactions by the NGOs and the Local Governments with the communities. It was important to compare the responses of the institutions from those of the local communities, concerning their experiences and expectations of these interactions. The grassroots study was shaped by my own experiences in community work and advocacy, which led to questioning about the impact institutions make in the local communities.

In addition, I focused on the rural communities' experiences to access resources. The poverty-focused budgets by local government target the remote communities for basic social service delivery in form of community projects. The NGOs were also identified as key actors because they fund projects independently of local governments in Uganda. It was therefore important to examine the NGO approach to the communities.

The key participants of the study included four categories, namely: the NGOs, Local Government (the representative on local government committees), Community Leaders, and

the community. In Uganda, the local community is geographically defined as the lowest level in the four-tier local government structure that comprises: the Village level (Local Council 1); Parish Level (Local Council 2); Sub-county level (Local Council 3); and District level. I specifically selected the Village level community (Local Council 1) which is also the participatory space for decisions on the social services. I interviewed both the men and women who were beneficiaries of the NGO and Local Government-funded projects in the selected villages. The community projects not only provide access to local services, but provide a space for interactions between institutions and the communities. It was important to examine the community project groups, their networks, and their activities for the future.

I interviewed the community leaders, who are essentially the political representatives of the three levels of the tier structure, including the village level (Local Council 1); Parish Level (Local Council 2); and Sub-county level (Local Council 3). It was important to understand the representation role, the decision making processes, and the information flow to the communities. The Local Government participants included the administrative and technical staff. I interviewed the Head of the District Administration (the Chief Administrative Officer), to gain the overall picture of the local government processes, and interactions with the communities. The Technical officers included the Planning Officer, the Community Development Officer (at the district level), and the Sub-County Chief, the Community Development Officer (at sub-county level), and the Parish Chiefs (at parish level). The interviews with the local government participants and the community leaders were important to understand the institutional framework for organisation and mobilisation of communities.

The NGO participants included both the field-level staff responsible for community mobilisation and the senior programme staff. I was interested to discuss with the senior staff the overall programming strategies and the funding mechanisms by NGOs and the overall NGO approach to communities. For each NGO, the study therefore purposely selected respondents from among senior programme staff and field-level staff.

The recruitment of the research participants for the government-funded projects covered 4 sub-counties and 8 parishes (1 village per parish) from one district (Bushenyi district). I considered it important to focus on a single district for the government-funded projects so that I could undertake an in-depth study of the elaborate institutional mechanisms. The four-tier local government structure comprises the elected representatives on one hand and the government staff, on the other. Since the NGO activities are scattered, I interviewed the NGO participants from 9 NGOs covering 5 districts (Rubirizi, Bushenyi, Hoima, Masaka, and Ntungamo, as illustrated in Figure 1).

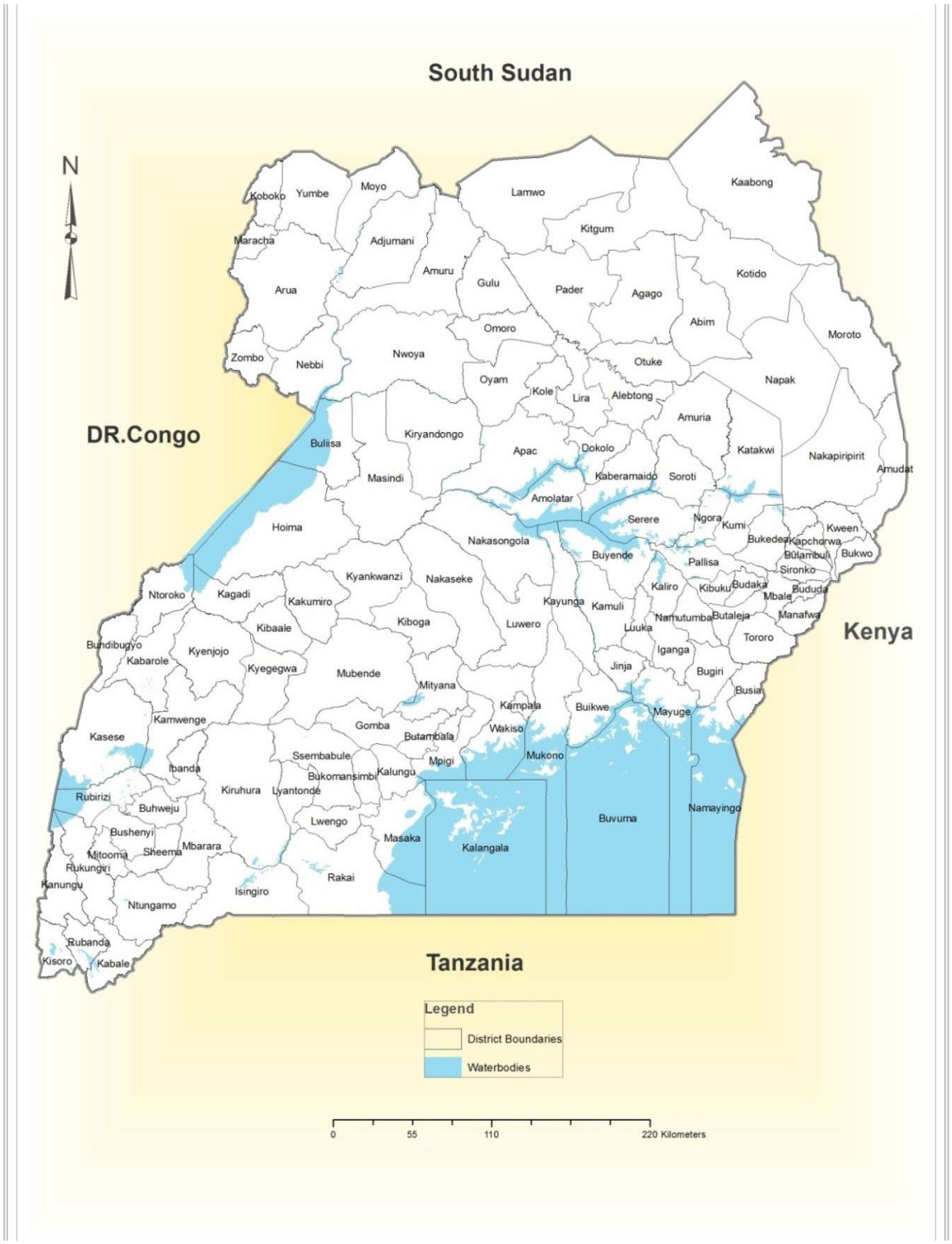

Figure 1: Districts covered by study

I purposively selected the districts from Western Uganda, taking into consideration the language proficiency, since I would not use an interpreter so as to effectively communicate and build rapport with the research participants. In addition, I selected a familiar region to minimise any cultural sensitivities.

I utilised semi-structured interviews. All the interviews were audiotaped, and I recorded field notes that captured observations at the community project sites to corroborate the information from the interviews. Using open-ended questions enabled in-depth discussions with the research participants and to build rapport with the research participants. I conducted Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with the community participants because it was important to listen to the experiences of the community project groups, rather than individually.

In total, I conducted 54 interviews and 16 focus groups discussions. More specifically, this entailed: 8 focus group discussions with NGO project participants, 8 focus group discussions with Local Government project participants, 13 interviews with Community Leaders, 19 interviews with Local Government staff, 5 interviews with Representative Committees, 9 interviews with NGO staff. Taking into account the focus groups participants, about 190 people participated in all the interviews, summarised in Table 3.

Participants	District	Sub-county	Parish	Village	Total
Government participants	1 Chief Administrative Officer 1 Planning Officer 1 Community Development Officer	4 Sub-county chiefs 4 Community Development Officers	8 Parish chiefs		19
Community leaders		3 Local Council III Chairpersons	2 Local Council II Chairpersons	8 Local Council I Chairpersons	13
Representation committees		3 Health Management			5

Participants	District	Sub-county	Parish	Village	Total
		2 School Management Committees			
Community	5 Districts			16 FGDs (9 people per FGD)	144
NGOs	5 Districts			9 NGO staff	9
Total					190

Table 3: Interviews conducted with the research participants.

I purposively selected the districts, taking into consideration the extent of the NGO activities in the rural areas. I was interested to identify from the NGO staff the funding mechanisms and the community involvement in the decision-making processes in the identification of the project priorities. In addition, I was interested to identify the local-level organisational structures created by the NGOs. The discussions focused on the difference that the community project groups made in the communities. Therefore, I selected the NGO-initiated community project groups on self-help activities, and the social accountability initiatives by the NGOs. The self-help activities included the project activities covering social services, while the social accountability activities covered the NGO support to the local communities to question local government budgets and expenditures. Overall, I was interested to know the sustainability of the community project groups and the capabilities through the NGO activities. I therefore prioritised the NGOs that had a long-term presence, and long-term interventions rather than emergency or recovery activities.

I contacted the research sites through the database of the NGO coordination office. Thereafter, I approached the District authorities for the research approval. The NGO participants then shared the contacts of the community project groups, and I organised introductory meetings with the leaders of the groups to request and schedule the FGDs. For the local government and the community leaders, after I gained permission of the Chief Administrative Officer to proceed with the interviews, I contacted the Planning Officer at the district (who is also the technical staff) to identify the sub-counties and the research sites. The final selection of the research sites for the government-funded projects was finalised at

the sub-county level office in coordination with the sub-county technical staff (the Sub-county chief and the community development officer. Through the tier structure, I contacted the community leaders at the village level to organise the appointments for the interviews and to mobilise the FGDs of 8-10 community participants. It is important to note that the village-level leaders are the authorised community mobilisers for all the community activities. I explained to the community participants about the objectives of the research to make sure that I did not raise false expectations, and I assured them that I would keep their responses anonymous.

I started with a pilot of the research tools with a focus group discussion and four individual interviews (with 1 NGO participant, 1 local government staff, 1 community leader at LC 1, and 1 community leader at LC 3). The responses from the pilot study were included in the sample. It was important to conduct a pilot study to be able to test the research tools and make alterations in the data collection methods (Meriwether, 2001). The pilot enabled me to identify issues relating to NGO activities, funding mechanisms, and the representation committees. In particular, I added the committees for the discussions on community representation. With regards to secondary data, I collected official district national plans and reports and other project information including progress reports, and evaluation reports which provided insight into the context of the study (the institutional framework and strategic plans).

It is worth noting that as a student researcher, I was able to build rapport with the research participants quite easily. This is because the research participants were cognisant that student research is apolitical as it primarily contributes to knowledge. I made it clear to the participants that there would be no political implications of the research. I was therefore able to engage with the research participants in an open manner. All the four categories of the research participants exhibited willingness and openness to share their experiences. From my experience, the local communities were open to discuss their community experiences with non-residents. Further, I did not experience any hinderance from the politicians, or

government offcials to conduct the study. Therefore, the data collection was not affected by the country's politics.

I approached the data analysis process by familiarising myself with the data through reviewing interview transcripts from all participants. Since all interviews were tape recorded, I transcribed them after the field research, although I reviewed the field notes after each field visit. I then utilised NVivo, a qualitative data analysis programme. As the study is interpretivist, I employed an inductive approach to analyse the subjective meanings of the participant experiences of: a) the organisational activities by the local communities b) and how collective capabilities are enhanced through community development projects. I used the thematic analysis approach, since it illuminates major themes and is data-driven (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I selected the thematic analysis, not only because the process of coding data does not employ predetermined codes, but it is possible to minimise "the researcher's analytic preconceptions (Braun and Clarke, 2006 p.83).

The coding processes started with identifying first-level codes (Punch, 2014) by employing what Watts (2013) refers to as the 'first-person perspective' or Saldaña (2009) as 'in vivo coding'. I found the 'first-person perspective', suggested by Watts (2013, p. 7) significant, because this empathic approach enables you to "ask yourself which extracts each participant might need you to use in order to communicate the participant's overall viewpoint most effectively". I generated descriptive codes in the first-level analysis or what Saldaña (2009) refers to as the 'first cycle' of the coding process. Moreover, I was mindful of capturing the uniqueness and commonalities through coding, sorting and the identification of themes by what Sandelowski (1996, p. 525) describes as "looking at and through each case" for analytic interpretations.

I considered each participant's response and identified significant statements, i.e. those phrases, sentences, or paragraphs which describe aspects of the participants' experiences. This first stage of analysing data therefore entailed collecting descriptive statements for all cases. Next, I compared the significant statements from each interview

report, paying particular attention to the commonalities across participant responses. The purpose of this cross-case analytic strategy was to compare the experiences of all participants and identify categories of significant statements that were common among them.

Following a period of coding, I then generated reports on all interview material relevant for each code in one document that guided data analysis in the empirical chapters. After generating the descriptive codes, I moved on to identify second-level interpretive codes, i.e. what Watts (2013, p. 6) refers to as the "'as structure' to make explicit the perceived nature of the thing being understood" (Watts, 2013 p. 6). This second-level coding is explained by Punch (2014, p. 174) as pattern coding which is "more inferential, a sort of "meta-code." Pattern codes pull together material into a smaller number of more meaningful units....a pattern code is a more abstract concept that brings together less abstract, more descriptive codes". I then grouped the data in this interpretive process of data analysis into categories. Because "coding leads you from the data to the idea, and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea" (Richards and Morse, 2007 p. 137), Creswell (2013, p. 186) suggests that categories "are broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea". Therefore, once I identified the categories, the last step in the data analysis process was the identification of themes as they related to the research questions as reported in the empirical chapters.

In terms of data management, I was solely responsible for the data collected, and I took precaution to ensure that the data was securely stored to protect the privacy of the participants.

1.3 Thesis Outline

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter two critiques the theorisation to foster accountability and citizen's organisation in the context of poverty, lack of political learning, and a peasant population. This discussion is important because the key contribution of the thesis is the critique of the empowerment theorisation. Therefore, the chapter is the

foundation for the rest of the thesis. The discussion juxtaposes the civic republican theory, with the theorisation on empowerment. The civic republican perspective sets the context for the critique of the empowerment theorisation, since the empowerment approach aims at replicating the civic republican idea of voluntary organisations and representative local government. I show the lack of a cohesive theoretical framework that can be replicated.

Chapter three examines the role of the NGOs as key actors in the empowerment approach. The chapter discusses the expected role of the NGOs as community facilitator. The discussion juxtaposes the civic republican approach with the community organising approach. While civic republicanism emphasises networks of trust in voluntary associations, the community organising approach focuses on creating linkages. However, there is an absence of theorisation on the relationship between the NGOs and the communities which would foster linkages. Linkages help to form trust, feedback mechanisms and information flow, questioning by the community, and political learning.

Chapter four provides a theoretical critique on political learning in the poverty and peasant context. The literature does not explain how citizens learn in this context, from a civic republican perspective. Civic republicanism clarifies on citizenship learning in the context of the middle class, and voluntary organisations are schools of citizenship, or political learning. The discussion examines the question: how do citizens learn the liberal democratic values in a poverty and peasant context? How does the empowerment approach conceptualise political learning? There is an absence of case studies on how citizens learn in the peasant context. Local membership organisations largely operate as self-help and service organisations, and they hardly provide a space to debate the values for a democratic society or influence the deliberative processes of government policy-making. Rather, these groups provide networks for a political culture of patronage.

Chapters five, six, and seven are the empirical studies. Chapter five is a case study on the *political representatives* in local government. The study shows two major weaknesses in the design of the decentralisation reforms in Uganda. First, I show that while the

empowerment approach embraces the civic republican idea that local government limits the state, it ignores the fact that representative local government is effective through citizens' organisation. The absence of citizens' organisation that would question the local governments, was not identified as a constraint in the decentralisation reforms. The findings show experiences of elite capture, patronage, and misuse of local government funds, since the local communities can hardly challenge the power of the elected leaders. Secondly, the study identified the disregard of the lack of a revenue base in a peasant context and the independence of resource-stricken local governments due to dependence on central government funding. Therefore, the study identified that local governments are appendages of the state, rather than limiting it.

Chapter six discusses the case study on *social service delivery/community poverty projects*. The findings derive from the critique of the social capital theory, as used by the empowerment approach, to catalyse associational life through projects that target poverty. While social capital theory originated in a middle-class setting, to analyse the political role of the social networks and associations in challenging the state, I question the political role and relevance of the theory in a peasant and poverty context for democratisation. The findings show that the social service delivery/ community projects do not respond to the peasants' interests to improve their position in the market economy. In addition, the discussion shows that the empowerment approach fails to suggest how voluntary organisations can emerge through the projects that target poverty. The study concludes that social capital, as the catalyst for voluntary organisations, needs to be analysed within the context of modern societies, not the poor and isolated villages or traditional societies. Therefore, social capital is the source of voluntary organisation to the extent that the society is modern.

Chapter seven discusses the findings on the role of the NGOs in fostering the accountability of local government. The empowerment approach suggests that NGOs can connect with the local communities to challenge their political leaders through social accountability and the activist approach. Therefore, the chapter examines the organisational role of the NGOs in the local communities through these contrasting approaches. The field

study examined the capacity-building role of NGOs to understand their impact on the communities' capability to organise and mobilise for local accountability. The study also examined the NGO capacity-building outcomes for the political representatives.

Chapter eight outlines the conclusions of the thesis, summarises the key findings of the study, and suggests the areas for further research.

2. Alloy of Theorisation on Empowerment and Accountability

2.1 Introduction

Chapter one indicated that the civic republican thought on the role of voluntary organisations for achieving accountability is precise, and derives from the context of the middle class. The chapter indicated the gaps in the theorisation on empowerment concerning citizens' organisation. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss these gaps and examine the extent that the theoretisation on empowerment responds to the context of poverty.

The political theorisation on voluntary orgnisation sets the context for the critique of the empowerment approach. In summary, the civic republican thinking specifies three key positions which differ from the theorisation on empowerment: a) it suggests that poverty and associationalism exist in tandem. It illuminates the constraints to associational life and participation in local government caused by poverty, (those at the margins of the market economy); b) membership in voluntary organisations is integral to the understanding of citizenship and the community as a political unit; c) it emphasises the preconditions for associational life: high incomes, a middle class, education and political learning i.e. it considers a systemic approach to the emergence of voluntary organisations, and implicitly problematises the peasant context.

However, the theorisation on empowerment portrays major weaknesses: a) it suggests the idea of empowerment of the poor, although this is ambiguous; b) it does not discuss the preconditions for associational life. While it disregards the structural preconditions for associational life, it suggests an alternative approach to the growth of voluntary organisations through community development project groups; c) its non-market conceptualisation of poverty focuses on social indicators/service delivery community projects. It thereby disregards the relationship between lack of incomes and unequal power between citizens and their political representatives in local government; d) it disregards the relevance of structural

transformation so that the challenges of a peasant population are overlooked nor considered a constraint.

The chapter shows the lack of a cohesive or corroborated theoretical framework that can be replicated. The theorisation on empowerment constitutes an alloy of discourses, including: a) critical theorists using the concept of power; b) the social constructionists, using the concept of agency; c) the communitarian concept of social capital, which itself embeds a fusion of discourses; d) the rights-based approach with the concept of rights; e) the diverse non-market concepts of poverty; and the post-modernist notions of localism, decentralisation, non-government actors, and community projects.

The key question in this discussion is: how significant is citizens' organisation in the theorisation on empowerment? The chapter discusses the following themes: a) community and citizenship; b) empowerment framework; c) challenging power by the poor; d) challenging elected representatives; e) non-market conceptualisation of poverty; f) the community project approach to associational life.

2.2 Community and citizenship

In this section, I discuss the lack of concordance in the literature on 'citizenship' and 'community'. From the civic republican perspective, the concept of citizenship denotes voluntary association in the context of a middle class. However, the idea of 'citizenship' by the theorisation on empowerment disregards the challenges of a peasant context, and is apolitical since it does not suggest the building of political networks.

It is important to note that in civic republicanism, membership in voluntary organisations is integral to what it means to be a citizen and a member of a community. Civic republicanism emphasises the idea of a citizen as an active participant, a member of a political community, and the obligations of individuals to that community (Oldfield, 1990; Lister, 1997). This includes citizen engagement in collective deliberation, community representation, mobilisation and action (Chaskin, 2013; Miller, 1995; Lister, 1998).

This thinking differs from the theoretisation on empowerment, which suggests non-membership organisations (NGOs) undertaking the role of voluntary organisations. Yet, the empowerment theorisation employs 'community' and 'citizenship' as key concepts as well. Thus, Kuper and Kuper (1996, p.114) note "the conceptual disarray of social science regarding community". It is this lack of precision and political character of 'community' and 'citizenship' that constitutes the gap in the theoretical framework as discussed below.

The political character of citizenship implies "collective and participatory engagement of citizens in the determination of the affairs of their community" (Lister, 1997 p. 24) and more specifically, the active role of the citizen through "political debate and decision-making" (Miller, 1995 p. 443). The political philosophers, such as Rousseau, Hobbes, and John Locke, emphasised that a citizen's right to liberty and freedom includes egalitarian relations in collective decision-making. In political thought, it is noted that:

> "natural men live for themselves; each one in a unit, a whole, dependent only on himself. Men as citizens depend on the community of which they are a part; it is the whole…By becoming citizens, man exchanges therefore independence for dependence, and autarky for participation…men have to cease being natural and become citizens instead" (Barnard, 1984 p.245).

The notion of citizenship affirms the centrality of egalitarian relations through membership in autonomous associations and local government to limit the power of the state (Lister, 1998). The political philosophers emphasised the "community spirit and independent associational life as protections against the domination of society by the state, and indeed as a counterbalance which helps to keep the state accountable and effective" (Lewis, 2002 p. 571). The idea of citizenship also emphasises "action" with the "intent to influence" (Verba and Nie, 1972).

In addition, the civic republican thinking affirms that poverty is a constraint to membership in voluntary organisations, and therefore, citizenship. Civic republicanism integrates a market/economy analysis as crucial for voluntary organisation. Alcock (1993, p. 212) indicates that "the direct costs of participation, such as membership fees, transport,

socialising and keeping up to date" are inescapable. "The most marginalised are those likely to have least power and resources to participate politically" (Phillips 1993, cited by Jones and Gaventa, 2002 p. 12). Similarly, Goldberg (2001, p.294), confirms that "without the economic and material resources needed to fully exercise citizenship rights, citizens are unable to participate fully in public affairs". Lijphart (1997) in *Unequal Participation: Democracy's Unresolved Dilemma*, summarises that:

> "political equality and political participation are both basic democratic ideals. In principle they are perfectly compatible. In practice, however, as political scientists have known for a long time, participation is highly unequal. And unequal participation spells unequal influence....Moreover, as political scientists have known for a long time, the inequality of representation and influence are not randomly distributed but systematically biased in favour of more privileged citizens – those with higher incomes, greater income, and better education – against less advantaged citizens" (Lijphart, 1997 p.1).

Other political thinkers, such as Lötter (2008, p. 182) affirm that "poor citizens cannot effectively make their needs and interests heard, they cannot fully employ their collective political voice, nor can they adequately insist on the fulfillment of their rights".

Contrary to the above civic republican thinking on citizenship, the idea of citizenship by the empowerment approach is ambiguous. It draws on diverse perspectives, including: the *communitarian and liberal traditions*, and the *social constructionists* as discussed below. It is important to note that the liberal, communitarian, and civic republican traditions provide conflicting understanding of citizenship. The liberal notion of citizenship emphasises individual's rights, (i.e civil and political rights necessary to protect individual freedom). This includes a set of legal obligations and entitlements, but also the mechanisms for claiming rights. Thus, Ferguson (1999) notes that people must be able to exercise their rights to decision-making about what concerns them. The idea of 'claiming rights' by the rights-based approach derives from the liberal tradition. However, the rights-based approach does not clarify the mechanisms for citizens' organisation to claim rights as discussed in section 2.5.

The empowerment approach blends the idea of exercising rights, from the liberal thought with the communitarian thought on social identity and community relationships. Communitarianism focuses on "the notion of the socially-embedded citizen and community belonging", while it critiques the "self-interested independent individual by liberal thinkers" (Jones and Gaventa, 2002 p.4). The study of citizenship has evolved as a specific strand within research on social capital, i.e. focusing on creating networks underlined by shared values; people coming together to pursue collective goals and interests in associations; trust and cooperation (Putnam, 2000). Thus, the political character of citizenship is absent in the communitarian thinking. The civic republicans, on the other hand, "attempt to incorporate the liberal notion of the self-interested individual within the communitarian framework, i.e what binds citizens together into a community" (Jones and Gaventa, 2002 p.4).

In addition, the empowerment approach draws on the critical and social constructionists on agency, and suggests the idea of citizens as agents. Thus, Lister (1998, p.228) argues that "citizenship as participation can be seen as representing an expression of human agency in the political arena, broadly defined; citizenship as rights enables people to act as agents". Anthony Giddens, of the social constructionist school of thought specifically pioneered the concept of agency in the 1980s. Giddens perceived "active human subjects creating the social world, acting upon the world rather than being shaped by it" (Walls, 2015 p.12). Giddens (1984, p.14), defined agency as "to be able to 'act otherwise'… to be able to intervene in the world, or to refrain from such intervention, with the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs". Sen (1999, p. 19) defines an agent as "someone who acts and brings about change". Crossley (2002) suggests that Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' is linked to agency in the sense that people take action to change their circumstances. In summary, the agency concept suggests that people are autonomous, and take responsibility for their own action (Pease and Fook, 1999). Therefore, some define citizenship in terms of *passive and active citizenship*. Passive citizenship focuses on the rights and duties of the citizens prescribed by the state (Kenny, 2002), or passive membership (Brannan et al. 2006). Active citizenship, on the other hand, is described as the citizens' willingness to contribute and engage in the social and political life of the community.

The ambiguity of the notion of citizenship by the empowerment theorisation is further observed in its delineation, which misses citizens' organisation. For instance, Glover (2004, p. 65), summarising Marshall's (1950) work on citizenship, classifies citizenship into: *civil citizenship*, which refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty (e.g., freedom of speech, justice, individual freedom, political, civil, social, and economic rights); *political citizenship*, which focuses on citizen action against injustice, or to hold government accountable; voting, or getting involved as an individual elected by the members of a community (e.g., a politician); and *social citizenship* which places emphasis on access to resources that allow citizens to live in accordance with the standards prevailing in society. Kenny (2006, p. 24) suggests that "to ensure full citizenship, people must be empowered to participate in the continual process of shaping their society, their communities, and their identities".

Similarly, the concept of community is multidimensional and apolitical, in the theorisation on empowerment. Sociological studies on 'community' have covered a wide range of aspects, and for the most part, presented communities as cultural, spatial, ecological, and social units. Stacey (1969), for instance considered to abandon 'community' as a 'non-concept'. Gilchrist and Taylor (2011, p 1), note that "community is a concept that seems always to be in fashion with policy makers", although Mohan and Stokke (2000) insist that it is a political use of community and the local. Therefore, Mohan and Stokke (2000, p. 253) argue that "community is a concept often used by state and other organisations, rather than the people themselves, and it carries connotations of consensus and 'needs' determined within parameters set by outsiders".

From the communitarian perspective, community is what Moore (2001, p. 322) describes as "the small, and spatially-defined…our old friend 'the village community'". Communitarianism presents "a view of the community as a homogeneous unit in which values of mutuality and reciprocity are seen as natural and lead to self-help and social cohesion" (Ledwith, 2011 p. 1). This homogeneous understanding of community, derives from sociological theorisation in the 1880s, which was in response to the impact of the social

changes and modernity caused by industrialisation and urbanisation, and idealised the idea of community as solidarity. Emile Durkheim in his theses on organic solidarity and mechanical solidarity, and Ferdinand Tönnies emphasised mutuality and sentiment as depicting 'community' (Gemeinschaft). Durkheim in his theory of mechanical solidarity specifically stressed the cohesive relations between individuals and in society noting "the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society" in segmented societies (Durkheim 1984, pp. 38–39). Durkheim also emphasised the shared values and interests, and the network of relationships that hold the society, even with the transition to modernity (organic solidarity). The concept of 'community' in communitarianism fails to embrace politics. Cleaver (1999, p. 597) critiques that the "considerations of power and politics on the whole are avoided as divisive and obstructive".

The communitarian thinking also embeds Putnam's social capital theory, which emphasises the networks and relationships among individuals and groups, i.e trust and norms of reciprocity (Putnam, 1995). Communitarian thought is concerned about the erosion of solidarity and the need to rebuild 'community' by promoting social capital (Putnam, 1993). Putnam's idea was particularly influential, suggesting that *social capital is the missing link* (Grootaert, 1998) in the poor communities. The apolitical approach of social capital theory, fosters the idea of '*development-of-community*' (Christenson and Robinson, 1989), i.e. the emphasis on the homogeneous community.

The critical and social constructionists use the concept of agency and the rights-based approach, to advance the idea of communities as claims-making agents (Walls, 2015). However, they target citizens through the project space, which is essentially needs-based. It is anticipated that through the community development projects, a citizenry that can express demands can emerge to oppose an inefficient and unresponsive state (Mansuri and Rao, 2012). The critical theorists, influenced by Bourdieu, further expound the view of 'community' beyond the dualistic categories of social class, gender, and race that dominated discourse in the 1960s and 1970s to include all aspects of marginalisation. However, the project approach targets citizens as beneficiaries of assistance. Communities are defined as

beneficiaries of self-help projects and social service delivery. Cleaver (1999) critiques the segmentation of communities, by membership in beneficiary project groups that: "the very definition of community in development projects involves defining those who are 'included' in rights, activities, benefits and those who are excluded because they do not belong to the defined entity" (Cleaver, 1999 p. 603). The project approach emphasises efficiency. Christenson and Robinson (1989) show that the conceptualisation of community in terms of poverty projects advances the idea of 'community' as a locality wherein economic activities occur, i.e. *development-in-the community*.

Moreover, poverty targeting encourages the conceptualisation of communities in terms of deprivation, which is a safe terrain for governments. The emphasis on the community as place-bound, has encouraged the politicisation of the 'local'. Communities are being defined by their governments in terms of geographical areas, emphasising the indicators of deprivation. Therefore, governments engage the deprived communities in decision-making for local government plans in a paternalistic fashion. Mohan and Stokke (2000, p. 251) critique "the local as a functional, economic space with policies designed to increase the efficiency of service delivery". Mohan and Stokke (2000) critique the politicisation of the local, which involves the lip service of many aid-receiving governments. These governments recognise that since "participation has become a discourse of Western donors, they ignore it at their financial peril" (Mohan and Stokke, 2000 p. 254).

The needs-based approach stresses the deprivation in the communities rather than agency. The literature depicts assertions, such as: "the poor are reluctant to influence processes of policy-making" or that "from the perspective of the poor there are several problems with political endeavors: they tend not to deliver immediate material gains" and that political action "exacerbates the vulnerability of the poor; they require resources that the poor seldom possess" (Webster and Engberg-Pedersen, 2002 p. 6). Moreover, in the context of decentralisation, the 'community' has also been conceptualised merely as a 'constituency of local government'. Citizen voice and influence is limited to a narrow focus on local government accountability in social service delivery, and citizens' organisation is absent.

Thus, the thesis identifies the lack of clarity about these key concepts: 'community' and 'citizenship' as a major gap in the theoretical framework. In summary, the concept of citizenship denotes membership in voluntary association, i.e citizens have the capability to organise themselves on matters that concern them and influence the state to address their concerns. The significance of a political community is emphasised. However, the conceptualisation of 'citizenship' by the empowerment approach is apolitical, and therefore does not suggest building political networks. Moreover, without a political character or clarification on citizens' organisation, the empowerment theorisation does not define the influence that citizens can make. The next section discusses the extent that the empowerment framework prioritises citizens' organisation.

2.3 Empowerment framework

It is important to note that the civic republican theory does not discuss 'empowerment of the poor', because it assumes abridged socio-economic inequalities and egalitarian relations in the political (deliberative) community, which is reduced to the middle class. For instance, Habermas' theorisation on 'the public sphere' (Öffentlichkeit) and the "ideal speech situation" points to the quality of social interactions in a discursive environment (Payrow and Omid, 2003). Habermas argued that in debate, "actors are equally endowed with the capacities of discourse, recognise each other's basic social equality" (Calhoun, 2012 p. 440). This discussion illuminates the unequal power caused by poverty, so that the poor are constrained to engage in deliberation with the powerful to influence public decision-making. Very often the poor are excluded from participation. Therefore, Young (2003, p.103) argues that if decision-making is dominated by the better-off and the powerful, they "silence the weak and vulnerable".

The concept of empowerment is suggested by the critical and social constructionist theorists who problematise the socio-economic inequalities, and the fact that the poor are excluded from public decision-making. Hegel was the initial critic of the "conflicts and inequalities that raged between economic and political interests within civil society"

(Edwards, 2014 p. 8). In response, Karl Marx, in his social conflict theory, instigated the debate on the problem of unequal power in society, which he argued, keeps the poor marginalised. Thus, the critical theorists draw on Marx to explain the passivity of the poor in terms of unequal power. They argue that marginalisation and disadvantage are a consequence of unequal power. The social constructionists, on the other hand, are influenced by Anthony Giddens' idea of agency, to suggest that the poor can challenge power.

The critical and social constructionists largely draw on civic republicanism or the pluralist approach, which perceives power as variable-sum (i.e. the process of attaining change in power relations is essentially deliberative). Civic republicanism is informed by deliberation theory, which promises that "deliberation overcomes inequalities and results in better policy decisions which can help government institutions and the quality of governance" (Nabatchi et al. 2013, p.3). The civic republican approach differs from the activist stance (the radicals), which posits that power is zero-sum (in finite supply) (Luttrell et al. 2009), meaning that the process of attaining change in power relations is essentially a struggle. For the radicals, "the only way to gain it is to take it from the more powerful" (Luttrell et al. 2009 p. 6). The Marxist school of thought suggested collective mobilisation to challenge "hegemonic interests within the state and the market" (Mohan and Stokke, 2000 p. 249). "For the post-Marxists, empowerment is a matter of collective mobilisation of marginalised groups against…both the state and the market" (Mohan and Stokke, 2000 p. 248). The critical and social constructionists also embrace the activist approach of the social movements (Walls, 2015). Thus, they envisage both the deliberative and activist spaces for the poor to challenge the state.

The proponents of empowerment agree that the poor are constrained to engage in deliberation with the state. "Poor people have little chance of articulating their rights in public spaces or becoming representatives of others similarly disadvantaged...the disadvantages to them of confronting unequal relations on which they depend may simply outweigh the costs of acquiescence" (Cleaver, 2004 p. 257). Thus, the empowerment approach suggests the representation of the poor by the NGOs and community organisers.

It is important to note the diverse perspectives by the critical theorists. While some completely reject the project approach by the social capital theory and the rights-based approach, others emphasise the role of the critical community organiser, and reject the idea of institutionalisation. These diverse perspectives by the critical theorists are discussed in section 2.7. Those who criticise the social capital theory note the contradictory role of the external organiser of being "within and against the state" (Pitchford and Hendsen, 2008 p. 56). The social capital theory envisages the role of the community organiser as building community capacity through the project groups that would eventually transform into formal organisations, as discussed in section 2.7. Therefore, the critical theorists problematise the institutionalisation of community organisations. For instance, Cleaver (1999, p. 600) notes that:

> "discourses of participation are strongly influenced by the new institutionalism…Institutions (mostly commonly conceptualised as organisations) are highly attractive to theorists, development policy makers and practitioners as they help to render legible community; they translate individual into collective endeavour in a form which is visible, analyzable and amenable to intervention and influence… Ideas about social capital and civil society are also strongly institutionalist, although often vague…Exclusion from local institutions is considered undesirable, marginalising, inefficient".

The activist approach rejects the idea of the "resourceful community" (Cleaver, 1999), by the social capital theory and institutionalism. They underline the competing demands of work and time for the poor (Cornwall, 2008). The analysis of current social movements finds that people reject 'unreasonable' demands on their time, and "have no expectation of participating in long-term, hierarchical organisations and would rather engage in 'networks of waxing and waning groups and strategies'" (Casswell, 2001 p. 25-26). On the other hand, the proponents of the rights-based approach see the role of the community facilitator as a mobiliser to 'strengthen civil society' (Banks and Hulme, 2012).

It is important to note that the feminist scholars influenced the thinking on empowerment. Rowlands (1997) particularly suggested an empowerment framework, outlining four types of power: *power-over* (the ability to influence) and *power-to* (organise

and alter existing hierarchies), *power-with* (power from collective action) and *power-within* (power from individual consciousness). The deliberative approach of the empowerment framework is clarified by Alsop et al. (2006, p. 2) who note that "as a relational concept, empowerment often means redressing the imbalances of power between those who have it and those who do not". Alsop et al. (2006, p. 1) define empowerment as "the process of enhancing an individual's or group's capacity to make purposive choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes".

The activist approach to empowerment is derived from *power*-with. The application of *power-with* is historically embedded in the writings of Paulo Freire in the 1960s and 1970s. Fundamental to Freire's educational philosophy is the notion of collective action and continuing struggle on the part of the oppressed (Cooke, 2004). As discussed in chapter four, Freire's educational philosophy emphasise the significance of the pedagogy for the poor to challenge power. Price-Chalita (1994, p. 239 cited by Cornwall, 2002) conceptualises *power-with* (power from collective action) as the "appropriation of the spatial", (the spatial dimension of empowerment), i.e. "creating new spaces, occupying existing spaces". Thus, Cornwall (2002, p. 2) notes that "empowerment is, in spatial terms, about expansion: about moving out of constrained and isolated spaces, widening the scope for action and multiplying potential sites for engagement, and about growing in an organic, self-realising, way – in confidence, in capacity, in well-being". Those who take a radical stance such as Webster and Engberg-Pedersen (2002, p. 268) argue that "even if political space were present, influence and control over political processes would have to be fought for by the poor – they are not gently given or secured". Similarly, Waddington and Mohan (2001, p. 221) note that "for empowerment to be transformatory it cannot be given to a less powerful group by a more powerful one, but has to be fought for".

However, the operationalisation of the empowerment framework in terms of citizen organisation is problematic. *First*, the framework suggests that the poor can engage in deliberation when they are not organised as interest groups. In civic republicanism, to effectively influence government, people engage in groups, rather than individually. The

empowerment approach proposes two major mechanisms through which the poor can engage the local government: a) the elected representatives in local government and b) social service delivery projects.

Secondly, it locates the deliberative space for the poor in the social services project space. Yet, the project space is located at the receiving end of the decision-making processes on social services. For instance, Cleaver (1999) argues that, it is impossible to advance empowerment in the framework of a project. Cleaver (1999, p. 598) adds that:

> "there is an inherent difficulty in incorporating project concerns with participatory discourses. A project is, by definition, a clearly defined set of activities, concerned with quantifiable costs and benefits, with time-limited activities and budgets. The project imperative emphasises meeting practical rather than strategic needs, instrumentality rather than empowerment".

Similarly, Wong (2003, p. 307) argues that there is great emphasis "on economic power and the calculated adoption of two 'positive' powers – 'power-to' and 'power-with'" geared at economic efficiency and self-help. The project approach does not prioritise political outcomes for the poor. A critique on the extent that the project approach fosters associational life is provided in section 2.7.

Thirdly, the mechanisms through which the poor can engage the local government, i.e. the elected representatives and social service delivery projects, do not support the idea of *power-with*. These are typically invited spaces by the government. The activist approach, emphasises the importance of spontaneous grassroots organising to foster government accountability. However, the activist approach is not articulated by the NGOs. Chapter three and the empirical study in chapter seven provide in-depth analyses on the extent that the NGOs embrace the activist approach.

Therefore, the theorisation on empowerment and accountability, leaves many questions unanswered. The following sections examine these key questions: a) How do the poor challenge power through the project space? b) How do unorganised citizens challenge

the elected representatives in local government c) How does the conceptualisation of poverty, in terms of social service delivery indicators address the challenges to citizens' organisation i.e. poverty and a peasant citizenry? d) To what extent does the project approach foster associational life? The next section critiques the theorisation on challenging power by the poor.

2.4 Challenging power by the poor

In this discussion, I show that contrary to civic republicanism which suggests the organisation of interests in the deliberative spaces, the social capital theory and the rights-based approach do not envision a deliberative space for the poor. Therefore, it is questionable that the project beneficiary groups can claim rights through the project space, as suggested by the rights-based approach.

Political philosophy affirms that unequal power constrains engagement in the deliberative spaces. The political theorists are cognisant that in deliberative theory, unequal power hampers the "chances to contribute to deliberation, nor...play an authoritative role in their deliberation" (Cohen, 1989 p. 74). In the situation of unequal power, the "deliberators will not achieve equal voice...they will speak less and consequently carry less authority in deliberation" (Karpowitz, 2012 p.533). Sui and Stanisevski (2012, p. 85) add that:

> "even social theorists and historians as far back as Alexis de Tocqueville, writing in the 19th century, observed the tendency of the majority suppressing the minority in participatory forms of democracy...the full and equal participation [ideal of deliberative democracy] cannot be achieved in the presence of social inequalities, cultural divisions, and uneven distribution of power".

Such deliberation "could do more harm than good not only to the participants, but also to democracy" (Sui and Stanisevski, 2012 p. 85). Similarly, Fraser (1990, p.62) critiques that it is "not possible for interlocutors in a public sphere to bracket status differentials and to deliberate 'as if' they were social equals" because "societal equality is a necessary condition for democracy".

Yet the proponents of empowerment suggest that the poor can deliberate with the powerful. For example, Cornwall (2002, p. 28), suggests "arming the poor" with the "weapons of the powerful" (i.e "nurturing voice and building critical consciousness") before entering into the deliberative spaces. Cornwall (2002, p.27) notes the need for:

> "tactical engagement…to enable weaker participants to enter the public arena armed with the means to assert themselves. These tactics may include popular education, assertiveness training, building skills of argumentation or simply providing people with information about their rights and about the policies that they are being consulted about".

Cornwall (2002), therefore, seems to suggest a distinct space for 'arming the poor', but does not clarify on how such a space is constituted. This is a major gap in the empowerment theorisation. In civic republicanism, voluntary organisations are schools of citizenship. Chapter four provides an in-depth discussion of the gap in political learning by the poor. In addition, Cornwall (2002) does not clarify on how the poor can be organised, or on the deliberative spaces where the poor can engage together with the powerful. As indicated earlier, the project space is highly unlikely to qualify as a deliberative space.

The civic republican understanding of participation as an "*organised effort*" (Steifel and Wolfe, 1994 p. 3) recognises that power is derived from organising as interest groups. Arendt's idea of the deliberative space (the *space of appearance),* where people come together to exchange political ideas and devise actions as a collective (Klein, 2016), depicts a space that can be organised by the people themselves anywhere as the need arises to address their interests. However, in the beneficiary project space, both citizen organisation and deliberation are elusive.

To what extent can the project space serve as a deliberative space? The understanding of power in deliberation theory is well elaborated by Bachrach and Baratz (1963) who argued that decision making is hampered by those who determine what gets to be discussed or to be left out of the deliberative space. Gannett (2005, p. 732) refers to the "protracted and heated political give-and-take of local town and regional governments". In the pluralist approach,

the winners of a decision-making process depict the 'powerful'. Cornwall (2008, p. 281) notes the conflict of interests and the requisite capabilities to challenge the dominant, powerful, or hegemonic opinions by the less powerful. Hence, decision making is a profound bargaining process for the transfer of power. However, the project space places the poor at the receiving end of the deliberative space for the government programmes for the poor.

The concept of power in the deliberative spaces is well summarised in the metaphor of space by the political philosophers and social theorists including Habermas, Arendt, Lefebvre, Bourdieu, and Foucault. For instance, Foucault (1984, p. 252 cited by Cornwall, 2004 p.80) argues that "space is fundamental in any exercise of power". Lefebvre (1991 p. 24 cited by Cornwall, 2002 p.6) noted that "space is a social product … it is not simply 'there', a neutral container waiting to be filled, but is a dynamic, humanly constructed means of control and hence of domination, of power". Arendt's theorisation on the deliberative space (the *polis – the space of appearance*), illuminates the tension between dissent and consensus; a recognition of conflicting views and interests before reaching a consensus (Cornwall, 2002; Klein, 2016). Klein (2016, p. 93) notes that "conflictual consensus is thus interminable, always under negotiation by voices, unsettled or unserved". The theorisation on spaces clarifies that deliberative spaces are permeated with power. A deliberative space is described by Cornwall (2004, p. 1) as an arena that can be "emptied or filled, permeable or sealed; it can be an opening, an invitation to speak or act. Spaces can also be clamped shut, voided of meaning, or depopulated as people turn their attention elsewhere".

Moreover, Bachrach and Baratz (1963) reveal the hidden power that influences the agenda in deliberative spaces, i.e the intense mobilisation by interest groups to determine what gets to be discussed or to be left out of the deliberative space. Lukes' (1974) ideas on visible power (i.e the overt face of power), in his theory on the 'three faces of power', illuminates the power struggles in decision-making spaces in terms of the winners and losers. Lukes (1974) suggests that power is exercised in three ways: decision-making, non-decision-making, and ideology. Lukes' second dimension borrows almost verbatim from Bachrach and Baratz (1963). The theorisation on deliberative spaces helps to draw our attention on

how spaces are constituted - who creates them, who gets the chance to attend these arenas, who gets represented, and which ideas get excluded.

The theorisation on empowerment suggests the "redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future" (Arnstein, 1969 p. 1). The problem with "redistribution of power" is that 'equality' in the interactions is instigated by the powerful. The redistribution of power by the authorities to the citizens obscures the understanding of power, or unequal power, as discussed above. Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation (Figure 2) suggests that it is up to the external community facilitator to ensure 'authentic' interaction with the community.

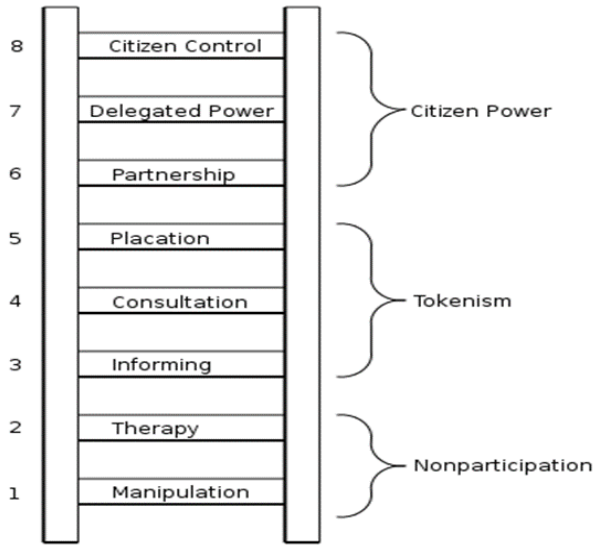

Figure 2: Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of citizen participation

Arnstein's (1969) idea embeds the benevolence of public officials in state-led interactions with the citizens as beneficiaries of basic social services. The benevolence of public servants is integral to the partnership approach by the state and to local government. Klugman (1994, p. 14) critiques the assumption that "local governments act more in accordance with the needs and priorities of local communities than would higher authorities". Cornwall (2008) shows

that, often, the poor people's voices are carefully positioned to support the agenda of the community facilitator. Rahnema (1992, p. 131) notes that "more often than not, people are asked or dragged into participating in operations of no interest to them, in the very name of participation". Cornwall (2008, p. 278) asserts that:

> "being involved in a process is not equivalent to having a voice…Translating voice into influence requires more than simply effective ways of capturing what people want to say…From within the authorities, responsiveness is contingent on wider institutional changes and the political will to convert professed commitment to participation into tangible action".

The critical theorists criticise the power of the facilitator with regards to imposing the project agenda over the local interests, since the facilitator shapes the process of participation (Mosse, 2005). The critical theorists further argue that the marginalised are unable to question (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). Thus, the expectation that powerful partners should listen to the communities' demands and respond appropriately is naïve. When the community's demands are in conflict with the external agendas, the powerful partners usually disconnect their support. OECD (2012) notes that questioning by the communities can be risky, as it opposes the interests of the local actors. Smyth (2009 p. 12) argues that "the effect of this 'overwhelming consensual' approach that actively discourages discord, dissent and contention, is that 'community activism' around issues of social justice are made 'invisible'".

Cornwall (2002) uses the metaphor of spaces and describes the non-participation of communities as 'isolated spaces', where 'larger hidden transcripts' remain unheard.

Passive spaces

Participatory Development Projects
- NGOs

Claimed spaces

Social Movements
- Spontaneous
- Arenas for public protest and resistance
- Flexible
- Difficult to co-opt

Fleeting Formations
- One-off processes
- Transient institutions
- Funded by government or donors

Invited spaces

State Regularised Institutions
-Local level institutions (Consultative or co-management committees)
- Citizen engagement in local governance
- Bounded space, open to certain members

Sites of resistance within invited spaces
At Sub-national and national levels
- Resistance to hegemonic norms or communicative strategies of the elite
- From where they enter invited spaces equipped with tools of productive engagement

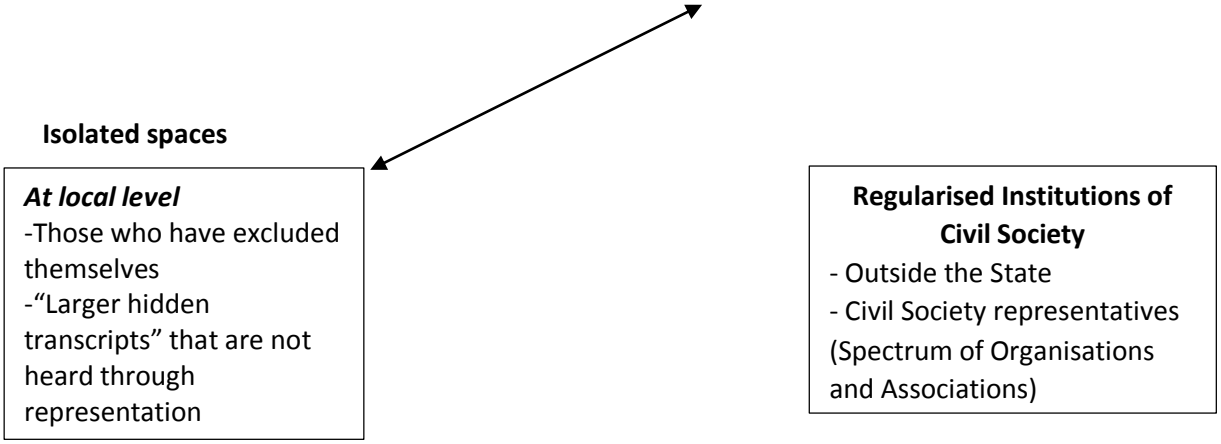

Figure 3: Mapping participatory spaces

Figure 3 shows that the project space (*passive spaces*) is highly unlikely to qualify as a deliberative space, since the beneficiaries of the community development projects are at the receiving end of the decision-making processes on social service provision. The poor are unable to organise themselves to *claim spaces*, or participate in the *invited spaces*. The influential spaces are occupied by organised groups or professional groups, including *social movements*, *fleeting formations*, fora within i*nvited spaces, and spaces within state institutions.*

In summary, the empowerment approach envisages the project space, which is needs-oriented. Secondly, empowerment emphasises representation, as the poor are unable to engage in deliberations with the powerful. Therefore, poor are essentially represented by the NGOs and the community organisers. However, the interactions between the poor and the community facilitator depict the challenges in setting an agenda that is driven by poor themselves. The next section critiques the empowerment discourse that the poor can challenge their political representatives in local government in the project space and unorganised.

2.5 Challenging the elected representatives

This discussion focuses on four key themes, namely: elite representation, decentralisation, the rights-based approach, and the concept of 'strengthening civil society'. The discussion highlights the absence of citizens' organisation in the theorisation on representative local government. Therefore, the concept of 'strengthening civil society' is suggested by the empowerment approach to promote the role of the NGOs in local accountability.

It is important to note that the empowerment approach draws on the democratic theory of representation, and it hinges on elite representation. However, the empowerment approach does not discuss the problem of unequal power caused by poverty, and how unequal power affects accountability. The political philosophers were skeptical that an "abused and hungry working population," would "deliberate with independence" (Goldberg, 2001 p. 295). Rousseau argued that "the rich keep the law in their pocket and the poor prefer bread to liberty" (Barnard, 1984 p. 263). Therefore, the philosophers were cognisant that socio-economic inequalities hampered participation. Rousseau remarked that "no citizen shall be rich enough to be able to buy another, and none poor enough to be forced to sell himself" (Barnard, 1984 p. 263). Therefore, the field study examines the accountability relationships between the communities and their elected leaders.

The problem of elite power is subtle in the theorisation on empowerment, since it assumes the benevolence of public officials acting on behalf of the citizens. The political philosophers conceptualised local government as a means to limiting the state. Yet the empowerment approach is hinged on a partnership approach between the government and communities as elaborated below.

Robinson (2007) notes that the decentralisation policy was promoted as an aspiration that local governments would be more responsive to the needs and priorities of the citizens in delivering social services. Decentralisation is understood as the transfer of power and/or

authority, functions, responsibilities, and resources from central government to local government to the citizens, through the elected representatives. The empowerment approach dvances the building of good relations between communities and government (Somerville, 2016). Therefore, decentralisation assumes the 'good' intentions of government. However, Mansuri and Rao (2012, p. 33) argue that:

> "when government induces participation by means of projects, its agents often must act against their self-interest by promoting institutions whose purpose is to upset the equilibrium that gives them considerable personal advantage. Moreover, by devolving power to the local level, higher levels of government cede power, authority, and finances to communities over which they may have little control".

Public officials are neither benevolent, nor self-restrained as suggested by the empowerment approach. Rather the elite maintain the control of resources and power through the key positions and networks that they occupy. They oppose any transfer of power to their constituents and are unwilling to accept reform of the prevailing structures (Webster and Engberg-Pedersen, 2002). The empirical study on elected representatives (chapter five) shows the experiences of elite capture, patronage, and misuse of local government funds.

Given the partnership approach by the government, it is not surprising that the rights-based approach does not envision citizens' organisation in local government accountability. Rather, the rights-based approach suggests the concept of social accountability to foster the responsiveness of the local government. Malena et al. (2004, p.3) define social accountability as an approach that "relies on civic engagement, i.e., in which it is ordinary citizens and/or civil society organisations who participate directly or indirectly in exacting accountability". Houtzager and Joshi (2008, p.3) define it as a "collective effort to hold public officials and service providers to account for the provision of public goods which are existing state obligations, such as primary healthcare, education, sanitation and security".

The empowerment approach emphasises claiming rights as an 'empowerment' process as illustrated in Figure 4. It envisages that unorganised citizens (as individuals and as a collective) can claim their rights from the duty bearers.

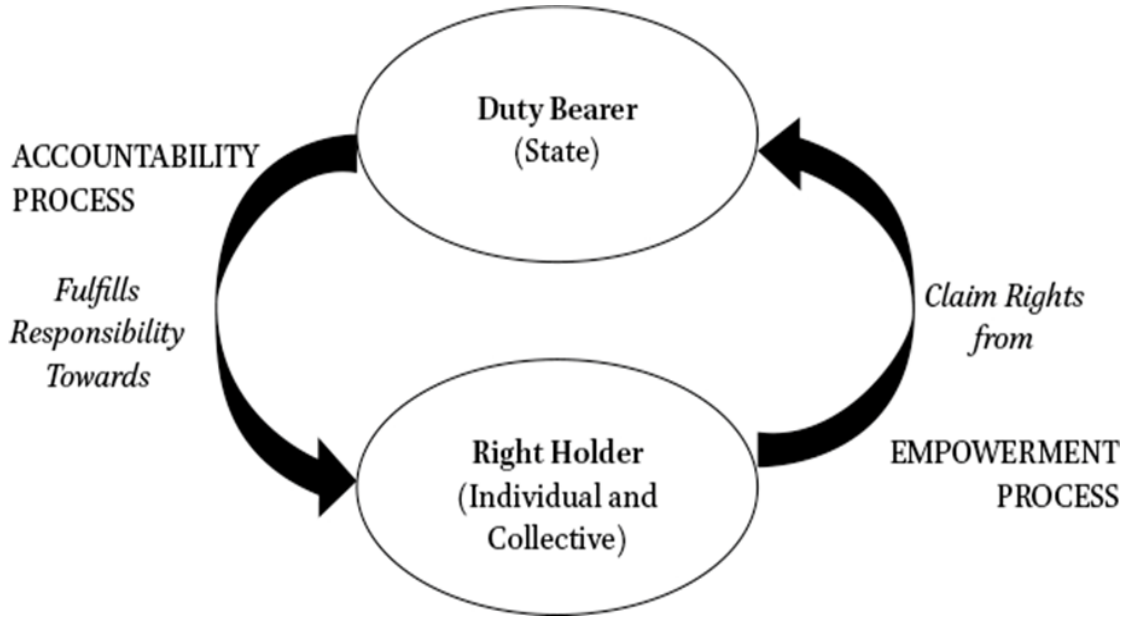

Figure 4: Relationships in the Rights-Based Approach

(Source: Da Costa and Pospieszna, 2015 p. 69).

The rights-based approach was endorsed by the 1993 United Nations conference on Human Rights leading to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action on democracy, human rights, sustainability and development, as a mechanism to increase the capacity of the duty bearers to deliver social services and the rights holders to demand accountability for services. DFID (2000, p.10) noted that "a human rights approach focuses on empowering all people to claim their rights to the opportunities and services made available through pro-poor development". DFID (2000, p. 24) noted that:

> "participation in decision-making is central to enabling people to claim all their human rights...when poor people are actively engaged in decision-making and when their voices and interests are heard. It requires access to information about government policies and performance so that people can make informed decisions and hold policy makers accountable".

However, the rights-based approach does not suggest how the poor and uneducated can access information in a state-led approach.

In essence, the elected representatives in local government are supposedly the voice of the people through decentralisation. Decentralisation emphasises the "strengthening of the communities to represent themselves ('voice') by establishing the civic infrastructure necessary for democratic government and strengthening the capacity of government to manage the demands voiced by communities" (Somerville, 2016 p. 43). The empowerment approach draws on the democratic theory of representation, which emphasises the legitimacy or constituency of the elected leader (Arnesen and Peters, 2017). The theory of representation posits that representatives advocate the "wishes, needs, or interests of the people that they represent", and that the responsiveness of the elected leaders is one of the defining features of a democracy (Arnesen and Peters, 2017). Similarly, Pitkin (1967 cited by Arnesen and Peters, 2017 p. 878) defines representation as "making present" and "acting for" another, and so "political representation is the activity of making citizens' voices, opinions, and perspectives 'present' in public policy-making processes. Political representation occurs when political actors speak, advocate, symbolise, and act on behalf of others in the political arena" (Dovi, 2018 p.1).

However, the 'insider' status of the elected representatives in relation to the state is a key challenge to accountability because representative local government assumes that citizens can 'punish' the representatives by voting them out. The democratic theory of representation posists that the representative "should be responsive to what people want" (Arnesen and Peters 2017, p. 873), and therefore, must be held to account (Pitkin, 1967). In other words, it is the right of the "constituents to punish their representative for failing to act in accordance with their wishes (e.g. voting an elected official out of office)" (Dovi, 2018). The empowerment approach assumes that the poor can equally punish their elected leaders by voting them out. The empirical study on elected representatives in chapter five shows that the citizens cannot easily vote out their elected leaders. This is because the power of the political representatives must, first of all, be checked through the analytical capacity of the voluntary organisations, before they can be voted out of office.

Decentralisation draws on Pitkin's (1967) ideas of descriptive representation, which is based on characteristics such as gender, or disability of the represented. For instance, mandatory inclusion of diverse social groups is suggested to overcome power inequalities. Thus, the quota system in representative local government is an attempt to increase the participation of marginal groups. Nevertheless, the quota system cannot play the role of voluntary organisations. Critics argue that the participants from the marginalised communities are rarely treated fairly and therefore fail to participate as equals (Karpowitz, 2012). Hickey and Mohan (2004, p. 161) suggest that mandatory inclusion in participatory governance "has been merely tokenism". For example, the 33 per cent quota rule that seeks to ensure representation of marginal groups on local councils in both India (women and low caste groups) and Uganda (women) has apparently failed to secure regular participation for these groups.

State-led participation overemphasises the establishment of representation structures, i.e. the formal procedures of authorisation, described as formalistic representation (Pitkin, 1967). The formality of the processes, with emphasis on the authority of the local government, accentuate bureaucratic procedures and therefore affect the communities' access to the powerful and influential leaders. Governments give importance to design frameworks of representative institutions and therefore spend time and resources on framing the 'perfect' structures (Barber, 2001; McGee et al. 2003). McGee et al. (2003) show that some countries replicate legal frameworks for decentralisation, without systematic analysis of the country contexts. Therefore, the institutional frameworks are 'perfect' in the sense that they prioritise elite representation. For instance, Kilewo and Frumence (2015) show the control of information by the higher-level representatives in Tanzania's three-tier structure in decentralised health planning. The village-level structures, i.e the Health Facilities Governing Committees (HFGCs) are expected to gather community views in developing the local health plans through the Council Health Service Boards (CHSBs), which is the second-level structure. However, the communication between the village planning committees and the second-tier committees reflects a disconnection; "the only existing formal communication system between CHMT and HFGC is when the CHMT give instructions to

lower level health facilities through letters" (Kilewo and Frumence, 2015 p.3). Thus, the village committees (HFGCs) reported lack of awareness of the local government Comprehensive Council Health Plan (CCHP); the majority of the respondents indicated that they had never heard of CCHP. Instead, it was reported that "the higher-level authority does not disseminate important information to lower levels" (Kilewo and Frumence, 2015 pp. 4-5). Kilewo and Frumence (2015, p. 3) further note that "it was highly surprising to find that even the members of the CHSBs, who are responsible for endorsement of the council plan, were not aware of CCHP". On the contrary, at the higher management level (CHMT), the study found that there was greater awareness of Comprehensive Council Health Plan (CCHP) since the CHMT is the body that is charged with preparing and coordinating the implementation of the CCHPs.

Contrary to the assumption that communities gain power through representation, the highest-level committee decides without the views of the poor, since the same entity restricts the flow of formation to the lower levels. Kilewo and Frumence (2015, p. 2) add that, "plans are prepared at the council level by Council Health Management Team (CHMT). In practice, the bottom-up planning has been difficult because communities do not have the opportunity or required capacity". The lack of awareness of the planning process by the village committees equally implies the non-participation and exclusion of community members in developing national policy plans. Moreover, the study reveals that many villages do not have the Health Facilities Governing Committees (HFGCs); they are non-existent and where they exist, they remain "just symbolic as they do not fully fulfil their roles and responsibilities" (Kilewo and Frumence, 2015 p. 2). This example shows the unequal power between the local government and the poor through the state-led approach to participation.

The empowerment approach suggests the notion of 'strengthening civil society', i.e. that the NGOs can support the poor to foster the responsiveness of the local governments. The rights-based approach uses the concept of capacity-building of both the local governments and citizens. 'Strengthening civil society' envisages the NGO role in mediating between the elected representative and the communities to hold the state to account (DFID,

2010). The thesis questions: How practicable is it for the NGOs to bridge the gap between the political leaders and the citizens? How does the mediation role by the NGOs affect the relationships between them and the state? Scholars critique the social accountability initiatives by the NGOs to be merely technical tools and widgets (Joshi and Houtzager, 2012) "that fail to address politics and power relations" (King 2015a, p. 889). However, we do not know the extent that the NGOs enhance the organisational capabilities of the communities in social accountability. The empirical study in chapter seven examines the NGO role in forstering organisational capabilities. .

The next section critiques how the conceptualisation of poverty, in terms of social service delivery indicators by the empowerment theorists, fails to address the challenges to citizen organisation for a peasant citizenry.

2.6 Non-market concept of poverty

In this section, I show that the empowerment approach employs a non-market concept of poverty, which does not perceive a peasant population as a challenge to citizen organisation. A market/economy is integral to voluntary organisation.

The political philosophers were cognisant that associational life was inextricably linked to the citizen's position in the economy. While the industrial labouring poor were driven to form associations, the "indigent citizens" (Goldberg, 2001 p. 294), i.e. the unemployed and the labourers in the informal sector, remained isolated from associations. The political philosophers conceptualised poverty in terms of classical economics.

Consequently, the monetary measure of poverty influenced the understanding of poverty and change in the low-income countries in the early 1950s. The post-World War II era focused on modernisation i.e. the increase in wealth, "comes with other benefits such as improved health, education, and quality of life' (Willis, 2005 p.3). During the 1950s and 1960s, Rostow's stages of economic growth expressed the fact that nations passed through defined stages to a state of development. The modernisation theory advocated the

transformation of economies from traditional modes of production to industrialisation. This thinking was influenced by the classical economists such as Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*.

The 1960-70s were a major turning point as the period brought about the formalisation of the development concepts. Poverty was inextricably linked to peasantry; and structural transformation was necessary to overcome poverty. In September 1961, the President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, addressed the UN General Assembly and launched a proposal for a Development Decade to "lessen the gap between developed and underdeveloped countries, to speed up the processes of modernisation, and to release the majority of mankind from poverty." (Jolly et al. 2004 p.86) The 1960-1970s was consequently designated a UN decade of progress and social advancement for this end with its emphasis on high growth rates as the strategy for less developed countries. In Africa, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa was set up to lay down prospects and programmes for the development of the continent. This development thinking attributed the underdevelopment problem to too little economic progress. In line with this development paradigm, policies were designed to achieve economic growth by stimulating industrial development in designated centres ('growth poles') with the expected trickle-down effect. The definition of development as modernity continued to dominate development theory, derived from neo-liberalism, with measurements of development largely in economic terms. This concept of development underlies much of the work of international organisations such as the World Bank and many national governments (Willis, 2005). The monetary measure of poverty continues to influence the national development plans in the low income countries, according to the modernisation theory. The monetary measure of development is reflected in the use of Gross National Product per capita into development categories according to four income groups – high, upper-middle, lower-middle, and low.

However, the non-monetary approach to poverty was popularised in the 1970s with the prioritisation of the basic needs approach to poverty (Pieterse, 2001). The World Bank outlines up to 74 social indicators in its country-specific studies, while the Human

Development Index stresses achievements for health (life expectancy at birth), education (adult literacy and primary, secondary, and tertiary education). Pieterse (2001, p.94) notes that "the Human Development Index (HDI) has become an influential standard." Human development draws on the Capability Approach which was first articulated by Amartya Sen in the 1980s (Sen, 1999). The approach has been employed extensively in the context of human development by the United Nations Development Programme, as an alternative to growth in Gross Domestic Product per capita.

Thus, the empowerment approach conceptualises poverty as multi-dimensional, including aspects such as: low and irregular incomes, lack of safe drinking water, poor housing, limited access to health and education, and social exclusion and discrimination (Narayan et al. 2000). Since the 1990s, the Human Development approach conceptualised poverty as a deprivation in the capability to live a good life, and 'development' is understood as capability expansion and the enlargement of people's choices (Sen, 1999). The Human Development approach has gradually expanded to include gender (Gender Development Index), environment (sustainable human development), political rights (Freedom Development Index). The Human Development approach provided the framework for the Millennium Development Goals and the subsequent Sustainable Development Goals.

Therefore, contrary to the centrality of the market/economy to understanding poverty and power by the political philosophers, the proponents of empowerment explain poverty within the welfare model, in terms of the absence of a public good and knowledge (Offenheiser and Susan, 2003). The welfare model suggests meeting the immediate needs of the poor, as a public service delivery function of governments. Moreover, the needs-based approach to communities embeds the view of deficiency and the social pathology of the poor. These perspectives are inherent in the traditional community development approach of social work, influenced by Myrdal's theorisation on the cycle of poverty (Kenny and Clarke, 2010). The social pathology perspective attributes deprivation to personal and collective failings (Kenny and Clarke, 2010). For Beazley et al. (2004), social pathology focuses on community deficiencies in skills, knowledge, and experience which inhibit them from taking advantage

of the resources and opportunities available to them. Thus, Mayo and Craig (1995, p. 100) argue that the state-led approach largely emphasised self-help strategies, focusing on individual needs, as "community problems were seen in terms of individual or community pathology, that is, the breakdown of family and community ties". As noted by Schiller (1989, p.4), although no theory of poverty has subsumed another, "which view of poverty we ultimately embrace will have a direct bearing on the public policies we pursue".

The pathological analysis of communities embeds the idea of the cycle of deprivation. Adherents of this thinking such as Welshman (2013) suggest 'transmitted deprivation' and the 'underclass' to emphasise the spiral character of poverty in communities. The theorisation stresses that the cycle of poverty dents the psychological capacities at individual level. For Miller et al. (1967, p. 24), "a vicious cycle of poverty then reinforces a vicious cycle of bureaucratic dysfunction" as apathy prevents poor communities from engaging the institutions that are meant to serve them. Thus, the proponents of the social capital theory envision empowerment in terms of community capacity-building that leads to self-help, as will be discussed in the next section (2.7). The social capital theory is criticised by those who conceptualise poverty in terms of unequal power, i.e. the structures of disadvantage.

The non-market understanding of poverty in policy discourse marked the 1975 Dag Hammarskjöld Report, which emphasised that approaches be 'geared to the satisfaction of 'needs' and 'self-reliance'. Thus, the NGOs were endorsed for their outreach to the poorest communities. At the same time, the structural adjustment conditions implied reduced government funding for social services. The NGO participatory approach, marked a shift from bureaucratic planning to community-based projects for self-help. Robert Chambers' ideas on 'participation' particularly promoted the reversal of centralised planning and popularised NGO interventions at the local level. Scholars supported the argument that "NGOs are beneficial to non-material aspects of 'development', in particular, processes of empowerment, participation, and democratisation" (Willis 2005, p.99). Mansuri and Rao (2012, p. 3) note that:

> Economists such as Sen and Ostrom made a vigorous case for a more bottom-up and deliberative vision of development that allows…communities to play a central part in decisions that affect them. Their scholarship led to a renewed interest in community-based development, decentralisation, and participation by donors and government".

The project approach to poverty was therefore identified as the magic bullet to addressing poverty from the non-market perspective. The proliferation of NGOs was influenced by the market model, i.e. NGOs operating as public and private organisations to provide utility where the market and the state are unable to, as well as leading the sector (Thrandardottir, 2015). "The role of NGOs is viewed as auxiliary to, and under the tutelage of, states…Arguments presented in market model theories claim that NGOs either have a comparative advantage over, or a complementary function to states and IGOs for delivering programmes and policies" (Thrandardottir, 2015 p.109). It is not surprising that when 'participation' became popularised in the low-income countries in the 1980s, community development projects were promoted as a means of ensuring that the needs of the poorest were met in the most cost-effective manner (Bhattacharya, 2004; Matarrita-Cascante and Brennan, 2012). However, the NGO projects greatly engaged the communities as beneficiaries (DFID, 2000) and the critique of the needs-based project approach ensued, dominating the discourse from the 1980s to the early 1990s. Narayan et al. (2000) indicate that much of the funding has been directed at responding to local needs at community level. Indeed, the needs-based approach remains central to NGO community project interventions, derived from the non-market concept of poverty.

Moreover, the needs-based or self-help approach to poverty was further fuelled by the interest in localism, driven by post-modernism and communitarianism i.e. to promote funding for community development projects to enhance social capital (Robinson, 2007). Despite the communitarian and post-modernist interest in community development projects and decentralisation or local-level planning, there is "suspicion over the role of the central government in people's lives" Casswell (2001, p. 22). The 'governmentality' critique emphasises that the project approach is essentially a co-option of communities into the agenda of the government. The 'governmentality' critique questions the process of

constructing communities as governable subjects through structures and spaces for governance (Dean, 1999). Thus, the post-modernist interest in decentralisation and non-government actors in social policies in the 1990s, created several actors at the local level (Taylor-Gooby, 1994), so that 'localism' has remained central in the 'community' discourse, but for political use.

In summary, the needs-based approach to poverty, in a state-led process has not only failed to address the integration of the poor into the market, it keeps them at the receiving end of project-funding, while it encourages political rhetoric. In the next section, I discuss the extent that the social capital theory fosters associational life through the project approach.

2.7 The Community Project Approach to Associational Life

From the communitarian perspective, the community development projects are envisaged as channels for building social capital that would lead to associational life. The communitarians assume that, the community project groups equally "serve as 'schools of citizenship' where individuals learn the habits of cooperation that would eventually carry over into public life" (Fukuyama, 2001 p.11). They envisage the transformation of community project groups into "voluntary associations in curbing the power of centralised institutions, protecting pluralism, and nurturing constructive social norms especially 'generalised trust and cooperation'" (Edwards, 2004 p. 14). Thus, Edwards (2004, p. 14) summaries that social capital is the crucial ingredient for promoting collective action "by creating and maintaining the social ties that are essential". Fukuyama (2001) emphasises the political function of social capital in promoting democracy. Weak solidarity and meagre social capital diminish the potential for collective action (Bhattacharya, 2004).

Mansuri and Rao (2012 p. 15) estimate that: "over the past decade, the World Bank has allocated almost $85 billion to local participatory development. Other development agencies - bilateral donors and regional development banks - have probably spent at least as much, as have the governments of most developing countries". The communitarian approach

particularly promotes the NGOs to build social capital, because governments are inappropriate in this role compared to the voluntary, private, and non-state sector. The communitarianists argue that "social capital cannot be easily created or shaped by public policy" (Fukuyama, 2001 pp. 7, 11).

However, the project approach is questionable as a mechanism for promoting associational life. The social capital theory promotes a technical and instrumentalist focus on projects embedding a fusion of discourses: including the charity, welfare-state, and market rationales (Kenny, 2002). The charity and welfare-state frameworks are driven by "state safety nets for those who 'cannot help themselves'" (Kenny, 2002 p.295), and these two frameworks see the "community as a site for forming identities and fulfilling social needs" (Kenny, 2002 p. 290). However, the market rationale is overriding in social capital theory, so that the accumulation of social capital is primarily for income generation.

The emphasis on the market rationale, with its focus on resources and efficiency, implies an instrumentalist approach to communities. The market framework is constructed around discourses of self-interest, self-help, private initiative, enterprise, and competition (Kenny, 2002). Nevertheless, none of these theorisations (the charity, welfare-state and market) advance the promotion of political participation. Indeed, such a fusion of discourses has led to portmanteau concepts. Cornwall and Brock (2005) specifically noted that 'empowerment' and 'participation' are buzzwords and fuzzwords in literature. Thus, Kenny (2002, p.295) notes that "the concept of social capital involves the fusion of the different lexicons drawn from the market (and enterprise lexicon) with the lexicon of inclusion, empowerment, mutuality and community". In a word, the communitarian discourse is indeed obscure.

Some scholars see the possibility of repoliticisation of participation by building political capabilities through political learning in the project space (Williams, 2004) and argue for politicised frameworks for analysing the outcomes of participatory initiatives (Hickey, 2005). Moore and Putzel (1999, p. 13) who pioneered the integration of political capabilities argued that: "it is useful to think of empowerment in terms of increasing the

political capabilities of the poor…It is the capabilities of the poor that will determine whether they can employ social capital…constructively or create where it is lacking". However, they too remain unclear on the practicability of repoliticisation. They do not clarify on how political learning would be promoted within the project logical framework, which is a "routinised praxis" (Parfitt, 2004), and a managerial exercise of procedures (Cooke and Kothari, 2001 p. 53).

Some of those who argue that the project space is depoliticised, critique the partnership approach between the government and the communities through community projects, which they refer to as 'governmentality'. Foucault conceptualised governmentality as "a type of power which acts on and through the agency and subjectivity of individuals as…rational subjects" (Shore and Wright, 1997 p. 6). The governmentality perspective suggests that, through the community projects, the community becomes an extended arm of the state. For instance, Ferguson (1994) argued that participation is an 'anti-politics machine' – a form of political control by the state through development agencies. Rahnema (1992) argued that participation entrenches the interests and the power of the state and institutions. These perspectives do not envisage political networks through the projects.

Moreover, the project approach derives from the systems theory in business organisations. The theory of change is rooted in the philosophy of logical positivism (Gamble and Weil, 2010). Those who critique the empowerment approach as myopic, argue that capacity-building envisages self-help projects rather than the community as a political unit, as summarised in Table 4.

Theory of community development	**Theorisation**	**Conceptualisation of local community**
Self-help	Social capital theory	Beneficiaries
Demand responsiveness of local government (social accountability)	Human rights-based approach	Local government constituency (locality)
Endogenous/Organic development of civil society	Civic republican theory	Political unit

Table 4: Conceptualisation of theory of community development

The critique of the project approach principally constitutes the social change debate by the critical theorists. The social change debate emphasises the concept of community development as community action that addresses poverty as a political problem, and therefore aims at political change. The theorists question the difference that the community development projects make for the poor. For instance, Huston (2013, p. 149) insists that "if community development is to be taken seriously as a strategic and professional intervention, then it must be able to able to show what difference it makes for communities". Bhattacharya's (2004) conceptualisation of community development from a teleological perspective, indicates that organic organisation is the desirable outcome for communities. However, social capital theory and the rights-based approach do not foster organic processes. As discussed in section 2.4, the social change debate is opposed to institutionalisation; they construct agency in terms of mobilisation for change, and not voluntary organisations. Therefore, they do not engage in the debate on associationalism.

The social change debate questions the notion of capacity-building as it advances the understanding of communities as deficient in skills, knowledge, and experience (Beazley et al. 2004). As discussed in 2.6, this conceptualisation embeds a social pathology perspective of communities (Makuwira, 2007; Mowbray, 2005). Therefore, the 'deficit model' of communities is criticised for its failure to measure empowerment. Cleaver (1999) argues that:

> "it is often unclear exactly who is to be empowered; the individual, the 'community', or categories of people such as 'women', 'the poor' or the 'socially excluded'. The question of how such categories of people might exercise agency is generally side-stepped. In many policy documents we see an apolitical individualisation of the concept".

The endpoint of the capacity-building process for local communities, is never explained. For instance, Makuwira (2007, p.129) questions that: "What is capacity? Who needs capacity? Capacity to do what? Whose interest(s) is/are served when people's capacities are built? Who determines the process and with what effects? Who evaluates and ascertains that capacity has been achieved?" There is no indication of an endpoint to what capacity is being built towards, or whether capacity-building is an end in itself. The project approach measures programmatic outputs in terms of narrowly quantitatively defined goals. Beazley et al. (2004, p. 6) critiques

that, if "greater political power lies with local communities, the endpoint might thus be more empowered and…self-determined communities".

The critical theorists argue that the conceptualisation of the local communities as deficient in skills, ideas, and capacities, reinforces a paternalistic approach, so that citizens see themselves as objects rather than agents of change. Moreover, community capacity-building is far from a neutral professional approach that can create political linkages with local communities. The capacity-building approach focuses on "how bad things are here" in the community, in order to tap funding (Kretzmann, 2010 p. 485). The theory of change that guides the project cycle is driven by funding and the demands for upward accountability. Lee (2004, p. 10) argues that, "the need to raise funds often leads to a distortion of NGO's actions because, just as businesses, NGOs rely on 'what sells' in order to stay in business". The effect of the dependency attitude by the needs-based approach is revealing. For instance, Mathie and Cunningham (2003, p. 476) show that:

> "people in the communities start to believe what their leaders are saying. They begin to see themselves as deficient and incapable of taking charge of their lives and of the community. Not surprisingly, community members no longer act like citizens; instead they begin to act like 'clients' or consumers of services with no incentive".

The emphasis here is that capacity-building inhibits any community optimism for engaging with the structures of power, by exploring the deficits, rather than the potential of the communities. Thus, the project space isolates communities from engagement with external structures of power (Pitchford and Hendsen, 2008).

The critical theorists argue that civic action cannot be fostered through the community development projects. They see the potential of the communities through the role of community leadership in mobilising, organising, and informing (Walls, 2015) and wary of the professional approach to communities that fails to foster organic linkages with the communities. They argue that, through the *theory of change,* NGOs can hardly engage in organic processes at the local level. For instance, Pitchford and Hendsen (2008) note that, in spite of spending time with communities, practitioners spend time at their desks and in

meetings. The role of the practitioner, proposed by social capital theory, is more managerial, focusing on capacity-building, funding, policy development and project implementation. Thus, "practitioners are unable to engage in an organic process within communities" (Pitchford and Hendsen, 2008 pp. 97). Similarly, Edwards (2014, p. 124) notes that:

> "it is not difficult to start up new NGOs…a task that fits comfortably with the donor agencies' tendency to focus on the short term and the easily measurable, or to invest in the physical infrastructure of the non-profit sector. But, by themselves, these interventions do little. They are not genuine attempts to facilitate the evolution of organic patterns of associational life, but misguided attempts to shape their destiny according to predetermined norms".

This shows the lack of agreement on the role of the community facilitator by the theorists. Those who propose the social capital theory and community capacity building, support the professional and depoliticised role of the community facilitator, while others would like to see the approach to communities through the role of the community organiser for political action.

2.8 Conclusion

The discussion examined the distinct approaches by the civic republican perspective and the empowerment approach concerning citizens' organisation. While the former assumes abridged socio-economic inequalities and emphasises the self-organisation of citizens to limit the state, the later deliberately targets the poor through community development projects.

I discussed the apolitical approach of the theorisation on empowerment. First, the idea of citizenship and community does not suggest building political networks that would foster accountability. Secondly, the project approach targets the communities as beneficiaries of social services. Therefore, the theorisation does not clarify on how the poor can engage politically through the project space. Thirdly, the idea of representative local government is significant in the empowerment approach, although the theorisation assumes the benevolence of the elected representatives in local government. While the rights-based approach posits that the poor can claim rights, it ignores that they cannot challenge power when they are

unorganised. Fourthly, the discussion clarified on the non-market conceptualisation of poverty, in terms of social service delivery indicators that was popularised in the 1970s. This understanding of poverty marked a shift from the modernisation theory that emphasised structural transformation from a peasant society to a modern society. Finally, the chapter examined the rationalisation for social capital theory to foster associational life through the poverty projects. In general, the chapter demonstrates the lack of a cohesive theoretical framework that can be replicated.

3. NGOs and Citizenship

3.1 Introduction

The chapter discusses the expected role of the NGOs as community facilitator in the empowerment theorisation. As indicated earlier, the empowerment approach draws on both the civic republican perspective and post-Marxism. This discussion focuses on the concept of citizenship, which is at the core of the civic republican theory. Citizenship denotes voluntary organisation and embeds networks of trust. The civic republican idea on citizenship is juxtaposed with the community organising approach, which emphasises creating linkages. Linkages help to form trust, foster feedback mechanisms and information flow, questioning by the community, and political learning.

For the civic republican theory, membership in voluntary organisations is integral to the idea of citizenship. However, the empowerment approach suggests non-membership organisations (the NGOs), undertaking the role of voluntary organisations. It is important to note that voluntary organisations, NGOs, and spontaneous organising, derive their legitimacy from non-electoral representation (Maia, 2012). However, unlike the NGOs, the voluntary organisations and activist organising emphasise the linkages with the people they represent. While the social capital theory suggests networks of trust, and the community organising approach emphasises linkages, there is an absence of theorisation on the relationship between the NGOs and the communities that would foster linkages. How, then, can the NGOs pursue both 'citizenship' (the civic republican idea) and creating linkages (community organising)? I show that the NGOs, pursue neither of these perspectives.

The first part of the chapter critiques the pursuit of citizenship by the NGOs as non-membership organisations. Part two illuminates the weak NGO linkages with the communities through their roles in service delivery and advocacy, and questions the extent that the NGOs can live up to the expectation of mobilisation.

Part three examines the extent that the NGOs embrace the activist approach. The main question for the chapter is: how may the NGOs mobilise citizens to advocate for themselves if the NGOs have weak linkages? The section discusses the expected role of NGOs as mobilisers. The expectations on the NGO roles concerning politics and legitimacy derive from the theorisation on empowerment. King (2015b, p. 742) reminds that:

> "NGOs are increasingly implored to 'return to their roots' by supporting disadvantaged groups to reject the de-politicised participatory spaces promoted within an inclusive liberal paradigm and claim their own spaces which allow for the participation of previously marginalised actors on more equal terms".

NGOs assume the role of voluntary associations and are expected to scrutinise the failures of government through research (and are therefore political), and they are expected to represent the liberal values. NGOs have been assigned to these roles, and defend their legitimacy through non-electoral representation. The discussion examines the extent that the NGOs have met these expectations.

The scope of the discussion covers the NGO role at the local (sub-national) level to foster citizens' organisation for accountability. Moreover, as noted in the thesis outline and chapter two, this chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the theorisation on the NGO roles in empowerment.

3.2 NGOs and citizenship formation

The preceding chapter underlined the understanding in political philosophy that membership in voluntary organisations is integral to citizenship and the community as a political unit. In addition, it was indicated that the concept of citizenship denotes voluntary organisation. However, the empowerment approach suggests non-membership organisations (the NGOs), undertaking the role of voluntary organisations. The chapter critiques the contradiction that NGOs as non-membership organisations pursue citizenship.

In the low-income countries, NGOs have assumed the following roles of voluntary organisations: i) *service provision* (such as education, community health care services); ii)

advocacy /campaigning (lobbying governments or businesses on identified priorities); iii) *watchdog* (monitoring government compliance with human rights treaties); iv) *building active citizenship* (catalysts for civic engagement at the local level as well as national governance) (Cooper, 2018). Building active citizenship necessitates the mobilisation of citizens, and AfDB (2012, p. 10) summarises the mobilisation role of NGOs as providing "opportunities to bring communities together for collective action, *mobilising society to articulate demands and voice concerns at local,* national, regional and international levels".

The discussion explores whether and how the NGOs may undertake the role of citizenship formation at the local level. To what extent can NGOs enhance the organisation and mobilisation of the poor? First, it is important to clarify the distinction between NGOs and civil society, and the challenge that they face as non-membership organisations. Therefore, the next section problematises the conflation of NGOs with civil society. The discussion also questions the conflation of membership organisations with civil society organisations, even when they do not represent liberal values.

3.2.1 NGOs and civil society

The United Nations which pioneered the concept of NGOs in 1945, defined them as both membership and non-membership organisations. The term 'NGOs' was articulated in Article 71 of the Charter without providing a definition or acknowledgement of the diverse contexts. Seven decades later, the United Nations acknowledged that:

> "There is considerable confusion surrounding this term in United Nations circles. Elsewhere, NGO has become shorthand for public-benefit NGOs—a type of civil society organisation (CSO) that is formally constituted to provide a benefit to the general public or the world at large through the provision of advocacy or services. They include organisations devoted to environment, development, human rights and peace and their international networks. They may or may not be membership-based" (United Nations, 2004 p.13).

This study defines NGOs as donor-funded non-membership organisations.

There is little agreement about the concept of civil society (Hann and Dunn, 1996). The concept has been understood in the antitheses: *civil society/state of nature* by Hobbes and Rousseau; *civil society/rude or barbarous society* by Adam Ferguson, and *civil society/state* by Hegel, Tocqueville, Gramsci, Marx, and Habermas (Varty, 1997; Kaldor, 2003; Chandhoke, 2010). Yet, there are even divergent perspectives within the version of civil society/state. For "de Tocqueville (1835, 1840), civil society limits the state; for Hegel (1821), civil society is a necessary stage in the formation of the state; for Marx, civil society is the source of the power of the state; for Gramsci (1929–1935), civil society is the space where the state constructs its hegemony in alliance with the dominant classes" (Chandhoke, 2010 p. 609), and for Habermas, the public sphere, i.e engagement in critical public debate. Both Gramsci, Tocqueville, and Habermas influenced the contemporary understanding of civil society.

The literature acknowledges the understanding of civil society as the space outside the family, market, and state, constituting the roles that individuals cannot accomplish alone (Mohan, 2002). McLaverty (2010 p. 305) provides a useful understanding of the concept and indicates the "ongoing debate about whether the market economy is part of civil society", since some scholars "exclude the market economy" and "understand '*civil society' as a sphere of social interaction between the economy and state*, composed above all…*the sphere of associations (especially voluntary associations), social movements, and forms of public communication*" (emphasis mine). Therefore, it is important to conceptualise civil society as the space between the state and the economy where citizens organise themselves to address matters of common interest. The idea of limiting the state is integral to the conceptualisation of civil society. The discussion draws on this understanding of civil society, with the view to limit the state.

The thesis identifies dissonance between political philosophy and empowerment literature on the composition of civil society and its role in limiting the state. From the perspective of political philosophy, "the conflation of NGOs with civil society can be problematic from a definitional perspective…thus rendering 'civil society' itself

conceptually vague" (Mercer, 2002 p. 10). The civic republican perspective draws on the citizens' capabilities to organise themselves, but the NGO role of mobilisation of citizens to challenge the state is not envisaged. In political philosophy, the idea of citizens' organisation (both in terms of voluntary organisations and spontaneous organising) is crucial to the conceptualisation of the space between the state and the market, both from the Tocquevillean, the activist approach (which draws on Gramsci), and Habermas' idea of the public sphere. These perspectives of civil society emphasise citizen's organisation as an organic process. In summary, Tocqueville's idea of civil society emphasises that people organise their affairs by themselves, including: social services, self-help and associational life. On the other hand, Gramsci sees civil society as an arena for struggle by the marginalised to express their political interests and to influence politics and as the space where the state constructs its hegemony in alliance with the dominant classes. Gramsci criticised the idea of civil society as theorised by Friedrich Hegel. The latter focused on the 'bourgeois society', which was concerned about their own freedom from domination by the nobility and individual freedom from traditional bonds. This bourgeois society of merchants, entrepreneurs, and civil servants ignored other citizen concerns. Gramsci particularly influenced the radical perspective on community organising, so that activism is now embraced within the liberal democracy as well (Chandhoke, 2010; Walls, 2015). Similarly, Habermas like Arendt's *space of appearance*, suggests political discourse by citizens in an open and peaceful manner on matters affecting the common good of the citizens. Clearly, the role of NGOs in civil society is not articulated in political philosophy.

The empowerment understanding of *civil society constitutes a wide range of organisations that include*: NGOs, community groups, trade unions, cultural or indigenous groups, faith-based organisations, professional associations, grassroots organisations, community or cooperatives unions, online networks and communities and many more (VanDyck 2017; Banks and Hulme, 2012). On the other hand, the *empowerment understanding of NGOs* includes: philanthropic foundations, church development agencies, academic think-tanks and other organisations focusing on issues such as human rights, gender, health, agricultural development, social welfare, the environment, and indigenous peoples

(Clarke, 1998). However, unlike the membership organisations, NGOs are operated by professional employees or expatriates, and funded by international donors. The NGO label is generally applied to international or national organisations, i.e. "organisations involved in development" (Fisher, 1998 p. 5) targeting disadvantaged communities, but reporting to external constituencies that fund their activities.

Therefore, the literature on empowerment promotes NGOs as key players in the sphere of social interaction between the economy and state. NGOs are described as a key "part of civil society" (Banks and Hulme, 2012 p. 20), a "subset of civil society" (Kaldor, 2003 p. 6), or "only one actor within the broader civil society" (Banks and Hume, 2012 p. 20). NGOs dominate the civil society space in Uganda, so that the the term civil society usually refers to NGOs (Mugisha et al. 2020), despite that the majority of them are apolitical (Daniel and Neubert, 2019). The decline in industrial growth in Uganda since the start of the neoliberal era, inhibited the structural conditions for member-based civil society (Mugisha et al. 2020). For instance, between 1958 and 1961, the number of trade unions and union membership in the country were at the highest as well as the largest form of organisation, owing to the rise in industrial activity. Thus, Mugisha et al. (2020) classify CSOs in Uganda into *old CSOs* i.e member-based organisations, and the *new CSOs* i.e. the NGOs that were urshered in by the neoliberal era and saw their proliferation in the country since the 1980s to 14,000 by 2019 (Okello, 2019).

The idea of NGOs distorts the meaning of citizenship, so that "there is no consensus about what civil society is, or what it does" in the developing countries (Edwards, 2014 p. 129). The empowerment understanding of the role of NGOs as "contributing to stronger civil societies across the developing world" (Banks and Hulme, 2012 p. 24), i.e. that NGOs 'strengthen / bolster/ build civil society' is conceptually obscure. Moreover, as some NGOs are created and funded by governments, it is questionable whether all NGOs are "non-governmental" (Bendaña, 2006 p. 12).

Further, while the political role of NGOs as non-membership organisations in terms of fostering citizenship or influencing the state is questionable, the idea of civil society in the context of authoritarism is equally problematic. Scholars question the existence of civil society in certain parts of the world (Edwards, 2014) and argue that the concept has limited relevance or little meaning in undemocratic contexts, i.e. outside its Western origins (Lewis, 2002; Lewis, 2019; Blaney and Pasha, 1993). The concept of civil society is historically specific to the social and political conditions in Europe and North America. In particular, the structural transformation in the organisation of economic and social life and the political socialisation to liberal rights influenced associational life in Europe and North America. Therefore, scholars query the transfer of the concept of civil society to non-Western countries.

In addition, the concept of civil society under authoritarianism is debatable, based on the liberal democratic thinking that "only a democratic state can create a democratic civil society" and that "only a democratic civil society can sustain a democratic state" (Walzer, 1991 p. 302). Thus, Kasfir (1998, p. 135) queries that: "how does one get inside this circle in which the state and civil society each act as prior conditions for the other"? Clearly, de Tocqueville's conceptualisation of civil society, refers to non-authoritarian states. According to the liberal democratic model, only "the democratic state is capable of facilitating the freedom of association, that *sine qua non* of civil society" (Wnuk-Lipiński et al. 2007 p. 675). It is not surprising that "across most authoritarian regimes, CSOs often face the threat of deregistration, while civil society workers are often tortured, arrested or placed under continuous surveillance" (Mugisha et al. 2020 p. 12). However, while associational life thrives in a democratic context, social movements helped to challenge autocratic regimes in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1980s (Jezard, 2018), and in Latin America in the 1970s. Yet it is also clear that the organisational rights of social movements are suppressed under autocratic regimes, as discussed in section 3.4.4

It is therefore a paradox to conceptualise civil society in the context of authoritarianism, just as in the peasant and poverty context, as argued in this thesis. Thus, the study findings illuminate the passivity of the local communities in Uganda to influence the

state. The study shows that the organisations of the poor are typically oriented to making ends meet, and are prey for patronage rather than limiting the state. In the developing countries, the role of civil society in democratisation (i.e. the transition from autocratic to a democratic system of government), as a bottom-up process in opposition to the state is minimal. Thus, while the good governance agenda promotes the NGOs, their role in influencing the transition from authoritarianism to democracy is constrained by state repression and the lack of autonomy due to donor funding conditions, as discussed in the following section.

As noted earlier, the discussion questions the conflation of membership organisations with civil society organisations, even when they do not represent liberal values. For instance, scholars are divided on whether ethnic and religious organisations in Africa should be included in civil society, as "they do not share the basic norms of liberal democracy"; the values and norms of the various forms of self-organisation in Africa are "not compatible with the notion of civil society" (Daniel and Neubert, 2019 p. 182). The membership organisations in the developing countries are not exempt from undemocratic practices; some of the organisations face challenges of accountability. For instance in Uganda, executive management of the cooperative societies have often not been accountable to the boards (Mugisha et al. 2020). Moreover, it is questionable whether religious and ethnic organisations advance liberal values.

It is beyond the scope of this discussion to examine the role of ethnic associations in politics, since the thesis is focused on political accountability. However, the empirical study on Malawi by Kayira et al. (2019), gives an indication on the roles of the ethnic associations. The empirical study on Malawi analysed the three associations that were "the most well-established: Mulhako wa Alhomwe (MwA), Mzimba Heritage Association (MZIHA), and Chewa Heritage Foundation (CHEFO)". The study identified that these associations were primarily cultural and social associations, organised along ethnic lines. Kayira et al. (2019, p. 718) noted the "potential for ethnic associations to be used as a means of political mobilisation", particularly Mulhako wa Alhomwe (MwA) which was "the only group that

was founded by ruling party politicians, including the president of the country". Kayira et al. (2019, p. 718) add that:

> The potential for MwA to be used for political mobilisation is also driven by the fact that the ethnic group it claims to represent, the Lhomwe, does not have a strong and autonomous chieftaincy that can constrain political elites, while traditional authorities significantly constrain the political utility of both CHEFO and MZIHA".

The fact that these associations are geographically concentrated, such as MZIHA, the ethnic association of the M'mbelwa Ngoni of Northern Malawi, indicates the difficulty to build social capital. Thus, Deng (1997, p.1.) suggests that ethnicity is Africa's predicament, noting that:

> "Some see ethnicity as a source of conflict; others see it as a tool used by political entrepreneurs to promote their ambitions. In reality, it is both. Ethnicity, especially when combined with territorial identity, is a reality that exists independently of political maneuvers. To argue that ethnic groups are unwitting tools of political manipulation is to underestimate a fundamental social reality. On the other hand, ethnicity is clearly a resource for political manipulation and entrepreneurship".

Deng refers to Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana who outlawed parties organised on tribal or ethnic bases and Houphouet-Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire who coopted ethnic groups through shrewd distribution of ministerial posts, civil service jobs, social services, and development projects. These examples show that membership associations in Africa do not represent liberal values, i.e, equality and impartiality. Therefore, these associations operate as appendages of the state.

It is important to note that some from the activist stance completely reject the conflation of NGOs with civil society. They argue that NGOs are institutionalist. For the activist stance, "the key question is not what civil society 'is' inherently, but rather how power is organised differently", historically or comparatively (Cox et al. 2009 p.15). Cox et al. (2009, p.4) further critique that "the habit of deferring to authority is so ingrained in much of the policy world - among academics as well as NGO policy workers – that it is still common to find simple statements of the kind "civil society means this". From the radical perspective, 'civil society' is a normative concept, and is therefore contested. Besides, the activist approach rejects the notion of 'civility'. For instance, Shils (1991, p. 12) suggests

that civility "considers others as fellow-citizens of equal dignity in their rights and obligations…it postulates that antagonists are also members of the same society". Similarly, Bendaña (2006, p.1) argues that all actors can be regarded as part of 'civil society', but "that term…is a site of struggle, particularly when the notions of civility—as models of analysis and action—are also shaped by existing power structures and the resistance they engender".

Thus, a recent definition in the 'International Encyclopedia of Civil Society' collates the Gramscian and the Tocquevillean perspectives and describes civil society as "the arena of unconstrained collective action, arranged around shared interests, tasks and values" (Irish 2010, p. 166) that includes a wide range of associations as well as social movements (Anheier and Toepler, 2010). Although the notion of 'civility' dismisses the use of violence, civil disobedience in mild forms is accepted as legitimate. The term civil society became popular in the 1980s with the non-state protest movements that challenged autocratic regimes in Central and Eastern Europe (Jezard, 2018). Therefore, the concept has evolved from associational networks to include social movements. Chandhoke (2010, p.178) reminds that the term 'civil society' became popularised in the 1980s, where people had historically struggled "to emancipate themselves from unbearable political situations". The activist approach reminds of the protest movements in authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe and Latin America, and Cox et al. (2009, p.4) argue that "popular self-organisation has normally, throughout world history, been anathema to ruling elites".

A pertinent question in the civil society debate is: Can the civil society space be "opened to the most excluded and unorganised — the fundamental building block in the effort to create another world?" (Bendaña, 2006 p. 13). Can the NGOs' approach respond better to the claims of the poor and marginalised? Chandhoke (2010, p.182) suggests that, we must "perceive civil society from the vantage point of the marginalised groups". The activist perspective problematises the idea of 'civility' as exclusionary, in terms of how citizens must be organised. The exclusionary tendencies of the 'civil society' concept, relates to the rural populations that dominate the low-income countries and aspire to be heard. Thus, the view that the 'civil society' concept targets the urban middle-class agenda while the

marginalised remain unrepresented is noteworthy. Chandhoke (2010, p. 183) figuratively remarks that: "therefore, in order to find a voice, marginal groups may well have to storm the ramparts of civil society, to break down the gates, and make a forcible entry into the sphere". The activist stance draws on Gramsci's argument that, wherever and whenever states – whether absolutist or socialist – deny their people political and civil rights, we can expect the eruption of discontent against exclusions from structures of representation (Chandhoke, 2010). In the context of the low-income countries, where elite power is not easily challenged coupled with unresponsive governments, the relevance of protest movements is undeniable.

From the foregoing, the role of NGOs is not envisaged in the civic republican perspective. However, the empowerment approach promotes NGOs to take on the roles of civil society, outlined in section 3.2. Mohan (2002) posits that NGOs are significant catalysts of democratisation. The empirical research in chapter seven examines the extent that the NGOs are catalysts of accountability at the local level.

Further distinction between the NGOs and membership organisations concerns funding and autonomy. It is observed that NGOs cease to be critical opponents of the state. For instance, Makumbe (1998, p. 311) argues that:

> "the majority of civic groups in Africa, are not capable of sustaining themselves without the support of either the state or foreign international donors. Thus their autonomy is seriously compromised from the start… Civic groups that are dependent on resources provided by international donor agencies equally find themselves constrained to be mere implementers of the donor agencies' agenda".

Moreover, the donors have no expectation of funding NGOs indefinitely, and unless the NGOs can develop local linkages and local resources of their own, they cannot sustain themselves when foreign funding ceases. Kasfir (1998, p. 134) notes that:

> "Donors rarely create autonomous organisations. Indeed, an aid-created independent civil organisation comes close to being an oxymoron. Furthermore, donors have no expectation of helping them forever. Unless the new externally funded African organisations can develop effective social roots and local resources of their own, they will die on the vine as soon as their foreign patrons depart or lose interest".

Scholars question the effectiveness of NGOs in the demand for civil liberties, especially the right to freedom of expression and the right to associate, the rule of law, limiting state power, and political accountability (Chandhoke, 2010). The argument that NGOs strengthen civil society and hence democracy by improving the articulation of community interests and representation is countered by the Gramscian position that, NGO proliferation simply institutionalises existing patterns of exclusion. The NGO agenda promotes professional and technical activities (Lewis and Kanji, 2009). It is therefore not surprising that NGOs are often described in terms of the sectors of their specialisation as social development agents such human rights, gender, health, environmental, or agriculture rather than political actors.

Therefore, Encarnacion (2011) argues that the indiscriminating and shallow perspective of civil society (i.e. NGOs) poses a threat to civil society in the low-income countries. In addition, Edwards (2011) notes the tensions between radical and neo-liberal interpretations of civil society, the former seeing it as the ground from which to challenge the status quo and build new alternatives, and the latter as the service-providing, not-for-profit sector necessitated by market failure (Edwards, 2011). Clarke (1998, p. 40) notes that:

> "Liberals see NGOs as a 'third sector', remedying the institutional weaknesses of both the state and private sector in promoting socio-economic development. Neoliberals, meanwhile, see NGOs as part of the private sector, of socio-economic significance mainly, delivering services to the poor cheaply, equitably and efficiently. To intellectuals and activists on the left, however, NGOs carry hopes of a 'new politics' that eschews the capture of state power and the centralising tendencies of the Marxist-Leninist movements of which many NGOs were born, but which retains the commitment to a structural transformation of society".

From the foregoing it is clear that "civil society" and "NGOs" are contested concepts. They are interpreted in relation to specific contexts, as well as by the academic orientation or theoretical perspective within which they are advanced. We may agree with Chandhoke (2010, p. 178) that:

> "The moment that we think of civil society as a welcome alternative to the state, we conveniently forget that the concept has always been problematic for political theory…If civil society is hailed by almost everyone, from trade unions, social movements, the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, NGOs, lending agencies, and borrowing agencies to states – both chauvinistic and democratic…there must be something wrong. Because this understanding of the concept excludes much more than it includes…a watered-down concept that has ceased to have any meaning, least of all for those who are supposed to benefit from it".

Nevertheless, "NGOs continue to rise in prevalence and prominence" (Banks and Hulme, 2012 p. 4), and "perceptions remain that NGOs will and must continue" (Banks and Hulme, 2012 p, 20).

The ensuing discussion explores the shifts in the NGO roles from service delivery and advocacy, to mobilisation. The section critiques the debates on the NGO role in the transition to mobilisation, in terms of their re-orientation to the local communities and supporting them to be advocates for themselves. The discussion explores the possibilities for local communities to demand rights, and how NGOs can play a part in the mobilisation role of civil society. First, the discussion questions how NGOs can overcome the weak linkages with local communities in service delivery and advocacy before they can engage in mobilisation.

3.4 The changing roles of NGOs

Section 3.2 highlighted the NGO roles in literature, namely: i) *service provision* (such as education, community health care services); ii) *advocacy /campaigning* (lobbying governments or businesses on identified priorities); iii) *watchdog* (monitoring government compliance with human rights treaties); iv) *building active citizenship* (catalysts for civic engagement at the local level as well as national governance) (Cooper, 2018). It was noted that building active citizenship necessitates the mobilisation of citizens. Some scholars suggest a trajectory of the NGO roles from service delivery, advocacy, to mobilisation. The discussion examines the debates on the constraints to make the transition to mobilisation, i.e: Why have the NGOs focused on service delivery and advocacy? I show that the

disconnection of the NGOs from the local communities flags the effectiveness of NGOs as catalysts for mobilisation. The discussion questions the extent that NGOs can support the local communities to speak for themselves.

Drawing on the empowerment theorisation, Korten (1987) anticipated four 'generations' of NGOs in a continuum of roles from: a) the focus on basic needs for relief; b) to small-scale, self-help and local development projects; c) to influencing institutional and policy change through advocacy; d) and gradually to the fourth generational strategy in which NGOs focus on community organisation, mobilisation, and coalition-building (Korten, 1990). It is this fourth category of the NGO role that is increasingly debated as a new focus for NGOs to build citizenship. Apart from analysing these NGO roles as a continuum, Korten's fourth generation strategy illuminates the importance of citizen engagement at the local level. There is also a perspective that in "practice prominent NGOs in the developing world pursue a combination of different generational strategies" (Clarke, 1998 p. 42). For the activists, Korten's typology suggests the possibility for the expression of citizenship unconstrained by institutionalisation. Korten (1987) supposes the building of close linkages with local communities and supporting the creation of social movements. However, this leads to the debate on the NGOs' willingness and ability to make the transition to partner with social movements. Conversely, the debate explores social movements and NGOs as totally distinct spheres wherein the disconnection from local communities by NGOisation (institutionalisation) remains an enduring limitation.

The conventional explanation for the dominant role of NGOs in service delivery is the failure of the state to deliver services for all its citizens (due to by limited budgets, poor governance, and corruption). This necessitated the *gap filling* by NGOs as service providers (Sternberg, 2010). Recognising that individuals and communities were unable to attain these services on their own, NGOs took on this responsibility (Sternberg 2010). The idea of NGOs as actors in civil society was then advanced by donors. The envisaged change with the proliferation of NGOs, extends beyond service provision to challenging the status quo and

building new alternatives. NGOs were also preferred because of their perceived ability to contribute to democratisation through advocacy and representation of voice.

The question, however, is whether and how NGOs may steer the mobilisation of the poor. Can NGOs live up to the expectation of mobilising for rights demands? The increasingly technical and service-oriented NGO focus has been met by a high level of disillusionment, as catalyst for citizenship formation. This challenge emerges from the conflicting approaches by social capital theory that fosters service delivery and the activist approach that advances the critique of the state by the citizens. For instance, King (2015b) examines a case study on a research and development NGO in Western Uganda (RD) that "seeks promote socio-economic and political empowerment by working within the existing system rather than imagining systemic change. It attempts to improve market access for farmers, for example, but doesn't engage in campaigns for land reform" (King 2015b, p. 744). RD has multiple programmes, but its rights and governance programme is implemented within the government's participatory governance mechanisms. The NGO aims at increasing "citizen influence over resource allocation and collective action for the improved use and maintenance of local resources" (King, 2015b p. 745). RD organises village and parish development planning processes focusing on primary health and education sectors. However, the overarching objective of RD is to support farmers by providing training and grants for crop trials to smallholder groups. From 2007 to 2011, RD had networked with over 500 farmer groups across the region. While RD helped to increase household income through savings and credit and sustainable production, the farmers were able to promote political leaders from their farmer groups. Thus, King (2015b, p. 742), argues that: "popular organisation around livelihood concerns emerges here as a more effective approach to enhancing the political influence of smallholder farmers than strategies aimed solely at promoting citizen participation within local government planning spaces". King (2015b), considers RD's focus on increasing participation for the rural communities in formal decentralised planning spaces to be "less effective in enhancing their political capabilities than those facilitating social mobilisation through the formation of producer groups and federations". However, it is important to note that the farmer groups supported their members

in political representation; they were not involved in analysis and questioning government. Therefore, as long as the NGOs do not embrace both theoretical perspectives of empowerment (social capital theory and the demand for rights), their orientation remains largely focused on basic needs. NGOs, as non-membership organisations are unlikely to build linkages with the citizens and mobilise them to engage in the demand for rights.

3.4.1 Weak NGO-local linkages

How do the NGOs' roles in service delivery and advocacy threaten citizenship formation? Sections 3.2 and 3.4 indicated the focus of the discussion, i.e. to explore the shifts in the NGO roles from service delivery and advocacy, to mobilisation. Two distinct perspectives characterise the debate on NGO linkages with the local communities. On one hand, the critique on the effectiveness of the NGOs greatly points to their *narrow focus* of the civil society roles. Therefore, the critical theorists see this narrow focus as a threat to civil society, characterised by an uncritical and superficial stance that evades politics. On the other hand, scholars trace the NGO disconnection from local communities to *dependency on donor funding*, which compromises their grassroots orientation to influence the development agenda. The critical theorists argue that, with the dependency on donor funding, "NGOs lost the independence necessary to openly challenge policies detrimental to the poor" (Bendaña, 2006 p. 13). Organic processes have traditionally raised funds from members of the community organisations and private sources, as a strategy against co-option by, or suspicion of external interests (Walls, 2015).

Conversely, the weak NGO linkages with each other impact on the NGO-State relations. Campbell (1996) notes the lack of trust between the state and NGOs in Africa. It is clear that authoritarian regimes restrict activist NGOs. "In some instances, the state promulgates a plethora of legal instruments targeted at curtailing the activities of NGOs" (Hofisi and Hofisi, 2013 p. 291). For instance, when Ethiopia's parliament promulgated a law in 2009 to raise transparency and accountability of civil society organisations (Anderson, 2017). The Ethiopian government stipulated that NGOs would only receive a maximum of 10% of their funding from abroad, because it was "suspicious of foreign influence"

(Anderson, 2017 p.1). Similarly, under the Mengistu dictatorship in Ethiopia, NGOs were restricted to provide only social services, and NGOs that criticised the government were expelled (Hofisi and Hofisi, 2013). Campbell (1996) notes that a French NGO was expelled from Ethiopia after it criticised the government for its resettlement policy. Other African countries such as Nigeria have imposed new restrictions on NGOs (Anderson, 2017). The weak linkages between the NGOs and the communities implies that the NGOs challenge the state without engaging the citizens.

Both the narrow role of NGOs and the dependency on donor funding, are argued to have impacted on the effectiveness of the NGOs to contribute to the necessary transformative and political change for the local communities (Bebbington, 2005). The process of change is inherently political and necessitates a political character of civil society actors, which the NGOs lack. Banks and Hulme (2012, p. 31) assert that, "only through this change, however, can they contribute to the redistributions and transformations necessary for longer-term structural change that tackles the roots causes – rather than symptoms of – poverty and its related social and economic vulnerabilities".

What is the extent of the engagement of NGOs in politics? Clarke (1998, p. 40) notes that, although "NGO action is intrinsically political", their contribution to political change and democratisation in the developing countries is questionable (Harsh et al. 2010). According to Clarke (1998), there is lack of clarity on how NGOs should engage in politics, which constrains the understanding of the contribution that NGOs should make. The absence of political science analysis on the proliferation of NGOs and the general NGO literature implies that "important questions go largely unanswered" (Clarke, 1998 p. 52). Similarly, Echeverri-Gent (1993) argues that the political science literature does not provide intimations for the emergence of NGOs. Political science has not taken interest in NGOs because they have no place in political theorisation on democracy.

Since much of the literature on NGOs has been generated "by NGOs activists or by social scientists with close links to funding agencies with a largely donor-driven research

agenda" (Clarke, 1998 p. 39), the perspective that the literature on NGOs embeds the vested interests of the donors who promote the research is predominant. It is not surprising that the critique on the proliferation of NGOs maintains ideological perspectives. It is argued that "because of the role of donor agencies in funding research, the contemporary NGO literature views NGOs primarily as social development agencies, obscuring the political character" (Clarke, 1998 p. 39). It becomes difficult to identify the political role of NGOs. This inadequate understanding of the expected involvement of NGOs in politics has also led to the tendency to conceptualise NGOs charity organisations. This has generated disillusionment about the political impact of their activities as pressure groups.

The managerial and technical character of NGOs implies that their role as social development agents, rather political actors, is prioritised. Edwards and Hulme, (1996 cited by Clarke, 1998 p.38) note that:

> "donor support for NGOs is predicated at least as much on their supposed role in democratising the political process as on their role in the provision of welfare services, [yet] rarely in the literature is it made clear exactly how NGOs…are supposed to contribute to 'democratisation' and the formal political process".

While the relief and welfare NGOs remain the largest group (Brass, 2012), the transition from the role of service provider to advocacy has remained non-political.

The professional role of NGOs in service delivery implies that NGO engagement with local communities is depoliticised (Kamat, 2004). In essence, the NGOs in service delivery provision aim to offset the dependency stimulated by first generation NGO strategies (relief supplies), by instigating the local communities to challenge the local elites through service delivery/community development projects (Clarke, 1998). The local communities are expected to put pressure on the local governments through their elected leaders. The emphasis on social service delivery/community development projects, implies that communities are compartmentalised into project groups. It is therefore not surprising to find that the political role of NGOs in service delivery is insignificant. Thus, Sanyal (1994, p. 40)

argues that "the political impact of bottom-up [NGO] projects has been…less striking than their economic impact". This questions the political goal of the social capital theory.

3.4.2 Accountability

The weak NGO linkages with the communities implies that the NGOs are unlikely to mobilise the citizens to challenge the power of the government. Bendaña (2006) clarifies that the apolitical character of NGOs is inextricably linked to the conceptualisation of accountability as a technical process rather than a political process. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines accountability as "the quality or state of being accountable; especially: an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions". From this perspective, it is follows that accountability concerns a relationship between A and B, where A is accountable to B if they must explain their actions to B, and could be adversely affected by B if B doesn't like the account (Goetz and Jenkins, 2002 p. 5). Bendell (2005) argues that since accountability is desirable, the ideal is a society where all decision making is accountable to those affected by those decisions or indecisions. This ideal resonates with the democratic values and the understanding of rights, which should not narrowly be conceptualised in terms of electoral processes in politics. Rather "the basic idea of *demos kratos*, or people rule, is that people govern themselves…Organisations of all forms, not just governmental, influence people's lives" (Bendell, 2005 p. 2).

Scholars therefore argue that institutions that allege to be democratic, i.e claiming to provide opportunities for people to govern themselves, would be able to ensure that a community of people can engage in decision-making processes on what concerns them. Bendell (2005, p. 3), problematises the technical character of accountability noting that, "organisations can be assessed in terms of how they contribute to democratic governance of society". It is appropriate and desirable for organisations and people to be accountable (Lister 1998). According to Bendell (2005, p. 2), the idea of "democratic accountability" by non-elected representatives and organisations allows for the "'demos' (the people) to make claims for the democratic control (directly or indirectly) of organisations especially those affected by the organisation".

In other words, democratic accountability needs to be conceptualised a process by which organisations of all forms build relationships of trust with the communities. Trust is important to build linkages, not only between the citizens as suggested by social capital theory, but also between the organisations and the communities. Voluntary organisations base their interactions on trust. "Trust is valuable social capital that is essential for effective partnerships…Yet, how to establish trust in culturally diverse communities is elusive for many researchers, practitioners, and agencies" (MacIntyre et al. 2013 p. 263). It is curious how the communities perceive the NGOs. Cooke (2004, p. 52) indicates the hidden community transcripts concerning NGOs, noting that:

> "Participatory change agents should ask themselves how they would appear in histories of the engagement with development written by or for participants; and must realise that whether or not they are being actually written, they are inevitably placed in a historical context by those with whom they work".

For instance, Jelinek's (2006, p. 22) study on the community perceptions on NGOs in Afghanistan showed that although "Afghans have an inherent distrust of foreigners…but people generally rely more on NGOs to provide them with services than they do on the government" (Jelinek, 2006 p. 12). Therefore, building trust needs to go beyond achieving project outcomes.

The idea of downward accountability aims at building trust with the citizens. However, scholars dismiss downward accountability as unworkable (Najam, 1996). Downward accountability is a practice that emerged within the NGO sector following the 1994 the Rwandan genocide, which called for the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) standards to enhance NGO management, complaints mechanisms and downward accountability to communities. The HAP standards, in particular assert that being accountable to crisis-affected people, "helps organisations to develop quality programmes that meet those people's needs" (HAP, 2010 p.1). Whilst the HAP standards are focused solely upon humanitarian work, downward accountability has been applied by some NGOs and describes the relationship between the NGO and its beneficiaries to give the latter a say over NGO practices (Edwards and Hulme, 1996). The rationale for 'democratic

accountability' however is absent in the application of downward accountability. The situation "where a less powerful actor (such as an intended beneficiary) uses accountability mechanisms to influence the actions of a more powerful actor" (Jacobs and Wilford, 2010 p. 799) remains ellusive in the NGO sector. Although scholars have suggested that downward accountability can improve the effectiveness of NGO work for the poor and marginalised groups, it is clear that the practice fails to overcome the unequal decision-making power. Downward accountability is rarely attained, and hence minimally prioritised by NGOs.

A few NGOs that have executed downward accountability have emphasised community decision-making in project evaluation. For instance, Oxfam (2020, p. 18) asserts that accountability means "working together with communities to decide what success looks like in the context of any project and how we would measure it". Similarly, Christensen (2004) notes that ActionAid International reoriented its accountability to the poor, especially women and children, to measure performance from their perspective. ActionAid International indicates that while acknowledging its accountability to 150,000 donors, governments and its own board "we realised we had no end of upward accountability systems in place, but what we really didn't know was what difference our work was making" (Christensen 2004, p. 1). The problem with the argument that the poor can be empowered through the opportunity of measuring performance (on what is successful and what should be changed) is the power inequality between accountability actors. Bolnick (2008) contends that it is not possible to talk of real participation or equal partnership when the decision to keep power and resources in the hands of professionals and out of the hands of the communities is one of the preconditions of the engagement. Smith (2008, p. 23) defines power as "the capacity, held individually or collectively, to influence either groups or individuals (including oneself) in a given social context". As discussed in chapter two, the project space does not provide the opportunity to engage with external structures of power (Pitchford and Hendsen, 2008).

It is noted that the concerns of financial sustainability and organisational survival drive the erosion of NGOs' original values and mission. The imperatives for financial

survival implies that NGOs have become too close to the donors as the ultimate authorities for accountability. Hofisi and Hofisi (2013) provide an example of an NGO in Uganda that refused to disclose its financial information to the government. Local government staff also noted the unwillingness of NGOs to share information about their budgets and work-plans. "A director of the Ugandan NGO was quoted as saying 'we will tell the district about our activities, but we will discuss money only with those who gave us money'" (Hofisi and Hofisi, 2013 p. 296).

At the same time, since NGOs are not politically accountable to the local communities, they have become too far from the powerless. The prioritisation of institutional survival implies that NGOs are incentivised to keep power over decision-making and the distribution of funds between themselves and community groups highly unequal, developing and maintaining patron–client relationships with beneficiary communities. Bendaña (2006, p. 4) argues that the NGO-donor unequal relationship creates a "confused line of accountability" despite the NGO claim to legitimacy from the local communities. Although the NGO literature focuses on financial accountability, there are strong perspectives that "at the end of the day, accountability is not technical, but political. And accountability to donors makes for confused politics, reducing the rendering of accounts to bookkeeping matters as if the transparent use of funds were an indication of political impact and purpose" (Bendaña, 2006 p. 4).

From the foregoing, the weak local linkages by NGOs are inextricably linked to the unequal power relationships in the aid chain that links NGOs instrumentally to the local communities rather than politically. The unequal power therefore instigates a cycle of excessive dependence on donor funds, which in turn restricts NGO autonomy, and further fuels upward accountability. The NGOs' disconnection from the local communities therefore needs to be understood in terms of the absence of NGO-citizen engagements for political change. A political analysis of NGO roles illuminates the narrow focus by NGOs on technical accountability.

The weak local linkages need to be analysed within the framework of elite representation in advocacy, as discussed in the next section.

3.4.3 Elite representation

Webster and Engberg-Pedersen (2002, p.6) illuminates the challenges the poor face in representation: "first, the interests and concerns of the poor must pass through intermediaries who must identify these interests and concerns, and second because these same intermediaries have their own concerns and interests". It is not surprising that NGOs, just like any bureaucracy, seek to protect their own interests for their own survival, regardless of their impact upon poor communities. NGOs want to maintain an elite status through association with those they have been engaging with (including politicians, civil servants, foundations, journalists and academics), and are not willing to lose that status. The funding that NGOs receive is therefore a stimulus for attaining future funding, rather than about ensuring the sustainability of projects (Green, 2015). In a word, NGOs are criticised for being illegitimate, disconnected from the communities they 'serve', and are in the sector for status and the funding (Green, 2015).

The NGO-donor alignment around resources depicts the constraints of elite representation. Harsh et al. (2010) indicate that the mobilised resources are not fully utilised for the exact community development goals. Harsh et al. (2010) use the concept of 'resource lodging' (the practice of financial, human and material resources concentrated at various points in the aid chain) from donors to recipients. This is not a problem of accountability, but of promoting personal gain through prioritising organisational practices that 'lodge or divert' resources to areas along the way from source to intended targets. Studies show that NGOs' choices of locations can restrict their closeness to disadvantaged groups and communities at the grassroots which urgently need to be reached (Mohan, 2002; Brass, 2012). Brass (2012) distinguishes between the 'saintly', 'self-serving', and 'political' NGOs, in reference to the relevance of NGO location to absolute need, expedient access to services and infrastructure, and patronage networks. For instance, a study on NGOs in Kenya confirmed that convenience was an undeniable effect on the choice of location focusing on proximity to services, rather

than the human development indicators. Thus, NGOs struggle to balance their 'saintly' and 'self-serving' motivations (Brass, 2012) and ease of access becomes a key factor.

The NGOs' choice of location is influenced by donor funding. Koch et al. (2009) note that neither poverty nor poor governance were priorities in the allocation of funds for 61 international NGOs in 13 donor countries. The 'donor-darling'/'donor-orphan' divide was apparent, portrayed by donor presence in those countries. Koch et al. (2009) find no evidence that NGOs prioritise the most vulnerable communities that are barely reached by the state. The struggle to tailor programmes to local needs and realities in a donor-driven funding environment implies that donor priorities and interests take precedence. Consequently, Bebbington (1997, p. 1759) argues that an NGO operates as a "subcontracted development consultancy". For instance, Morfit (2011) elucidates the donor prioritisation of HIV/AIDS in Malawi while funding for sectors with more pressing needs such as agriculture 'dried up' as 'HIV/AIDS' became popularised by donors. Morfit (2011) further shows that AIDS funding to Malawi rose from around one percent in 1989 to about 30 percent in 2006. On the other hand, donor funding to other sectors dwindled.

The high dependency on donor funding for up to 85 to 90 percent of NGO income implies the risk of closure without continued streams of aid (Fowler, 2000). Concerns of financial sustainability and organisational survival means that NGOs are forced to focus on professionalism. It is clear that NGOs offer a means of securing a livelihood and sustaining privileged access to policy making for elite professionals (Brass, 2012).

Cox et al. (2009) criticises the inability of the NGO workers to choose between their profession or the community interests in their aspirations of change. Organic processes survive through the self-sacrifice of community organisers. However, as with all organisations, survival is paramount for NGOs; they must put their own interests before those of others, including donors and beneficiaries (Koch et al. 2009).

Apart from the elite interests in the service provider role, the constraints in NGO representation need to be further analysed within the framework of the legitimacy of non-electoral representation and the lack of a membership base (constituents). Although some scholars have defended that NGO represent perspectives, discourses, values, and not people, (Maia, 2012), the issue of representation remains problematic for NGOs. NGOs claim to represent people's interests or concerns at different levels of decision-making: locally, nationally and internationally.

The critical theorists argue that NGO advocacy needs to bring about social change for local communities, by challenging the power relations. While advocacy is designed to influence public policies in order to empower the marginalised, "people-centred advocacy seeks to challenge and change unjust power relations at all levels" (Samuel, 2010 p.186). Liberal democracy promises deliberative political processes that seek to question and change unequal power relations for the marginalised. From the civic republican perspective, public policies (instead of overt political campaigning and protest actions) are important mechanisms for achieving social justice, political and civil liberties, and the interests of the citizens. Indeed, "public policies are a function of the dominant political equation at a given time" (Samuel, 2010 p.187). NGO advocacy in policy formulation and implementation has been undertaken as a managerial and technical process, rather than a political one. This emerges from the NGO emphasis on professionalisation, rather than grassroots mobilisation. Samuel (2010, p. 192) warns that "a real danger of professional advocacy is that the real issues become diluted or marginalised in the labyrinth of strategies, tactics, and skills".

The political work of NGOs tends to focus on international fora on issue-based advocacy in areas such as human rights or environmental protection as they span advocacy spaces (Gaventa, 2006). At national level, NGOs engage in policy dialogues with the state, without linkages to citizen mobilisation at the local level. Rather NGOs choose to utilise extractive research from local communities as evidence for policy advocacy, which creates a disconnection from the represented. Besides, there are strong arguments that "NGOs pursue advocacy by stealth, by working in partnership with the government through which they can

demonstrate strategies and methods for more effective service provision" (Banks and Hulme, 2012 p. 10). It is not surprising that NGOs are largely service-oriented. For instance, (Brass, 2012) shows that 90 percent of registered NGOs in Kenya were involved primarily in service delivery. The service provision role by NGOs covers a wide range of sectors ranging from livelihood interventions and health and education service to more specific areas, such as emergency response, democracy building, conflict resolution, human rights, and environmental management (Lewis and Kanji, 2009). Despite the breadth of the political nature of such sectors, "few donors, however, are concerned with the political complexities or dynamics of NGO action and in many cases are anxious to ignore them. Many NGOs in the developed world (e.g. United States-based foundations) are restricted from funding the political activities of Southern partners, such as advocacy and campaigning" (Clarke, 1998 p. 39). It is also not surprising that NGOs opt to pursue the service provider role rather than organising poor communities at the local level, to help them to challenge local elites. As policy processes are located at national level, NGOs lose touch with the grassroots for harnessing community voice.

The contradiction between grassroots support and professional background is central to the critique on NGO credibility and legitimacy. Samuel (2010) warns that advocacy without citizen mobilisation is unlikely to lead to the necessary changes for those who require it. "If advocacy is not rooted in grassroots realities and is practised only at the macro level, the voice of the marginalised is increasingly likely to be appropriated by professional elites urban (or international) who have the necessary information and skills" Samuel (2010, p. 192). The literature corroborates the importance of grassroots support and linkages. For instance, a study on NGOs operating in Southern Africa and India reveals the critique by the NGO staff of the extensive travels by NGO leaders to advocacy conferences whereas considerable impact could be attained through community mobilisation (Dütting and Sogge, 2010). The NGO respondents in the study were unconvinced of the overemphasis on advocacy by most donors as "many sophisticated skills needed to mobilise citizens for collective action get less attention…Yet often that is exactly what is needed" (Dütting and Sogge, 2010 p. 19). Although studies on local community perceptions on NGO

representation are absent in the literature, Samuel (2010) argues that in India, grassroots support rather than professional background is a key determinant for a lobbyist's credibility.

Hence, the question of representation remains problematic for NGOs. NGOs create space as agents of social change based on *what* they represent (perspectives, discourses, values) rather than *whom* they represent (identifiable constituents i.e. members). Without a constituency base, Thrandardottir (2015, p.112) argues that NGO legitimacy can only be conceptualised in terms of solidarity, not democracy, which is "futile and unreasonable". The representativeness of NGOs remains equally problematic in the context of participatory governance and accountability, wherein the 'community' is constructed as a local government constituency. In that case, do NGOs represent perspectives?

From the foregoing, the need for creating organic/grassroots linkages is a key justification for mobilisation, which is considered a relevant option for steering social change for the marginalised. As discussed, the NGOs' linkages with the local communities in service provision and advocacy flag their effectiveness in building citizenship. The growth of NGOs is unabated, and it is curious whether NGOs can play the role of mobilisation.

3.4.4 The mobilisation role of civil society

The discussion derives from the mobilisation role of the NGOs as community facilitators. The critical theorists suggest that the community facilitator must be a critical educator, and an organiser who ensures community leadership for the representation of the poor (Ledwith, 2005). Schutz and Sandy (2011, p. 205), argue that "the central job of organisers is to develop leaders", and "a leader is 'one' who mobilises others toward a goal shared by a leader and followers" (Wills, 1994 p. 66). The "community organiser is the trigger for local action" (Rubin and Rubin, 1992 p. 22). The organiser identifies leaders with the responsibility to mobilise, inform, and organise communities. Moreover, the organisers "have the community support, build permanent organisations that can pressure government on long-term issues...The goal of organiser is temporary, as people develop their own skills"

(Rubin and Rubin, 1992 p. 22). Thus, the idea that "Dolphins need advocacy, poor people need power" is central to community organising (Somerville, 2016 p. 66).

The key question that guides this discussion is: Can NGOs as non-membership organisations mobilise citizens? The literature on Africa does not indicate NGO engagement in community organising. Mugisha (et al. 2020 p. 3) argue that NGOs are not member-based organisations and therefore are "incapable of mobilising citizen participation and engagement in activities that are necessary for driving institutional change and democratisation". Thus, the activist approach is not articulated by the NGOs, given their weak linkages. This discussion examines the debates on the NGOs' willingness and ability to partner with social movements. Scholars debate the role of NGOs in enhancing the capacity of local communities to negotiate for themselves and defend their rights (Ibrahim and Hulme, 2011). It is suggested that enhancing the organisational capacity of the poor to be their own advocates, is an effective mechanism for citizenship formation.

It is important to note the challenges to organising / social movements in Africa. It is clear that the literature on social movements in Africa is scanty, apart from South Africa which provides a number of examples (Sinwell, 2013). This is because authoritarianism in most of Africa constrains organisational rights. For instance, the literature on Uganda, evidences the repression of protests over the years. While the country's capital city has been the epicentre of opposition to the NRM regime, the rural areas have been its heartlands (Vokes and Wilkins, 2017). One of the national-level protests that have occurred in the city include the 'walk to work' protests that followed the 2011 election. However, the repression of the movement by the police led to several deaths, so that by April-May that year, the protests were stamped out (Nansozi et al. 2020). The political regime in Uganda thrives on the military and police to quell any political mobilisation as disussed in section 5.5.

Human Rights Watch (2015) and Mugabe (2018) show that political activists have often been arrested and killed by the NRM regime in Uganda. The promulgation of the Uganda Public Order Management Act in 2013, implied the increased suppression of political

dissent. The violent repression of protests in the city was particularly organised by the Inspector General of Police, so that the president's political challengers were constantly imprisoned and their activities halted. Although the Public Order Management Act was dissolved in March 2020[1], police brutality against protesters has persisted. For instance, the police shot to death 54 people during protests in November 2020 (Freedom House, 2021). It is worth noting that the opposition to the NRM regime typically constitutes the political party leaders, rather than community organisers. This depicts the gap in leadership in community organising and the lack of linkages with the grassroots by the educated.

Scholars envisage the transition from service provision, advocacy, and mobilisation in sequence. Korten's (1990) typology suggests the fourth generation strategy of NGOs focusing on community organisation, mobilisation, and coalition-building. Korten's fourth strategy is linked with social movements connecting local action with activities at a national or global level aimed at long-term structural change. This strategy resonates with the civil society role of building active citizenship (civil society as a catalyst for civic engagement at the local level) discussed by Cooper (2018). Chapter seven discusses the findings on the extent that the NGOs build the organisational capabilities of the communities.

Debates in the literature explore the convergence of NGOs and social movements, i.e. NGO support to the creation of social movements. Others see social movements moving towards the formation of NGOs (institutionalisation) (Ghosh, 2009). The next section examines the debates on how NGOs and social movements may converge.

3.5 The Convergence of NGOs and Social Movements?

This section discusses the extent that the NGOs embrace the social movements. Scholars have debated how NGOs that are apolitical may support the creation of social movements. The literature shows the divergent approaches by the NGOs and the social

[1] The 2013 public order law that necessitated that groups requested the police to gather, three days to the public meeting. The government curtailed opposition assemblies, since the police could reject meetings that were considered critical. Consequently, these rallies could be dispersed by police, if the were not approved.

movements, and it is clear that the activist approach is not articulated by the NGOs, given their weak linkages. Latin America offers strong examples of grassroots organising in opposisition to the state particularly in the 1970s, when grassroots organising helped to oppose authoritarian regimes. Despite the scanty experiences on social movements in Africa, the critical theorists envisage that the unresponsive states can greatly be challenged through activism. The critical theorists are influenced by Freire's philosophy that "human existence cannot be silent…To exist, humanly is to name the world, to change it" (Freire, 1970 p. 125).

The NGO agenda diverges from that of the social movements because the project-based programmes focus on material poverty, but tend to ignore the broader social goals that are of a political nature. Social movements conceptualise poverty as a socio-political relationship, rather than a lack of assets so that social mobilisation is envisaged as a mechanism for addressing these unequal relationships (Bebbington, 2007). In other words, the social movement approach embeds "the notion that development projects ought not to be about targeted poverty reduction, but rather about redistributions and transformations" (Banks and Hulme 2012, p. 22). Therefore, scholars argue that the service provider role is a 'safe' alternative for NGOs leading them away from relationships with social movements towards narrow and targeted programmes that aim at addressing poverty reduction through projects rather than political change and long-term transformation (Banks and Hulme, 2012). This implies that the possibilities for substantive political change are erased through the service provider role. As Bendaña (2006) argues, when people at the grassroots are persuaded to espouse "the language of efficiency and competitiveness", this relegates the "demands for changes and justice" and in turn restricts the space for civil disobedience and mass resistance. Thus, Roy (2014, p. 1) argues that NGOs "alter the public psyche. They turn people into dependent victims". The contradictory agendas reveal that it is unlikely for NGOs to connect with social movements to transform the unequal power relations.

It is important to note the rift between NGOs and social movements is observed in their organisational approaches and rationale. The term 'social movement' is used to refer to the diverse forms of collective action including campaigns usually at national and

international level, wherein citizen groups join efforts around an issue and demand action. Contrary to 'depoliticised' NGO influence through community development projects and advocacy, social movements focus on politics and mobilise support from the citizens to oppose the state. The political character of social movements entails the "struggle to integrate previously excluded groups and issues into local or national politics" (Foweraker, 1995 p. 63), through community/grassroots mobilisation for protest and resistance around the political implications of a problem. Thus, social movements distinguish themselves from NGOs in the terms of the open politicisation of their goals. This rift further permeates scholarly writings. For instance, Hilhorst (2003 p. 28) notes that:

> "NGO documents rarely refer to publications on social movements, and vice versa…Several decades ago, organisational interest in developing countries often focused on political or social movements, from revolutionary groups and Third World activists to struggles for land reform and squatter movements of the urban poor. From the 1980s onwards, this interest was slowly overtaken by studies of NGOs, often without asking how the two kinds of phenomena were related".

For this reason, the convergence between NGOs and social movements has been weak as the latter see themselves as challengers rather than adjusting to the state (Stiles, 2002). The mobilisation of the diverse citizen interests and networks of organisations, is central to social movements. Bendaña (2006, p. 13) cautions that "a social movement alternative is not always present or made politically attractive. As a result, potential activism is neutralised as NGOs become "alternatives" to politics. Thus the gulf grows between civil society and political society, but also between the NGOs and social movements". Scholars argue that NGOs are reluctant to connect with social movements (Edwards, 2011). This affirms the incompatibility of the political character of social movements and NGOs.

The argument for the mobilisation role of NGOs in the contemporary era, is a call for the transition of NGOs back to their grassroots orientation of the pre-1980s. The mobilisation argument emphasises the 'original and primary mandate' of NGOs as catalysts for the democratisation and transformation (Harsh et al. 2010; Banks and Hulme, 2012). Chandhoke (2010, p. 175) argues that "the net effect of mobilisation in civil society is well known: some

very powerful states collapsed, in the face of mass protests, like the proverbial house of cards". For instance, in the Eastern European nations freeing themselves of Soviet domination such as Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, NGOs sprouted and flourished as an accepted form of political opposition to the denial of citizens' basic rights in the Stalinist states (Fuchs et al. 2016). Thus, the concept of civil society (NGOs), as a space between the household and the state, was a "free zone" within the authoritarian state (Chandhoke, 2010) where people found expression of their civil, political liberties, and citizenship. Chandhoke (2010) refers to the peaceful and non-violent methods including strikes, protest marches, demonstrations, dissemination of information through informal networks, and associational life through reading clubs and discussion forums as constitutive of this free zone (the civil society). As noted earlier, context gives relevance to citizenship in terms of the methods of expression and engagement.

In Latin America in the 1970s, the political character of NGOs as catalysts was apparent in organising social movements. The NGOs (constituting coalitions of People's Organisations) challenged the unresponsive and authoritarian states where military regimes had managed to survive by employment of the same methods as in Eastern Europe. The Catholic Church, inspired by Latin American liberation theology on 'conscientisation' (raising the critical consciousness) and mobilisation, was a major force behind the proliferation of NGOs in Latin America and the Philippines. In Chile, for instance, the church-sponsored NGO, the Committee of Cooperation for Peace (COPACHI) was spread in 22 of Chile's 25 provinces, and represented over 13,000 victims of the Pinochet regime. COPACHI later transformed into a new NGO (the Vicarìa de la Solidaridad), achieving greater influence as well as the largest indigenous human rights NGO in the developing world Clarke (1998). Thus, Banks and Hulme (2012, p. 8) affirm that in Latin America, NGOs have historically challenged government through grassroots mobilisation. Consequently, the NGO sector in Latin America emerged from social movements in collaboration with local organisations against authoritarian regimes. However, the absence of social movements in Africa, implies that there are limited opportunities for the NGOs to foster activist linkages with the local communities as envisaged by some scholars.

NGOs are expected to play the role of catalyst and pressure group against the state through mobilising people to voice their concerns and, "in the process, build up a cohesive and unified force in the form of people's protest movements" (Pattnaik and Panda, 2005 p. 2). The significance of organic and endogenous processes, led by motivated community leaders is noted. For example, in Mexico, NGOs emerged from university-educated members of the middle class, motivated to steer 'transformation from below' through education of the poor communities (Miraftab, 1997). As discussed in the preceding chapter, unlike the extrinsically-motivated salaried staff in community development, organic processes emerge from "self-motivated leaders who work tirelessly, with little compensation, often at a high opportunity cost." Mansuri and Rao (2012, p. 33). Therefore, Roy (2014, p. 1) critiques that "NGO-sation…threatens to turn resistance into a well-mannered, reasonable, salaried, 9-to-5 job with a few perks thrown in. Real resistance has real consequences. And no salary".

The institutional imperatives of organisational survival drive NGO priorities and their relationships with the state, donors, and the poor (Miraftab, 1997). It is argued that NGOs are not willing to connect with social movements because this implies becoming secondary actors (Banks and Hulme, 2012 p.25). The self-sustenance of NGOs is an important aspect of resource mobilisation that inhibits the mobilisation role. Consequently, in critique of the post-1980 NGOs, Chandhoke (2010, pp. 176-177) satirically remarks that,

> "witness the tragedy that has befallen the proponents of the concept: people struggling against authoritarian regimes had demanded civil society; what they got instead was NGOs! In the process of being presented as an alternative to the formal sphere of politics…[but] presented to us as an area of solidarity, self-help, and goodwill".

Clearly, the convergence of NGOs and social movements is ellusive, since mobilisation is the core agenda of social movements, rather than the NGOs.

The core of the agenda of social movements aims at influencing structural changes. NGOs, through the capacity-building approach focus on efficiency goals (self-help). Bendaña (2006) notes that while NGOs provide social services, social movements reject the role of service provider in place of the state. The debt cancellation initiative that secured the

writing-off of debt for the poorest countries reveals the conflicting ideologies of the NGOs and the social movements. From the perspective of social movements in the South, the debt campaign spearheaded by NGO Jubilee 2000 coalition lacked a critical focus by simply proposing 'debt forgiveness' just for the 'poorest' countries. The social movements instead campaigned for debt repudiation for all poor countries (Bendaña, 2006). The radical critique of the debt campaign questioned the appropriateness of a single global campaign to integrate the diverse perspectives of civil society. They questioned the relevance of 'debt relief' for poverty reduction and instead saw the debt cancellation as a mechanism for initiating further borrowing. Accordingly, the debt write-off provided a naïve and wrong supposition that getting rid of the debt would help to eradicate extreme poverty. For the social movements, the NGOs were aligned with governments in the South to spend the proceeds of any debt relief on social programmes. Bendaña (2006, p. 8) argues that "South campaigners rejected this type of 'conditionality' as a matter of principle, but the World Bank welcomed such a criteria that gave it even more negotiation power". Consequently, the social movement contested the 'debt relief' for the poorest countries reasoning that "the debt was an ideological construct no matter what the accounting books said" (Bendaña, 2006 p. 9). The historical and analytical understanding of the debt question by the NGOs was considerably different from the social movements, which considered that the 'real' debt by the North to the South entailed moral and environmental damages incurred through colonial plunder, and support of dictatorships and regimes. Under the slogan, 'Don't owe, won't pay', the movement against debt relief asserted that Southern countries were not debtors. Evidently, the social movements and NGOs have distinct perspectives that stand in the way for convergence. For the social movements, 'depolitisation' is a form of politics itself that reinforces the power structures. Thus, Bendaña (2006, p. 9) asserts that "campaigns and advocacy are not 'apolitical': they presuppose political and analytical assumptions". Clearly, Korten's (1987; 1990) idea of the possibility of convergence between NGOs with social movements is impractical given the divergence of ideologies.

The literature indicates further incompatibilities between social movements and NGOs. Although not all social movements are explicit about the capitalist system, the radical

social movements particularly oppose the transfer of state functions and enterprises to the private sector. Therefore the idea of NGOs substituting the state functions, from the radical social movement perspective, is considered an upshot of neoliberalism. As Banks and Hulme (2012, p. 45) note, "radical social movements generally feel that NGOs are agents of capitalism and Western political and cultural values throughout the developing world, articulating an agenda set by multilateral, bilateral and nongovernmental donors".

The funding question is increasingly central to the debate on the autonomy of NGOs to effectively engage with citizens. Scholars see the possibilities for community organising by NGOs, without necessarily being dependent on donor funding. For instance, Fowler (2000) in 'NGO futures beyond Aid' explores the effectiveness of NGOs in civil society as they cease to depend on aid for their role and continuity. On the other hand, Cooper (2018, p.16) discusses the strategy to raise funds through remittances, although remittances "are often on the margins of the sector and one of the challenges is finding ways for diaspora groups and international NGOs to collaborate".

As NGOs concentrate on becoming autonomous and independent, the expectation that they can be strong political institutions is nurtured. Some NGOs have started to explore alternative sources of funds, such as non-financial assets, and participating in markets for generating income particularly in the Latin American countries (Aldaba et al. 2000). Devine (2003) indicates that in Bangladesh, NGOs engage in various commercial activities: fisheries, animal husbandry, garment manufacturing, telecommunications and so on. Kilby (2006) provides case studies of two NGOs in India that turned down donor assistance: in one case, the funds were in conflict with the NGO priorities, while in the other case, the beneficiaries were becoming self-reliant. In the latter, the NGO reasoned that the funding would not make a difference.

Andrews (2014) discusses the experiences of the futile collaboration between NGOs and the Zapatista Movement in Mexico wherein the movement criticised NGOs for impressing external agendas. The study shows that 77 NGOs withdrew funding from the

social movement as the beneficiaries demanded greater control for the management of the funds, including the reprioritisation of programmes that the movement considered relevant. Consequently, the social movements refused the support from the NGOs that did not find the demands agreeable (Andrews, 2014). Andrews (2014, p. 99) highlights the incongruent priorities between the NGOs and the Zapatista Movement noting the response by one of the NGOs that: "these demands provoked a brief shutdown and extended struggle for the NGO…It sometimes felt kind of crappy in terms of how this impacted you personally or your project…Politically, I really agreed with them, and at the same time it sometimes would come as a negative – kind of a clash." This experience portrays the significance of community leadership to demand change.

There are limited examples of collaboration between NGOs and social movements. However, the literature indicates examples of grassroots organisations instigating social movements. For instance, Pattnaik and Panda (2005) show that in India, grassroots organising around the environment, human rights, and women's empowerment initiated social movements that influenced government responsiveness to local demands. With the decline of the early social movements in Latin America and Asia in the 1970s, and their institutionalisation as NGOs, scholars have debated NGOisation and the future of civil society.

As highlighted earlier, there is an absence of social movements in Africa. Following the resistance movements against colonialism, the literature does not indicate the social movements in Africa following independence. Chapter four, highlights some of the examples of the campaigns in South Africa against the failures of the state related to housing for the poor in the urban areas (Sinwell, 2013). The absence of social movements in Africa affirms the argument of this study, i.e. the lack of organisational capabilities to initiate organic processes.

3.6 Conclusion

The chapter discusses the expected role of the NGOs as community facilitators in the empowerment theorisation. The discussion juxtaposes the civic republican approach with the community organising approach to citizen's organisation. While civic republicanism emphasises networks of trust, the community organising approach focuses on creating linkages. Linkages help to form trust, feedback mechanisms and information flow, questioning by the community, and political learning. I show that the NGOs pursue neither of these perspectives.

4. Learning Citizenship and Citizen Capabilities

4.1 Introduction

It was noted in chapter one that the civic republican perspective envisages citizenship learning in the context of the middle class, whereby economic prosperity (the market) enables membership in voluntary organisations. From the civic republican perspective, voluntary organisations are schools of citizenship, which in turn fosters a political culture of liberal democratic values. In addition, the high education levels imply the citizens' capability for analysis and debate. However, the literature does not explain how citizens learn in a peasant and poverty context.

Therefore, this chapter examines the gap in the literature concerning citizenship learning by the poor. The discussion questions: How do citizens learn the liberal democratic values in a poverty and peasant context? To what extent does the empowerment approach addresses political learning? The chapter shows that in the absence of voluntary associations in the peasant and poverty context, which are essentially the schools of citizenship, donors have implemented civic education programmes through the NGOs. The proponents of empowerment challenge the political theorists such as (Almond and Verba, 1963; Lipset, 1959) who envisaged that "the acquisition of democratic norms, values, and participatory orientations among individuals in new democracies would be a long-term process linked to social modernisation and generational replacement" (Finkel and Smith, 2011 p. 418). The proponents of empowerment instead argue that "the most promising direct means for promoting democratic orientations in new democracies is through civic education programs, which teach democratic citizenship to young people in classroom settings or to adults in community workshops, lectures, or public fora" (Finkel and Smith, 2011 p. 418). However, I show that the civic education programmes target citizens as individuals, rather than foster citizens' organisational capabilities. Moreover, the evidence shows that the civic education programmes "are much less likely to affect 'deep-seated' democratic values such as political

tolerance, support, and trust", or the democratic orientations of the citizens (Finkel, 2014 p. 161).

The political theorisation sets the context for the discussion as the empowerment approach derives from it. The first part of the discussion gives an overview of the approaches to citizenship learning in literature. I show the distinction between the learning approaches from the civic republican perspective and the social movement approach. I show that citizenship learning, from the civic republican perspective, has historically occurred through: a) membership in voluntary organisations b) as members of interest groups, and c) informal political socialisation. Citizenship learning has also occurred through critical organisations (social movements).

In the second part, I discuss the community organising approach. The empowerment framework suggests the role of the organiser, as a critical educator and mobiliser. As discussed in chapter two, the empowerment framework suggests *power-with* (power from collective action) and *power-within* (power from individual consciousness). I draw on Freire's approach, which influenced the community organising and social movement approach to show that the approach responds to the context of poverty and low levels of education. However, as discussed in chapter three, the NGOs have not embraced the role of community organiser and educator. This is because NGOs seek an insider status (closer to the state). Although the rights-based approach envisages political engagement between the local communities and the NGOs, it is not an education approach. As discussed in chapter three, there is an absence of social movements in Africa. Therefore, in the absence of empirical research on political learning in Africa through the community organising approach, this discussion illuminates the theoretical arguments that underlie the pedagogy of learning by the poor by Freire's approach.

In the third part, I discuss the civic republican approach to citizenship learning to show the political learning gap by the poor and peasants, as they are not members of voluntary organisations. It is important to note that the political theorisation on learning

through voluntary organisations is extensive, and has a long history that is traced to (Alexis de Tocqueville 1805-1859), compared to the social movement approach which emerged in the 1970s (Paulo Freire 1921–1997). It is not surprising that the discourse on voluntary organisations is broad and dominant. Moreover, the discussion illuminates the unique context of the low-income countries in terms of the challenges to citizenship learning, including: the informal character of the local forms of organisation, the role of ethnicity, neo-patrimonial politics, and poverty. The final part of the discussion covers the civic education programmes by the NGOs.

4.2 Approaches to Citizenship Learning

The literature indicates that citizenship learning is crucial for democracy, and that citizenship is learned before it can be expressed as agency. People have learned to be active citizens through socialisation, both informally, and as members of civil society organisations (Galston, 2001). The political philosophy literature shows that, historically citizens have engaged in three forms of civil society organisations, through which they learn politically, i.e as: a) members of interest groups, b) as members of critical organisations (social movements), and c) members of voluntary organisations (*service organisations* such as culture, and leisure groups and *community organisations* (e.g. neighborhood associations, social and humanitarian organisations) (Jobert and Kohler-Koch, 2010). These organisational forms are summarised in Table 5. It is important to note that citizens learn in groups, rather than individually. The ensuing discussion examines political learning through these organisational forms.

	Individual	*Collective*
Conflict	Pluralism Civil society as competition between interests Most valued organisations: *interest organisations* (e.g. unions, advocacy groups)	Public sphere theory, comparative associationalism, social movement literature Civil society as competition between ideas and values

	Individual	*Collective*
		Most valued organisations: *critical organisations* (e.g. 'old' and 'new' social movements
Consensus	Social capital Civil society as socialisation Most valued organisations: *service organisations* (e.g. culture, and leisure groups, cooperatives)	Communitarianism Civil society as social cohesion Most valued organisations: *community organisations* (e.g. neighborhood associations, social and humanitarian organisations)

Table 5: Approaches to civil society
Source: Jobert and Kohler-Koch (2010, p. 49)

The argument that collective participation makes better citizens is traced to Aristotle (Mansbridge, 1999). Thus, the liberal democratic model is based on the idea that organisational membership is important for political participation. Mansbridge argues that society benefits from collective participation because:

> "Less participant citizens have a reduced capacity to develop their faculties through joining with others in deliberating on and forging a common good, a process that can clarify their conceptions of their interests, enlarge those conceptions by encouraging them to make the good of others and the whole their own, generate greater feelings of political efficacy, and ultimately benefit the larger society by anchoring it in a citizenry clearer about its interests and responsive to the claims of justice" (Mansbridge, 1999 p. 423).

As discussed in Chapter two, the liberal perspective emphasises citizenship as a status (the legal definitions concerning the formal status of citizens), while the civic republicans emphasise citizenship as a practice (the idea of a citizen as an active participant in governance and politics for the good of the wider community) (Lister, 1998). The literature on empowerment shows that the study of active citizenship has evolved to include research on social capital, i.e focusing on creating webs of networks underpinned by shared values; people getting involved with each other to pursue their own goals and interests in associations; trust and cooperation (Putnam, 2000). This study emphasises the civic

republican understanding of citizenship, i.e. the importance of citizen action to demand rights and engage in decision-making processes.

The liberal and civic republican theorists clarify on what it means 'to be' a citizen and 'to act as' a citizen, respectively. This distinction is important for conceptualising the approaches to citizenship learning. "To be a citizen means to enjoy the rights necessary for agency and social and political participation. To act as a citizen involves fulfilling the full potential of the status. Those who do not fulfil that potential do not cease to be citizens" (Lister, 1998 pp. 228-229). This understanding of citizenship emphasises the significance of learning to act as a citizen. Merrifield (2001) argues that the knowledge of one's rights is important in terms of the legal status of a citizen, but awareness of one's agency is important for citizenship as a practice. Therefore, the question of "what citizens must know and be able to do in order to participate fully, to 'act as' citizens" is crucial for enhancing active citizenship (Merrifield, 2001).

Thus, knowledge is at the forefront of agency. The question, however, is what knowledge is essential for citizenship, and how do citizens learn? Westheimer and Kahne' (2004) typology of citizens suggests the approaches to citizenship learning. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) identify three kinds of citizens i.e. the (a) personally responsible, (b) participatory, and (c) justice-oriented citizens (Table 6). Westheimer and Kahne (2004) in Table 6 indicate that the participatory citizen is an active member of community organisations who 'knows how government agencies work'.

	The Personally responsible citizen	**The Participatory citizen**	**Justice-oriented citizen**
Description	Acts responsibly in his/her community. Works and pays taxes. Obeys laws. Recycles, gives blood. Volunteers to lend a hand in times of crisis.	Active member of community organisations and/or improvement efforts. Organises community efforts to care for those in need, promote economic	Critically assesses social, political, and economic structures to see beyond surface causes. Seeks out and addresses areas of injustice. Knows about democratic

	The Personally responsible citizen	The Participatory citizen	Justice-oriented citizen
		development, or clean up environment. Knows how government agencies work. Knows strategies for Accomplishing collective tasks.	social movements and how to effect systemic change.
Sample action	Contributes food to a food drive	Helps to organise a food drive.	Explores why people are hungry and acts to solve root causes.
Core assumptions	To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must. have good character; they must be honest, responsible, and law-abiding members of the community.	To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must actively participate and take leadership positions within established systems and community structures.	To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must question, debate, and change established systems and structures that reproduce patterns of injustice over time.

Table 6: Kinds of Citizens
Source: Westheimer and Kahne (2004, p.240)

The participatory citizen and the justice-oriented citizen align with the civic republicanism and the activist approach, respectively.

One of the oldest topics in political science research is citizen education, and the recognition that democracies require democratic citizens with appropriate knowledge, skills, and traits of character (Galston, 2001). In other words, "good citizens are made, not born" (Galston, 2001 p. 217). Thus, for the political right, citizenship learning is conceptualised in terms of building a personally responsible character (Galston, 2001), and to build the capabilities to engage in a participatory manner, i.e. a participatory citizen. It is noted that citizenship learning plays an important role in the development of citizen's abilities for public deliberation i.e the openness and willingness to consider the views of others; appreciation of others as free and equal agents and participants in the governance of their society (Popkin

and Dimock, 1999). Thus, scholars indicate that for the participatory citizen, learning focuses on values such as democracy, human rights, and tolerance in deliberations. At the same time, citizen knowledge of institutions, processes, and policies is crucial; participatory citizens must understand the political structures and the opportunities for engagement in civil society (Merrifield, 2001).

Thus, Popkin and Dimock (1999) argue that when citizens have low levels of information, they are unable to engage in public debate. Rather, they make judgments on the basis of character rather than issues, and are significantly less inclined to participate in politics at all. Scholars show that "competent democratic citizens need not be policy experts, but there is a level of basic knowledge below which the ability to make a full range of reasoned civic judgments is impaired" (Galston, 2001 p. 218). However, as discussed in the following sections, the liberal democratic model does not clarify citizenship learning for the poor and marginalised groups. This is because, in essence, a level of professional expertise and advocacy is "crucial for governance...capable of judging expert knowledge" (O'Neill, 2006 p. 6). "Investment in education, then, is seen to be essential for the development of an effective and skilled democratic citizenry" (O'Neill, 2006 p. 6).

The next section discusses political learning through the community organising approach, aided by the organiser's role to educate and inform. I show that the community organising approach responds to the context of poverty, since it historically emerged in response to the socio-economic inequalities.

4.3 Political learning through social movements or community organising

Rowlands (1997) theorised four types of power: power-over (the ability to influence and coerce) and power-to (organise and change existing hierarchies), power-with (power from collective action) and power-within (power from individual consciousness). The activist approach draws on the empowerment framework, particularly, power-with and power-within (power from individual consciousness). The application of power-within is

historically embedded in the writings of Freire, a critical theorist, in the 1960s and 1970s. Fundamental to Freire's educational philosophy is the notion of collective action and continuing struggle on the part of the oppressed (Cooke, 2004). Price-Chalita (1994, p. 239 cited by Cornwall, 2002) conceptualises power-with (power from collective action) as the "appropriation of the spatial", (the spatial dimension of empowerment), i.e. "creating new spaces, occupying existing spaces". Thus, Cornwall (2002, p. 2) notes that "empowerment is, in spatial terms, about expansion: about moving out of constrained and isolated spaces, widening the scope for action and multiplying potential sites for engagement, and about growing in an organic, self-realising, way – in confidence, in capacity, in well-being".

The social movement approach specifically originated in providing political space for political learning by the poor and marginalised; poverty and marginalisation are at the core of the social movement approach. Chapter two discussed how the critical theorists instigated debate on the importance of challenging marginalisation and poverty as a political problem, rooted in unequal power relations i.e. powerlessness, while the neo-liberal approach explained poverty in terms of social pathology.

From the social movement perspective, citizenship learning should enhance the articulation of interests to challenge poverty and marginalisation. In the 1970s, Freire (1970) developed an approach to education that enables the poor to identify their interests, as well as raise awareness on their agency to influence changes. With its roots in critical pedagogy and social constructivism, learning or knowledge are seen as a social construction, "deeply rooted in a nexus of power relations" (McLaren, 2009 p. 63). McLaren (2009) suggested that: "critical pedagogy asks how our everyday common-sense understandings – our social constructions or "subjectivities" – get produced and lived out".

The social movement approach conceives citizen education within broader structural critiques (Freire, 1970). Freire particularly influenced the justice-oriented education approach, which is grounded in political literacy for the poor and uneducated, whereby through learning to read and write, people "construct their own knowledge as well as lever

in knowledge from outside, on their own terms to change their lives" (Waddington and Mohan, 2001 p. 225). Citizenship education from this perspective is about people "being able to write their lives and read their world" (Waddington and Mohan, 2001 p. 225). Freire's education approach, however, is criticised for ideological indoctrination by the educator (who drives the agenda for learning) (Sundström and Fernandez, 2013).

Influenced by Freire's adult and popular education approach, social movements embed planned, conscious and deliberate processes for learning for the grassroots, led by an educator. Therefore, scholars argue that participating in social movements is an educative process (Mayo, 2005). Hall (2006) notes that: "learning within social movements has a more powerful impact on society than does all of the learning that takes place in schools." (Hall 2006, p. 234). Although Freire's approach aimed at challenging the wider structures of disadvantage and marginalisation in capitalism, his contribution lies in locating the voicelessness and passivity of the poor and marginalised in their lack of articulation of interests and the lack of awareness of the possibilities for action and change. Freire (1970) was critical of what he called the 'cultures of silence' in education and for the marginalised, because this instilled passivity. His pedagogy aimed at breaking that silence and giving voice to the marginalised. He proposed a problem-posing approach in which the marginalised become active participants by linking knowledge to action. According to the Freirean approach, learning is seen as critical for giving a voice to marginalised groups.

In summary, Paulo Freire's political learning approach aimed at "conscientisation" and "praxis". Conscientisation is the process where reality and social conditions are analysed dialogically and critically, thereby revealing dehumanising and oppressive structures (Freire, 1970). Praxis, on the other hand, is the process whereby people iteratively take actions and reflect on reality and social conditions in order to transform them (Freire, 1970). Through the practice of dialogue, Freire emphasises the collective dimension of learning, as "it is collectively that people not only solve problems but, moreover, transform their sociopolitical conditions" (Finger and Asún, 2001 p. 86). Thus, the education approach of the social movements draws on Freire's critical perspective with emphasis on the importance of praxis

whereby, through critically reflecting on experiences and action that can lead to transformation, there is space for learning (Mayo, 2005). Learning and action are inextricably linked.

Although the popular education approach is criticised for indoctrination, the question that remains unresolved is: If political learning should facilitate the articulation of interests to challenge poverty and marginalisation in government policies and structures, can citizenship learning be neutral? The problem of values is central to the debate on citizenship learning. For Freire, "there's no such thing as a neutral educational process", it either fosters conformity to the existing circumstances, or enhances freedom (Freire, 1970 p. 34). Kliucharev and Morgan (2008 p.55) argue that values in a discourse are an essential element of education, and formal education systems are "agencies through which the States and those in political authority achieve their ideological and hegemonic goals".

Thompson and Tapscott (2010) note that mobilisation and social movements in the South have become key forms of citizen engagement with the state, and preferred channels for expressing agency. As discussed in the preceding section, the lack of political space for the poor within the participatory approach, owing to the lack of capabilities by the local organisations to represent their interests, implies that they increasingly embrace the activist approach. Benequista (2010, p.13) argues that "social movements and other forms of collective action are not a failure of democratic politics, but are an essential component of it". Although donors and the policy makers often disregard the democratising potential of social movements, the literature indicates that the unresponsiveness of governments in the developing countries often necessitates citizen mobilisation. For instance, Sinwell's (2013) study in South Africa shows the ineffectiveness of the institutional spaces provided by the government for citizens. The Anti-Eviction Campaign activist against the city's policies for housing noted that: "Council doesn't listen to us if we go through the right channels. They don't listen. They make as if they listen if you go through the right channels. They don't take notice of us. If we do what we do, then immediately they respond… If they take too long, then we do our own thing" (Sinwell, 2013 p. 107).

Evidently, issues such as poverty and powerlessness are political and emotive issues which necessitate the building of linkages with the local communities to learn dialogically and articulate common interests. The next section discusses learning through voluntary organisations.

4.4 Citizenship learning from the civic republican perspective

As indicated in section 4.2, the literature indicates three important organisational forms through which community members participate and learn to engage with government. They include: interest groups, voluntary organisations and associations, and social movements (Jobert and Kohler-Koch, 2010).

The civic republican perspective enables the analysis of the political role of groups, i.e., influencing government policy-making. The political science perspective of groups recognises the necessity for citizens to organise themselves to advance their competing interests by building organisational leadership to promote these interests. Jobert and Kohler-Koch's (2010) typology of the approaches to civil society in (Table 5) builds on the discussion in chapter three on the roles of civil society, including: citizen engagement in *service organisations* (such as education, community health care services); *advocacy/campaigning* (lobbying governments); *watchdog* (monitoring government compliance with human rights treaties); and as *catalysts* for civic engagement at the local level as well as national governance (Cooper, 2018).

The importance of group interests in political society was particularly emphasised with the rise of democracy in the early 19th century "Western" society. Thus, the liberal democratic model derives from the consideration of the preferences of individuals through groups in policy-making. Salzman (2011, p. 193) notes that "these preferences were recognised and shared by individuals, who thus organised themselves into groups based on those shared preferences." The liberal democratic model has influenced the rest of the world, with emphasis on the importance of membership in associations affecting the political agenda (Sundström and Fernandez, 2013) and in mediating the relationships between individuals and

the state. Salzman (2011) argues that the intermediary role of organisations in advancing the preferences of citizens, gives them leverage in political society. Through membership in organisations, "citizens with competing but overlapping interests can contrive to live together communally" as they influence government (Barber, 1984 p. 11).

Although the liberal democratic approach to citizenship learning is successful in the Western democracies, the question that concerns the low-income countries is: how has the replication of the model influenced citizenship learning? This question specifically explores citizenship learning through interest organisations and membership in voluntary associations because these organisational forms are the key pathways to citizen engagement in the democratic model, as discussed below.

4.4.1 Interest groups

Tocqueville envisaged learning through associations and in the political parties (which were "rough schools") (Gannett, 2005 p. 732). Subsequently, scholars have studied the importance of groups in politics and in political science. Citizens advance their political interests, as groups. For instance, Berkhout (2013, p. 227) in *Why do interest organisations do what they do?*, examines the three types of actors in interest organisations: (i) the supporters, (ii) political institutional actors and (iii) the news media and other actors related to public opinion. Yoho (1998, p. 231) argues that:

> "Political scientists and other scholars have collectively failed to define the term "interest group" and its synonyms in a consistent fashion or with any real precision. A definition of the term that considers the nature of interest groups, why they are studied, and how they have been defined in the past is offered: interest groups are actual organisations, they are private in nature, they attempt to influence public policy, and they are not political parties—i.e., they do not nominate candidates for public office".

From the liberal democratic perspective, Rosenstone and Hansen (2003) define an interest group as an organised group sharing common objectives, and actively attempts to influence government. The liberal democratic model operates an intricate organisational

structure which necessitates professional expertise that makes its replication in the developing countries challenging. For instance, interest groups need to know how to engage with the media and political parties, they educate group members and the general public, and are highly skilled in lobbying, advocacy, and communication. In the case of lobbying, interest groups employ lobbyists to represent the interests to the official policymakers through a highly competitive and assertive process to overturn opposing interests. "Lobbyists can be part of a law or consulting firm" (Sundström and Fernandez (2013, p. 755). Therefore, interest groups exert pressure in an effort to promote their agenda. The importance of articulating an agenda is critical to effectively influence government. Sundström and Fernandez (2013, p. 753) clarifies that "these groups are part of the agenda-setting, policy formulation, and evaluation process". Their strong membership bases and huge financial resources implies that, they can continuously engage with public officials. Earlier studies noted the influence of resources on membership in associations such as (Verba et al. 1978, cited by Merrifield 2001). Therefore, although the term interest group is described as "just about any group of people attempting to influence government" (Sundström and Fernandez, 2013 p. 752) or simply as "a shared-attitude group that makes certain claims on other groups in society", we can hardly expect the poor, uneducated and illiterate to engage in them (Truman 1951, p. 37 cited by Sussman, 2011 p. 752).

For instance, Sundström and Fernandez (2013) assert that membership in interest groups is linked to socio-economic status and is greatest among professional, college-educated, and high-income persons. On the contrary:

> "Those who are the most disadvantaged economically cannot afford to join interest groups, and many may not have the time or expertise to find out what group might represent them. Even a small contribution to an interest group may be seen as a luxury they cannot afford. Nor do they have the expertise to be interest-group entrepreneurs by creating and marketing their own special interest" (Sundström and Fernandez, 2013 p. 752).

Evidently, interest groups are generally out of reach for the low-income citizens and the uneducated, even in the wealthy countries. Formal education plays a significant role in

building the skills and capabilities for political participation (Morduchowicz et al. 1996). Education is highly correlated with political knowledge, interest, and other forms of political participation (Torney-Purta et al. 2001). Galston (2001, p.21) notes "that political participation is shaped by relative as well as absolute levels of educational attainment". Membership into interest groups in the liberal democratic model includes corporations, trade associations, professional associations, labor unions, citizen groups, think tanks, university or college associations (Galston, 2001). However, the lack of access to formal education by the poor, or the low literacy levels in the developing countries, implies that they are confined to informal organisations as discussed later.

The foregoing affirms that education is a prerequisite for engaging in interest groups. Therefore, political learning through interest groups in the developing countries is questionable. Scholars note the lack of awareness of citizens' rights and engagement in political life in the developing countries. For instance, Benequista's (2010, p.7) policy study on citizen engagement in 30 countries in the developing countries shows that citizens are "unaware of their rights, lack the knowledge needed to interact with the state, or do not feel they have the capability to act". The study suggests that, "an important first step – the prerequisite to further action and participation is to develop a greater political knowledge and awareness of rights and of one's agency" (Benequista, 2010 p.7). Logan and Bratton (2006, p. 1) argue that:

> "democracy remains *unclaimed*…People in African countries may have begun to transform themselves from the 'subjects' of past authoritarian systems into active 'voters' under the present dispensation. At the same time, they do not appear to fully grasp their political rights as 'citizens', notably to regularly demand accountability from leaders".

It follows that citizens in the developing countries not only lack knowledge of their rights in their *status* as citizens (i.e the liberal perspective of citizenship concerning the legal definitions concerning the formal status of citizens), they also lack awareness of the political knowledge necessary for their agency, i.e. citizenship *as a practice*. This reveals the unique challenges to political agency in the developing countries, as the participatory citizen is an

active member of community organisations who 'knows how' to participate (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004) in Table 6.

It is important to note that local organisations in Africa are essentially formed as strategies for coping against poverty, rather than professionalised interest groups. Scholars seem to suggest that in the developing countries, membership into interest organisations is accessible to the poor and illiterate, rather than being the domain of the highly educated, who easily articulate group interests. For instance, Chazan's (1982) typology of interest groups in Africa indiscriminately includes the professional associations and non-professionalised groups as discussed in the next section. These scholars thereby contradict the evidence on the relevance of the education and income variables on membership in interest organisations. OECD (1998, p. 117) notes that the lack of education stops a great majority of Africans from being citizens in their own right."

The significance of education for citizen engagement in the policy-making process is evident in the policy cycle; interest groups require professional expertise to articulate their interests (Figure 5). Webster and Engberg-Pedersen (2002) argue that, if the local organisations of the poor must function as interest groups, they must create a political space for political discourse to influence policy processes. It is within these political spaces that political learning for the poor occurs. Since the organisations of the poor lack professional expertise to influence policy-making as interest groups, Webster and Engberg-Pedersen (2002, p.8) suggest a political space: a) in policy formulation – "allowing for access, control and contest by the poor"; b) in "political discourses in which poverty and poverty reduction are significant issues"; c) in "influencing decision-making, agendas, policy and programme implementation".

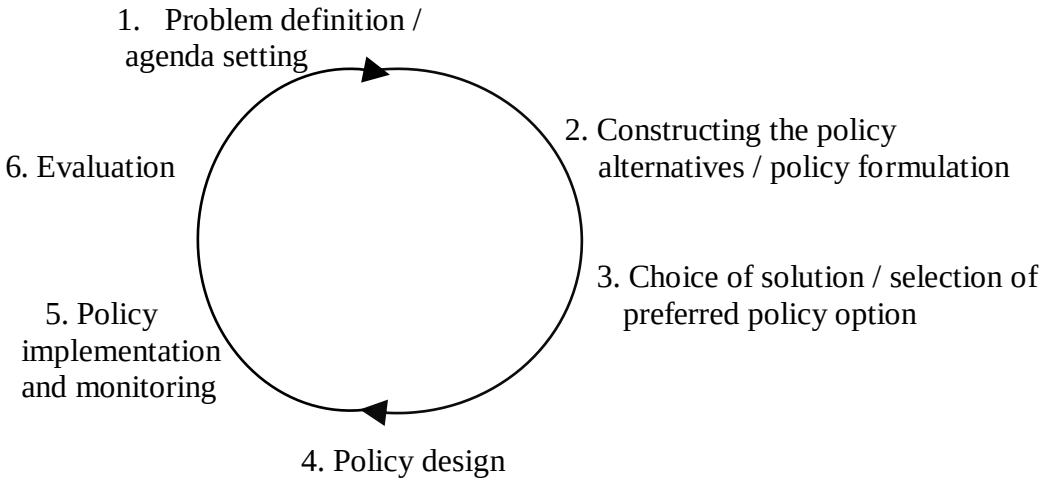

Figure 5: The policy cycle
Source: Young and Quinn (2002) cited by Pollard and Court (2008, p. 135)

A political space "constitutes the types and ranges of possibilities present for pursuing education by the poor of on behalf of the poor by local organisations" Webster and Engberg-Pedersen (2002, p. 8). In other words, if the poor are unable to organise themselves, they can be organised and represented by others. The opportunities for political learning through the policy making process, created by the representative organisations, are greater than the interactions in project-based groups and informal organisations. The role of the representative organisation becomes critical in terms of political discourse. Although Webster and Engberg-Pedersen (2002, p. 6) do not clarify on the 'organiser' and 'representative' of the poor, they acknowledge that in governance, "attempts to influence policies and decisions affecting the conditions of the poor are typically, but not exclusively, undertaken by various kinds of organisations on their behalf". The idea of creating a political space within the policy-making process, is inclusive in approach, contrary to representation along the ethnic, religious, and cultural organisational interests.

Webster and Engberg-Pedersen (2002, p. 5) argue that the organisations trying to "advocate the cause of the poor may be more valuable to the poor". The proliferation of donor-funded NGOs aimed at filling the advocacy gap in the developing countries. Therefore,

NGOs aim at enhancing their own capacity as primary actors in the policy cycle, than becoming secondary actors (Banks and Hulme, 2012). Rather than create political spaces to enhance political learning of the poor, NGOs instead devote resources to develop their capacity as research-oriented organisations to better influence policy processes. The need for evidence to influence policy processes is crucial. The question on whose interests are represented through NGO advocacy, due to the weak linkages with the local communities, was addressed in chapter three. Pollard and Court (2008, p. 135) note that NGOs "have played a critical role in fostering individual awareness and knowledge – which can eventually lead to incremental policy changes or which can create policy windows". For instance, "in order to introduce a problem to the policy agenda… it is necessary to convince the relevant policy actors that the problem is indeed important" (Pollard and Court, 2008 p. 135). Clearly, NGOs have accumulated the communication and research skills, as well as the understanding of the development issues for advocacy. However, they have yet to open political spaces for political discourse with the local communities to enhance learning.

Unlike the organisations of the poor, NGOs are professionalised groups that seek "to secure their interests by effecting change in the actions and policies of others and, in particular, bringing about change in public policy and in its implementation" (Webster and Engberg-Pedersen (2002, p. 7). Therefore, the proliferation of self-help organisations in the developing countries, does not imply that the interactions within these groups foster political learning. Rather, Webster and Engberg-Pedersen (2002, p. 5) suggest that "in a situation within which deprivation is of central concern, organisations providing social services will be of importance". The informal local self-help associations, such as the *Munno Mu Kabi* women's self-help group in Uganda, which provides home care services to HIV/AIDS patients (Brehony, 2000), need to be analysed as local service delivery associations. They do not engage in policy analysis, or claim spaces for political debate. Coping strategies against poverty are described as mechanisms through which the "poor can achieve a change in their poverty…usually based on individual or local groups of the poor seeking ways to offset the economic disadvantages they face by exploiting opportunities to utilise the resources and assets they possess or can access" Webster and Engberg-Pedersen (2002, p. 7). This analysis

resonates with Jobert and Kohler-Koch's (2010) typology of civil society organisations (in Table 5) and Cooper's (2018) typology of civil society roles, whereby interest groups in the liberal democratic model, are conceptualised as competitive organisations, not service organisations.

4.4.2 Voluntary organisations and associations as schools of citizenship

Learning through membership in voluntary organisations is a key mechanism to active citizenship from the civic republican perspective. These include (*service organisations* such culture and leisure groups, cooperatives) and *community organisations* (such as neighborhood associations, social and humanitarian organisations) (Jobert and Kohler-Koch, 2010). Apart from political socialisation through interest organisations, Tocqueville's approach suggests political learning through membership in voluntary organisations. The purpose of the discussion is to show the learning gap by the poor / peasants, as they are not members of voluntary organisations. Tocqueville (1945, cited by Chandler, 1999 p.124), suggests that "citizens need to be educated in the values of democracy through voluntary associations, *which serve as large free schools*, where all the members of the community go to learn the general theory of association" (emphasis mine). Similarly, Fukuyama (2001, p.11) asserts that the "associations formed could either participate directly in political life (as in the case of a political party or interest group) or could serve as 'schools of citizenship' where individuals learn the habits of co-operation that would eventually carry over into public life".

It is argued that citizen engagement in voluntary associations and organisations exposes members to politicians and activists, and in turn enhances the mobilisation of citizens (Rosenstone and Hansen, 2003). Tocqueville observed that by being involved in associations, American citizens were able to overcome their lack of influence as separate individuals, and that when individuals with a common opinion met, they naturally combined themselves into an association. As the association grew, political actors were forced to take notice of the

association and recognise the preferences of the group members. In this way, associations empowered individuals, which forced accommodation by political actors (Salzman, 2011).

Tocqueville's idea on the role of membership associations on individual political attitudes, influenced the social capital theory (Putnam, 2000). In the developing countries, social capital theory promoted community development project groups based on the idea that the accumulation of social capital encourages individuals to act together to achieve common goals. Thus, social capital theory envision that, establishing community groups around the development projects would enhance political agency. This study provides empirical evidence of social capital theory through community development projects.

Some scholars suggest that 'civil society' or voluntary organisations exist in Africa (Willems, 2014; Lewis, 2002). This provokes questioning on *why* citizenship learning in the developing countries is limited, if citizens actually engage in civil society organisations. If civil society organisations exist in the developing countries, *why* is the lack of political knowledge pervasive? How do citizens in the developing countries learn, or how may they learn to be active citizens? Next, I show that the organisations of the poor are hardly 'schools of citizenship'.

Voluntary organisations in Africa?

Are the organisations of the poor in Africa schools of citizenship? In this discussion, I show that the organisations of the poor do not play the role of voluntary organisations. There are diverse perspectives on the notion of civil society in Africa. Daniel and Neubert (2019, p. 177) question if the concept is "universal, and whether it can be applied to social realities in the Global South, particularly to cases in Africa". However, Mailafia (2010, p. 9) argues that if "there is no such a thing as 'African democracy'", then there is no such a thing as African civil society. Therefore, the voluntary associations and forms of self-organisation in the non-Western countries need to represent liberal democratic values, as the foundation for political learning.

Do ethnic and religious organisations in Africa represent liberal democratic values, and should they be included in civil society? For some scholars, the "crude export of outsider visions of civil society by Western aid donors is clearly flawed" because the approach "tends to view phenomenon through a limiting Western lens" (Lewis, 2002 p. 578), which disregards the relevance of indigenous civil society organisations. Willems (2014, p.47) adds that "the prescription that Africa should 'build' its civil society assumed that Africa did not have a 'civil society'". They argue that such a top-down perspective ignores "organisations which do not fit with its prescriptions (for example because they are based on kin or ethnicity or local 'tradition') or may miss altogether groups which take an unfamiliar form" (Lewis, 2002 p. 578). For instance, Lewis (2002) provides the example of the clan-based and kinship groups under the ceremonial royal kingdom of the Baganda ethnic group in Uganda, whereby the kingdom mediates between the ethnic group under the monarchy and the state. Lewis (2002, p. 580) argues that this state-monarchy interaction contradicts the "Western assumptions of civil society in which kinship relations are considered to be outside civil society norms". However, as discussed later, I problematise citizenship learning through organising on the basis of ethnic identities. As argued by Finkel and Smith (2011, p. 411), "political knowledge, tolerance, and the individual's sense of national versus tribal identification are core aspects of democratic citizenship".

The lack of clarity on what civil society is in Africa is illustrated by Chazan (1982), who identified two types of associations, i.e. the voluntary associations of an *interest-group type*, and the *ascriptive primary associations*. Chazan (1982) notes that the interest-group type of voluntary associations in Africa, include trade unions, women's organisations, professional associations, associations of chiefs, youth and student groups, literary societies, religious societies, self-help groups, rotating credit associations, the military, or sports club associations. While Chazan (1982, p. 172) argues that "these groups have in common the voluntary nature of their membership, specific common interests uniting their adherents", the author asserts that in Africa:

> "voluntary organisations of the interest-group kind are generally located in or around urban centres (although they may be found in rural areas as well) and tend to have an *ethnically cross-cutting composition.* In this sense, these organisations are horizontally based associations linking people around specific interests or potential benefit". (emphasis mine).

Chazan's (1982) typology of interest groups in Africa is typical to that what other scholars identify. Similarly, Appiah (1992, p. 170) outlines the ethnoregional and religious associations, sports clubs, market women's groups, professional organisations and trade unions.

On the other hand, Chazan (1982) notes that *ascriptive* groups in Africa include ethnic associations, traditional groups, kinship associations, local improvement associations, and regional or home-town groupings. They are generally organised around ethnic, cultural or geographical ties. Although participation in these associations is voluntary, "membership is restricted by ascriptive means. Because of their localised nature, voluntary associations of the primary type are usually more homogenous ethnically than their interest-group counterparts. They are constructed on a vertical, solidarity basis" (Chazan, 1982 p. 173). In the liberal democratic model, interest groups operate within a pluralist and competitive framework, while the service organisations operate within a consensus and association approach (Jobert and Kohler-Koch, 2010).

The scholars who conceptualise organising along ethnic, religious, or cultural identities, do not elaborate on the political culture (i.e. the behaviours and attitudes) of such identities and whether they foster broader and cohesive citizen interactions, in terms of community and nation-state identities. The positive role of organisation around ethnicity is debatable, as highlighted in the next section. Some have argued that ethnicity has impeded the cohesion of communities. Different countries in Africa have different experiences of the impact of ethnicity on democracy. Nevertheless, it is important to note that associations along ethnic lines do not necessarily represent liberal democratic values, including tolerance, equality, and egalitarianism. Daniel and Neubert (2019, p. 182) assert that the associations in Africa "do not share the basic norms of liberal democracy"; the values and norms of the

various forms of self-organisation in Africa are "not compatible with the notion of civil society". It is therefore open to question whether ethnic identities promote liberal thinking, which is critical for citizenship learning. Can organising around ethnic identities enhance a cohesive citizenry? The fact that ethnic identities often conflict with national identity, is less often explored in the civil society debate in Africa.

Therefore, the influence of organising along ethnic identities on citizenship learning in Africa is not articulated. This is because scholars evade the debate on whether the groups in Africa should be assessed in reference to the liberal democratic model. Since liberal democracy is a Western idea, scholars refrain from suggesting that civil society in the developing countries should develop along the same trajectory as the Western liberal democracies. The contextual challenges in Africa, impact on the growth of civil society and citizenship learning. For instance, with the removal of the old (traditional) political institutions of the pre-colonial period, at the creation of the nation-state, the local organisations in Africa largely remained informal. Informality became, not only a problem for the market (i.e. the informal economy) at the establishment of the nation-state, but also, the informal organisations were unrecognised in the new governance institutions that required formalisation through legislative frameworks. It follows that, learning through informal local organisations in Africa, is implicitly a 'revision' of the liberal democratic approach to learning, because the literature on political socialisation provides evidence on citizenship learning in formal civil society organisations.

The organisations by the poor in Africa are informal, unprofessional, and exclusive of other ethnic groups. For instance, Jones' (2008, p. 133) study on the burial societies in Eastern Uganda indicates that "almost every villager was a member of such a society". Jones (2008, p. 133) clarifies that the burial societies:

> "worked as insurance schemes, typically organised around a lineage group (ateker), and collected money on the death of a society member to help the home with the costs of burial. They provided labour and organisational support during the burial, and had somewhat eclipsed, or taken over, the customary arrangements that dealt with

> marriage negotiations or inheritance disputes…They had allowed many poorer homes to achieve what had come to be regarded as a respectable burial, something measured in social as well as material terms. It was marked by high levels of community participation and involved the provision of food, burial cloth, coffin and cement for sealing the grave, all of which was to be paid for through the burial society. Paying burial dues and turning up to funerals were perhaps the strongest conventions governing public life in the village and the most important means of demonstrating one's membership in the community".

However, Jones' study does not indicate political learning through the burial societies. Similarly, while the church is central to the village members of Eastern Uganda, its role in fostering political debates is not articulated in Jones' (2008) study.

Nevertheless, a level of political learning through local organisations in Africa is observed in Quaynor's (2015) study on political socialisation in voluntary youth organisations in Ghana and Liberia. Quaynor (2015) shows that the Ghanaian youth often participate in structured activities, such as athletic teams, religious organisations, and community or cultural development groups. Similarly in Liberia, the youth engaged in political discussions at Atari (tea) shops, neighbourhood youth associations, church associations, media programs, and indigenous societies. Quaynor (2015) observed that the *Matadi Youth United for Progress (MAYUP)* neighbourhood youth associations in Liberia was primarily organised to provide vocational services and awareness activities among the youth which were sustained through fundraising from the community members. Quaynor (2015) shows that the traditional leaders (community elders) encouraged critical inquiry by the youth. The community leaders, for instance, challenged the attitudes of the youth remarking that:

> "the youth policy written four years ago has not yet been passed by the government … the opportunities in government are given to people in the United States. We will not lift Liberia up by denying youth…We as a community will look out for you … We are happy that our children are running faster than us. Copy what is good...Question whatever you are not satisfied with" (Quaynor, 2015 pp. 129-130).

The above case study portrays some level of critique of the communities' role governance. However, the paternalistic, or unequal relationships that characterise the cultural groups is

self-evident. In general, the literature portrays the lack of political learning through the organisations of the poor.

In essence, the organisations of the poor confirm an absence of voluntary organisations in Africa. Some scholars agree to the absence of civil society or voluntary organisations in Africa. For instance, Shankar (2014, p.25) contends that, "most observers agree that civil society in Africa is 'poorly developed'". Others, such as Herbeson et al. (1994 cited by Lewis, 2002 p. 575) argued that "civil society is a hitherto missing key to sustained political reform, legitimate states and governments...and improved governance". From the side of the donors, the World Bank, for instance, affirmed in its 1990s policy report, *Social Capital: the Missing Link* (Grootaert, 1998), that the absence of the networks that enable people to act collectively in the developing countries, was the missing link. Similarly, Parekh (2004, p. 14) succinctly affirms the top-down drive to create civil society organisations noting that:

> "There is today an almost universal consensus that civil society is a vital component of a good society, and that the stronger and more developed it is, the better governed and more stable the wider political community is likely to be. This belief underlies the widely held view that Western societies are vibrant, free and democratic because they have, and the erstwhile communist societies came to grief because they did not have, a civil society, and that if the developing world is to avoid the fate of the latter, it should *foster civil societ*y. Large and well-meaning Western foundations devote huge resources to helping the developing world do just this, and Western governments and international institutions make it a precondition of their aid". (emphasis mine)

Therefore, Willems (2014 p. 47) notes that "civil society became a policy prescription for Africa in the 1990s", conceptualised in terms of "a set of development NGOs, most of which are funded by bilateral or multilateral donors or by international NGOs" (Lewis, 2002 p. 577). The literature shows that the organisations of the poor are not only informal, they are typically based on ethnic identities, as discussed in the next section.

Informal groups, ethnic identity, and political culture

Scholars undervalue the issue of formalisation of local organisations. They do not problematise informality in the modern state. Informality is not encouraged in the liberal democratic model, not only for the market, but also for civil society organisations. Although scholars maintain that civil society constitutes the citizens' groups, outside of the market and the state (Van Rooy, 1998), they do not clarify on how informal groups may participate in the liberal democratic model. Scholars assume that the interface between the state and civil society organisations, although informal, is acceptable. However, it is clear that informal organisations are unrecognised in the liberal democratic model. I argue that the disregard for formalisation by scholars is paradoxical. The informality of the community groups is attributed to the prohibitive financial requirements (Cleaver, 1999). The lack of incomes implies that the costs of formal membership are unaffordable to the poor. As the political discourse in the policy-making process does not provide spaces for community organising based on ethnic, religious, or other cultural identities, these groups remain informal.

While political socialisation through informal relationships provides positive evidence for citizenship learning in the West, the implications for political learning through organisations around ethnic identities is not necessarily positive. Since political socialisation is attained through informal interactions, we cannot ignore that if the informal groups around ethnic identities do not represent the liberal democratic values, then, learning through these groups fosters socialisation into an undemocratic political culture. Taylor (1999, p. 64), describes political culture as: "the specifically unwritten norms of conduct both of and between the various political actors operating in society, together with the concomitant expectations and understandings of the rights and responsibilities of citizens, representatives, public servants and so on". Citizen organising along ethnic identities, and representation along kinship or clan relations, are prejudiced and at odds with the interests of the majority of the citizens. Appiah (1992, p. 170) notes that: "it has always been true that in large parts of Africa, "tribalism"— what, in Ivory Coast, is half humorously called geopolitics, the politics of geographical regions, the mobilisation and management of ethnic balancing — far

from being an obstacle to governance, is what makes possible any government at all". The question, again, is whether this is an advantage to citizenship learning? Allen (1995) illustrates the case of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), which distributed loans from its credit program to their rural network of supporters, but which were not repaid. For these politicians, "to have power was to have the means to reproduce it; to lose power, however, was to risk never having the means to regain it' (Allen, 1995 p. 304). These evidences confirm that since the informal organisations have no political space in the deliberative public sphere, they do not contribute to democratisation. On the contrary, they maintain informal interactions and networks with the state that sustain an undemocratic political culture, i.e. the learned attitudes and behaviour through these interactions do not conform to the liberal democratic values.

Chazan (1982) discusses the problems relating to the political networks of the local organisations in Africa. These informal organisations present the demands of their members to influence government decisions on matters of concern. "The manner in which demands are forwarded may range from contacting individuals in power to lobbying or making overt petitions to government. In particular situations, when no responses to requests are forthcoming, violence may erupt at the instigation of the leadership of these associations" (Chazan, 1982 p. 176). However, government institutions tend to prioritise resource allocation to patronage networks (Öjendal and Sedara, 2006; Pak et al. 2007). Local organisations encourage patronage so that government leaders aim to maximise their personal gains in terms of power, wealth or votes. Such patronage-based networks and rent-seeking are so pervasive that it is difficult to identify a voluntary association that is organised around the formal, impersonalised Weberian state (Van de Walle, 2001). If organisations are involved in patronage networks, the discourse and interactions within these organisations applaud patronage. The political culture that ensues is self-evident.

Nevertheless, the findings from the study conducted by the Commonwealth Foundation on civil society in the developing countries show that:

> "developing country citizens too want to play a more significant role in setting policy priorities…citizens want a strong state as well as a strong civil society, deepened democracy and democratic culture, and an enlarged role for citizens; a new compact involving citizens, the state and intermediary organisations" (Lartey and Sastry, 2010 p. 5).

Thus, citizens in the developing countries espouse the democratic values in search of a 'good' society, through democratic governance, which is, "collective decision-taking and action in which government is one stakeholder among others" (Knight et al. 2002 p. 131).

It is clear, however, that the most important drivers in the creation of political cultures are the attitudes of elites, who lead and shape the attitudes of the masses (Almond and Verba, 1963; Pyle and Verba, 1965). This implies that, since "democracy in Africa remains largely a work in progress", that is yet to "mature and prosper" (Mailafia, 2010 p. 9), we could agree that Africa's civil society is '*poorly developed*' (Shankar, 2014 p.25), and should be '*fostered'* (Parekh, 2004 p. 14), and are to a great extent *hitherto missing* (Herbeson 1994, cited by Lewis, 2002 p. 575); (Grootaert, 1998). To argue otherwise would be suggesting that citizens in the low-income countries have opportunities for political learning through political socialisation in civil society organisations. A culture of democracy, whereby political socialisation may "inculcate the values, trying to get people to appropriate the values for themselves, so that then they practice them and generate a new type of culture" (Taylor, 1999 pp. 69-70) is debatable.

For instance, Waghid and Davids (2018, p. xiv) argue that Africa has yet to inculcate a deliberative culture, noting that when citizenship education "does not consider people as equal speaking beings would itself become vulnerable to kinds of prejudice that drive people apart rather than including them collectively in communication". Consequently, citizen engagement in matters of mutual concern has hardly yielded meaningful deliberations on the continent, thereby potentially hindering many opportunities for developing democratic communities that Africa needs to foster. The challenges to inculcating a deliberative culture in Africa, are noted by Waghid and Davids (2018, pp. 116-117) using the example of Kenya:

> "violence in Kenya undermines the role of higher education as a hub for democratic citizenry… ethnic violence has led to the instability of higher education institutions as well as cultivated societal hatred and division among so-called citizens. At the heart of the conflict, students, faculty and staff turned against one another and impaired their sense of belonging (relationships) and the ability of higher education institutions in Kenya to contribute to national development as part of a national agenda for the institutions."

The lack of inclusive deliberation in Kenya higher education has led to limited academic freedom due to political interference. Hornsby's (2012, p.269) study on the deliberative culture in Kenya's violence-prone universities established that "the political elite silenced academics teaching public reasonableness, and students were not encouraged to question or engage in public discourses about public policy or to question political authority in Kenya". The lack of a deliberative culture in Africa is inextricably linked to the absence of voluntary organisations, which are the schools of citizenship.

The next section discusses the role of informal networks for citizenship learning.

4.4.3 Political socialisation through informal interactions

Merelman (1986) describes political socialisation as the process by which people acquire relatively enduring orientations toward politics in general, and toward their own political system. This is because political socialisation imparts knowledge and understanding of the political world, how it works, thereby influencing people's attitudes about political actors and institutions. "These skills and values are then internalised and adopted as one's own, as individualised forms of participation in the life of a community organised and protected by a democratic state" (Wnuk-Lipiński 2007, p. 675). The literature indicates that the formative years between childhood and adulthood are generally crucial, during which citizens form the basis of political attitudes and behaviours (Neundorf and Smets, 2017). Socialisation into a political culture through informal relationships like peer groups, family members, social groups is noted to be a major mechanism for citizenship learning. Much socialisation is noted to take place within the family and community (Macedo, 1994). Research indicates that socialisation is "considered to form the basis for political attitudes

(e.g., political values and identity), political engagement (e.g., political interest and political efficacy), and ultimately political behaviours (e.g., conventional and unconventional forms of political participation)" Neundorf and Smets, 2017 p. 1).

Most importantly, political socialisation creates a political culture. Socialisation into political culture results in broad societal characteristics and attitudes (Merrifield 2001). Accordingly, a political culture shape the attitudes of the masses in terms of what people expect of their political system, what they see as possibilities for their own action, and what rights and responsibilities the various actors are perceived to have (Almond and Verba, 1963; Pyle and Verba, 1965). In other words, a *political culture tells us about what people have learned about the functioning of their political system that they are willing to accept, and what they think they can change*. Therefore, to understand the politics of a country, necessitates examining its political culture, i.e. an examination of political attitudes, the values that people have about politics, government, and their own role (Taylor, 1999). However, there is an absence of empirical studies on the political attitudes and values in a peasant and poverty context.

The literature indicates that a political culture may be characterised by the politics of patronage, violence, and manipulation (Blackburn, 2000). According to Backburn (2000), citizens can be socialised to embrace 'undemocratic attitudes'. The influence of a political culture on citizenship is articulated by Jarvis (1987, p.14) that:

> "individuals do not merely receive these impressions from culture and have them imprinted; rather there is a process of thought and then, also, one of externalisation. Hence individuals actually modify what is received and it is the changed version that is subsequently transmitted to other people in the social interaction".

Similarly, Merrifield (2001) argues that socialisation creates deep-rooted assumptions that are not easily changed. It is possible that citizens can be socialised to political cultures of violence, manipulation, or corruption. Taylor argues that, political cultures are a site of struggle because citizens challenge authoritarian cultures. For example, in the study on El Salvador, Taylor (1999, p.67) argues that:

> "it would be a mistake, though, to portray El Salvador's citizens as being wholly swayed by a political culture steeped in exclusion, coercion and corruption; the history of struggle has created its own set of heroes, stories, ideals and modes of behaviour which combine to create an alternative politics and an alternative political culture".

Therefore, I argue that political socialisation in the developing countries embeds the struggle to 'unlearn' the old ways and create new ways (i.e. challenging socialised and internalised power).

It follows that while democratic political cultures create empowered citizens (Blackburn, 2000), in the authoritarian political contexts, "in order to participate and have their voice heard, citizens need to understand power and how to have an impact" (Merrifield 2001, p.5). The question that remains to be answered is how the poor can learn to be active citizens and challenge internalised power. Taylor (1999) makes reference to an alternative political culture that opposes corruption and exclusion, but makes no suggestion on how the poor may learn to be active citizens. We know from the literature that the entrenchment of power by the elite is invasive. For instance, Lukes (2005, p.25) notes that "the domination of the defenders of the status quo may be so secure and pervasive that they are unaware of any potential challengers to their position and thus of any alternatives to the existing political process, whose bias they work to maintain".

Patronage is a key challenge in some political cultures. It reveals a structure of networks tangled to the state, through which power is dispersed, preserved, and fostered. Van de Walle's (2001) study on Africa's growing cabinet size indicates how the political elite divert public resources to maintain themselves in power. For instance, Cameroon, was noted to have one of the largest cabinets in Africa with 44 ministers in 2000, in comparison to Romania with a size, similar to that of Cameroon but maintained only 19 ministries. While Romania had a cabinet size of less than half of Cameroon's, its economy was over five times that of Cameroon (Van de Walle's 2001). President Biya's ruling CPDM party in Cameroon, was blamed for using cabinet seats to pay off the opposition in exchange for their support (Takougang, 2003), which clearly indicates the challenges to democratic political

socialisation in the context of deep-seated patronage relations and a political culture of corruption. Takougang (2003, p. 428) notes that:

> "President Biya and the CPDM have continued to dominate the political process through the effective use of patronage. Because the regime maintains a monopoly over the nation's purse strings, it has been able to manipulate individuals, regions, ethnic groups, and even some opposition parties in an effort to maintain control of Cameroon politics. Just as regime loyalty by individuals, ethnic groups or region brought tremendous financial and other socio-economic rewards under the one-party system, the same remains true under the current political environment".

The political theorists such as (Almond and Verba, 1963; Lipset, 1959) envisaged that "the acquisition of democratic norms, values, and participatory orientations among individuals in new democracies would be a long-term process linked to social modernisation and generational replacement" (Finkel and Smith, 2011 p. 418). However, the proponents of empowerment instead argue that "the most promising direct means for promoting democratic orientations in new democracies is through civic education programs, which teach democratic citizenship to young people in classroom settings or to adults in community workshops, lectures, or public fora" (Finkel and Smith, 2011 p. 418). The next section critiques the effectiveness of civic education programmes.

4.5 The effectiveness of civic education programmes

The influence of civic education in schools on the development of democratic knowledge, norms, and values is acknowledged in literature (Merrifield 2001; Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). Civic education in schools builds awareness on the democratic values, attitudes, and the responsibilities of citizens (Torney-Purta et al. 2001). Some developing countries have integrated civic education in primary schools to stimulate citizen engagement in the political processes. Mattes and Bratton's (2007) study in 12 sub-Saharan Africa countries showed that the introduction of civic education in schools increased political knowledge of the key institutions and players in governance. Bleck's (2015) study on Mali equally shows a positive relationship between schooling and participation in politics. The study shows that education plays a significant role in fostering agency. The forms of political

participation by Bleck (2015) include campaigning, willingness to run for office, and contacting government officials. Datzberger and Le Mat's (2019) on Ugandan youth, examines the extent that education fosters active, informed, critical and responsible citizens. Datzberger and Le Mat (2019) examine the respondents from secondary schools and universities on their understanding of political structures, independent critical thinking; levels of political interest; and political participation. However, Datzberger and Le Mat (2019, p. 18) observed that:

> "Ugandan schools make only a very modest contribution towards nurturing an individual's political agency. While the majority of respondents felt they critically reflected on societal issues in school, their knowledge of national political institutions, and on how they would claim and advocate their rights as citizens was remarkably low".

The above studies highlight the positive effects of civic education in schools on political participation. However, the influence of civic education in schools on citizens' organisation is not examined. Rather political participation is examined in relation to voting, contacting public officials, or attending community meetings.

While the above mentioned studies focus on civic education in schools, the literature further indicates the proliferation of civic education programmes in the developing countries by the NGOs to provide some spaces for political learning through NGOs awareness and training workshops. "It is difficult to estimate the precise number of these programs in developing democracies, but United States Agency for International Development (USAID) data suggest that the United States alone spent between $30 million and $50 million a year on civic education between 1990 and 2005"(Finkel and Smith, 2011 p. 418). Finkel's (2002) study highlights the significance of external funding through NGOs to organise adult civic education programs in South Africa, Kenya, and the Dominican Republic. NGOs such as the *Grupo Acción por la Democracia (GAD)* in the Dominican Republic, *Lawyers for Human Rights* in South Africa, and *Constitutional and Reform Education Consortium* in Kenya were funded by USA and European donors to create a "diverse, active, and independent civil society that articulates the interests of citizens and holds government accountable" (Carothers,

1999 p. 87). The *Grupo Acción por la Democracia (GAD)* organised lectures and forums on the political rights and obligations covering policy issues on justice, health, and education. A gender-focused civic education program, on the other hand, targeted a women's small business NGO, *Asociación Dominicana para el Desarrollo de la Mujer (ADOPEM*) which trained women community leaders in women's rights, and democracy. In South Africa, the *Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR)* organised awareness and Training of Trainers workshops on human and democratic rights, targeting paralegals who organised civic awareness workshops in the local communities on different aspects of democratic governance and human rights. Scholars have critiqued the effectiveness of the civic education programmes. For instance, Finkel's (2014, p. 161) impact study of the adult civic education programmes in the developing democracies questions that: "Are individuals in emerging democracies more likely to embrace democratic values, to learn basic knowledge about political processes, and to engage in politics in response to donor-sponsored civic education programmes?"

After a decade of implementing the Kenyan National Civic Education Programme, which organised about 50,000 workshops by 80 NGOs between late 2001 and December 2002 to promote civic skills, democratic values, a survey was conducted to measure the key aspects of political culture, including political knowledge, participation, tolerance, and the individual's sense of national versus tribal identification (Finkel and Smith, 2011). It was established that the civic education "interventions are much less likely to affect 'deep-seated' democratic values such as political tolerance, support, and trust" (Finkel, 2014 p. 161). For instance, Finkel and Smith (2011 p. 419) show that Kenya has experienced "long-standing ethnic rivalries and inequalities (which erupted into violence most recently in 2008), high levels of intolerance and distrust, and relatively low levels of citizen engagement with the political process"

In general, the civic education impact studies reveal improvement in the participation of citizens, in terms of their involvement in community problem-solving activities; attendance in local government meetings; involvement in election campaigns; and contact with local elected official (Finkel, 2002). Finkel (2002, p. 998) notes that:

> "though the goal of many advocacy organisations conducting civic education is to mobilise dispossessed, marginal, and previously inactive constituencies, it is nevertheless the case that mobilisation efforts appear to be most successful among individuals possessing relatively higher levels of resources such as education and political interest, and who are more highly integrated into existing social networks".

Therefore, Finkel (2002) argues that civic education benefits those with a higher level of education. However, the influence of adult civic education programmes on citizens' organisation is not articulated.

4.6 Conclusion

The chapter questions political learning in a poverty and peasant context. The literature does not explain how citizens learn in a peasant and poverty context, from a civic republican perspective. Civic republicanism clarifies on citizenship learning in the context of the middle class, and voluntary organisations are schools of citizenship, or political learning. The discussion examines the question: how do citizens learn liberal democratic values in a poverty and peasant context? How does the empowerment approach conceptualise political learning? There is an absence of case studies on how citizens learn in the peasant context. Local membership organisations largely operate as self-help and service organisations, and they hardly provide a space to debate the values for a democratic society or influence the deliberative processes of government policy-making. Rather, they are networks for a political culture of patronage. The community organising approach suggests the role of a critical educator in the context of poverty. Chapter five shows the absence of political learning in the community development project groups.

5. Limiting the State through Political Representatives

5.1 Introduction

The study set out to ascertain how conclusively the poor can influence the state through a) *political representatives* in local government, b) *NGOs*, and c) *social service delivery/community development projects*, as claimed by the theorisation on empowerment. This chapter examines the case of the political representatives in Uganda's local governments. It is important to note that the idea of representative local government is integral to civic republicanism. Civic republicanism posits that citizens do well to limit the state and make it accountable through political representation in local government and voluntary organisations. Citizen's organisation is critical in representative local government.

Therefore, the discussion on the findings on the case of the political representatives in Uganda's local governments derives from the third research question of the study, i.e. *how do the communities organise to question their elected representatives to be accountable?* The research question is examined within the framework and rationale of local government or decentralisation, i.e. to give citizens – through their elected representatives – increased power in decision-making. Decentralisation is defined as the "transfer of power and responsibilities from the central government level to elected authorities at the subnational level" (OECD, 2019 p. 16).

The research question derives from the critique of the theorisation on empowerment, which influenced the good governance agenda in the 1990s, and subsequently, the formulation of Uganda's decentralisation policy. The decentralisation reforms in Uganda aimed at *addressing poverty, the deliberate inclusion of the poor* in decision-making, and *accountability by the political representatives* in local government. As discussed in chapter two, the empowerment approach assumes the benevolence of the public officials to act on behalf of the citizens to foster accountability. Consequently, the decentralisation policy in Uganda stipulated the transfer of power and resources to the political representatives, who

would create linkages between the state and the citizens. It was envisaged that the political representatives would get closer to the citizens, foster efficient allocation of resources, and accountability. However, the absence of citizens' organisation, that would question the local governments, was not identified as a constraint in the decentralisation reforms.

The field research identified two key findings that contribute to the critique on representative local government, which have hitherto not been suggested by scholars. First, the study shows a major weakness in the design of the decentralisation reforms in Uganda, namely: the disregard of the lack of a revenue base in a peasant context and the independence of resource-stricken local governments due to dependence on central government funding. The study identified the overdependence of local governments on central government funding, which encourages politicians to create networks of patronage. The field research particularly noted the proliferation of local governments as a mechanism for patronage. Moreover, the fact that local governments in Uganda are demarcated along ethnic identities, implies that their proliferation reinforces ethnically-divided citizens.

This finding challenges the foundations of the theorisation on empowerment. It is established in literature that "local government revenue must be sufficient and adequate", for decentralisation to occur (OECD, 2019 p. 32). The civic republican perspective emphasises the independence of local governments, deriving from economic prosperity. Local governments have historically been driven by "independence and power" (Gannett, 2005 p. 724). Their independence from the state has historically derived from enterprise and the economy as the backbone. Thus, local government was a means to limiting the state, as the "central government's greatest challenge became one of resisting its natural tendency either to co-opt or crush the independence of feisty local governments" (Gannett, 2005 p. 720). By ignoring the problem of a peasant population and economic dependence, it is not surprising that local governments are appendages of the state in Uganda.

The other significant finding of the study is that the decentralisation reforms in Uganda emphasised the inclusion of the local communities in decision making in form of

village assemblies at the receiving end of the social service delivery projects, and without accountability mechanisms for questioning the local governments. While the empowerment approach embraces the civic republican idea that decentralisation creates linkages between the state and the citizens, it ignores the fact that representative local government is effective through citizens' organisation. I show that the village assemblies, in Uganda's decentralisation policy, cannot substitute voluntary organisations. The study identified that the absence of voluntary organisations, implies the unrestrained power of the political representatives. Scholars corroborate problems of elite capture, corruption, and the misuse of local government funds in Uganda (Sonko, 2013; Ojambo, 2012; Ayeko-Kümmeth, 2014; Bashaasha et al. 2011; Green, 2015). The study findings show that these problems persist because unorganised and poor communities can hardly influence their local governments. Thus, I show that the decentralisation structure in Uganda precludes meaningful participation, since unorganised citizens are unable to question or put pressure on the state.

The case study of Uganda is significant because: a) the decentralisation policy has been implemented since the early 1990s. Therefore, Uganda provides a relevant context for examining the choices and influence by the poor through the political representatives. b) it portrays the unique context of local governments in Uganda, typically dependent on the central government funds. I therefore discuss the following themes from the field research, namely: a) a political and elite structure; b) accountability by the local leaders; and c) the influence of politics in the community projects due to dependence on central government funding.

5.2 Citizen Voice in a Political and Elite Structure

The analysis of the political and elite structure questions the citizens' voice within the local government structure. The section is divided into three parts. The first part (section 5.2.1) discusses the background to the decentralisation reforms in Uganda to show that the reforms did not emerge from systematic analysis. Rather, decentralisation was politically motivated. The second part (section 5.2.2) examines the local government structure in

Uganda to show the gap between citizens and the political representatives. The third part (section 5.2.3) questions the role of the citizens in the decentralisation reforms. The discussion shows that citizens are at the receiving end of social service delivery, i.e. the village assemblies in planning for social services. I indicate the absence of accountability mechanisms and show that the village assemblies approach cannot substitute the voluntary organisations.

5.2.1 Background to decentralisation in Uganda

After three decades of adopting the decentralisation reforms, Uganda is a good case study to examine the citizens' voice in decentralisation, and the extent that the political representatives get closer to the citizens in a politically motivated structure. Prior to the good governance agenda in the 1990s, the ruling government had established the decentralisation structure that had been instrumental in its guerrilla warfare before coming to power in 1986. This discussion raises the irony of democratising through representative local governments that are appendages of the state.

It is important to note that by the late 1990s most of the countries in Latin America, as well as parts of Africa and Asia, had made the transition to liberal democracy (Robinson, 2007). The good governance agenda promoted decentralisation to foster decision-making by the poor, who would contribute to improved social service delivery by holding the political leaders accountable (Holla et al. 2011). Therefore, many African countries started to devolve the central government functions to local jurisdictions as part of the structural adjustment reforms, which many countries adopted in exchange for aid and loans from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In Uganda, as in most developing countries, decentralisation focused on poverty reduction through social service delivery, while bringing government closer to the people (Robinson, 2007). In other words, decentralisation was guided by the assumption that the reforms would not only lead to increased access to social services, but also *deepen democracy*, so that the local communities would gain power through local government.

Decentralisation includes the political, administrative, and fiscal features. The political dimension is the essence of democratisation as illustrated in Figure 6.

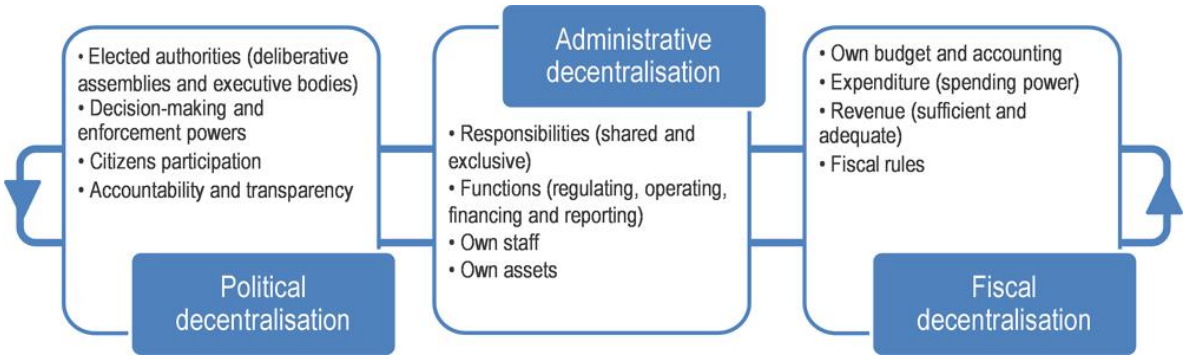

Figure 6: Political, Administrative, and Fiscal decentralisation **(Source: OECD, 2019 p. 32).**

OECD (2019, p. 33) defines decentralisation as:

> "the transfer of a range of powers, responsibilities, and resources from central government to subnational governments, defined as legal entities elected by universal suffrage and having some degree of autonomy. Subnational governments are thus governed by political bodies (deliberative assemblies and executive bodies) and have their own assets and administrative staff".

The decentralisation reforms promise citizens' voice through hierarchical political structures. Representative local government promotes linking citizens to the state through politicians in a hierarchical organisational structure. Therefore, the study considers significant the role of the political structure of decentralisation in Uganda in terms of whether it works to concentrate power into the hands of the political representatives, or increases the power of the citizens in local governments. Blaug (2009, pp. 85, 92) argues that

> "elitist and technocratic accounts of democracy assume the necessity of leadership and hierarchy...Often, democratic theorists assume the necessity of a representational hierarchy, and pay little attention to other methods by which democracy might secure organisational effectiveness".

The democratic theorists argue that:

> "not everyone can participate, that there are simply too many of us, that the state is too large a political entity and that the complexity of decisions exceeds the capacities of participants…and for this *structural* reason there must always be hierarchy. Participatory democrats question authority because…They know that hierarchies tend to corrupt." (Blaug, 2009 pp. 92-96).

A representational hierarchy is integral to representative democracy, since the "majority delegates power to a minority nominated to act in their interest" through an electoral process (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002 p. 29). Therefore, the extent that representation increases citizens' control over government, depends on the accountability of the representatives.

In contrast, the participatory democrats emphasise citizen participation in the political decisions and policies that affect their lives directly rather than through elected representatives. Thus, non-elected citizens' involvement in decision-making is central to participatory democracy. Blaug (2009, p. 86) adds that the problem with the hierarchical organisational form is particularly the excessive concentration of power, but participatory democrats desist from "their use of so troubling an organisational form". Similarly, Cloke and Goldsmith (2002, p. 83) argue that hierarchy "signifies a stack of power asymmetries, each featuring differentiated levels of status and degrees of power; layered, as it were, one above the other". Nevertheless, representative democracy and participatory democracy complement each other. Citizens' organisation is particularly important to foster the accountability of the political representatives.

In Uganda, the transfer of power and resources to political representatives was envisaged to create linkages between the state and the people, through a hierarchical five-tier pyramidal structure (discussed in the next section). Therefore, "in theory, decentralisation reforms promote a new conception of governance no longer based on hierarchical, top-down and vertical relations but adding a bottom-up and co-operative perspective, with more transparency, accountability and participation, in particular by citizens" (OECD, 2019 p.33). Further, decentralisation assumes that local governments are politically independent from the

influence of the state, and that the political leaders put the electorate's interests before the state's interests. The fundamental challenge of decentralisation, however, has been the lack of responsiveness by the local governments, and the lack of citizens' voice in the decisions that most concern them. The observation that the decentralisation reforms "have failed to bring about downward accountability and popular participation" (Ito, 2011 p. 413) applies also to the case of Uganda (as discussed in section 5.3).

It is important to note that the decentralisation reforms in Uganda did not emerge from any systematic analysis, and therefore, did not consider the absence of citizens' organisation and the unrestrained power of the political representative structures. Mansuri and Rao (2012, p. 3) note that:

> "policy interest in participatory initiatives, along with the expansion in funding, has proceeded, in large part, with little systematic effort to understand the particular challenges entailed in inducing participation or to learn from past programs. As a result, the process is, arguably, *still driven more by ideology and optimism than by systematic analysis, either theoretical or empirical.* (emphasis mine).

Decentralisation in Uganda was adopted in 1992 (Francis and James, 2003) "through a presidential policy statement" (Steiner, 2006 p. 6). However, the country's decentralised governance had been initiated as a political strategy of the new regime in 1986 to foster grassroots-based participation. The local councils (called resistance councils then) were critical to the National Resistance Movement/Army (NRM/NRA) during and after its guerrilla warfare (Mamdani, 1996). "These councils were meant to resist the incumbent government before the NRM came to power" (Steiner, 2006 p. 5). Green (2015, p. 493) elaborates that:

> "Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) began to create local government cells in territories it controlled under the name of 'Resistance Councils' (RCs). As early as 1981 the NRA began to organise 'clandestine committees' purely as a means for civilians to provide food and security for the rebels. After securing enough territory, the NRA allowed the RCs to take on the responsibility of governing villages as well…In other words, the pre-1986 RC system functioned precisely because, in contrast to its later forms, it was directly important to the survival of the NRA."

After the NRM came to power in 1986, it established resistance councils country-wide, which were organised in a five-tier structure. Accordingly, there was no institutional process that initiated the decentralisation reform in Uganda, neither was the reform subject to critique through a participatory manner (DENIVA, 2011). Nevertheless, the Resistance Councils (RCs) were renamed into local councils (LCs) in the 1995 Constitution. This was preceded by the "enactment of the 1987 Resistance Council/Committee's (RC's) Statute 9, which legalised RCs and gave them powers in their areas of jurisdiction at the local level" (Bashaasha et al. 2011, p. 2). The decentralisation policy was later enshrined in Uganda's constitution in 1995 and was legalised by the Local Government Act of 1997 (Republic of Uganda, 1997), and these are the primary legislation that guide decentralisation in Uganda. After three decades of implementing the decentralisation policy in Uganda, no further reforms have been made to it. Scholars have examined its impact, but have not suggested any revisions to the policy.

Despite the political aspirations for decentralisation, scholars have described the Uganda decentralisation reform as unique among developing countries. Steiner (2006, p. 5) noted that the "Ugandan decentralisation reform initiated in 1992 is exceptional among developing countries in terms of the scale and scope of the transfer of power and responsibilities to the local level". Francis and James (2003, p. 325) described Uganda's decentralisation to be "one of the most far-reaching local government reform programmes in the developing world", while Mitchinson (2003, p. 241) termed it as "one of the most radical devolution initiatives of any country". Ojambo (2012, pp. 73-74) argues that Uganda had "witnessed increased centralisation of power through the various political regimes from independence until 1986...The current system of local government is by far more robust and elaborate than any other that was ever attempted in the country's history"

The above praises of Uganda's decentralisation do not align with its criticisms. For instance, Tumushabe et al. (2010) acknowledge that the local governments in Uganda are appendages of the state due their financial dependence, and question the accountability mechanisms. Tumushabe et al. (2010, p. vi) summarises that:

> "Almost two decades later, the quality of public service delivery is less than desirable; district local governments with no financial resources of their own have become mere agents of the centre while the accountability mechanisms for good governance and public service delivery are either non-existent or malfunctional".

Similarly, Green (2015) identifies the problem of lack of funding, corruption, and the proliferation of local governments in Uganda. Green (2015, p. 492) critiques that:

> "Initial excitement about Uganda's decentralisation programme has, however, tapered off in recent years due in large part to continued strong ties between the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party and local governments and a resulting lack of effectiveness in providing high quality public services…numerous problems with Uganda's decentralisation programme such as a lack of funds, a lack of competent staff, corruption and an obsessive focus on the creation of new local government units are all responsible for the lagging performance of local governments".

However, the critique of Uganda's decentralisation by scholars misses the problem of a peasant population and the absence of citizens' organisation to challenge the political representatives as key constraints.

Therefore, this study makes a contribution by pointing out that the problems identified by scholars in Uganda's decentralisation policy, largely relate to the absence of citizens' organisation to challenge the political representatives. Scholars have hitherto not critiqued this as a problem per se. Sections 5.3 and 5.4 show that unorganised and poor citizens are hardly effective participants through political representation in Uganda's resource-stricken local governments. The citizens fail to challenge the public officials and the politicians, who seek to entrench their power. The next section discusses Uganda's local government structure.

5.2.2 The local government structure in Uganda

The preceding section indicates that political control by citizens, which is a key objective in Uganda's decentralisation, is hampered by a politically motivated power structure. In this section, I illuminate the gap between the citizens and their political

representatives in the design of the decentralisation structure, and show that the village assemblies approach cannot substitute the voluntary organisations.

As indicated in the preceding section, decentralisation includes the political, administrative, and fiscal dimensions, and the political dimension is the essence of democratisation. Therefore, the primary legislation that guides decentralisation in Uganda, i.e. the constitution and the Local Government Act stipulate a local government structure that devolves political power to the citizens. Uganda's constitution stipulates that: "the state shall be guided by the principle of decentralisation and devolution of governmental functions and powers to the people at appropriate levels where they can best manage and direct their own affairs" (Republic of Uganda, 1995). The decentralisation policy enables local government units to plan, initiate and execute policies in respect of the matters affecting people within their jurisdiction. In addition, the Local Governments Act clearly defines the functions that are devolved to local governments, i.e. health services, educations services, water services, road services, and agricultural extension services.

The specific objectives of decentralisation in Uganda are:

- To transfer power to the districts and thus reduce the workload of remote and under-resourced government officials at the centre.
- To bring *political* and administrative control over services to the point where they are actually delivered thereby improve accountability and effectiveness and promote people's feeling of "ownership" of programmes and projects executed in their Local Governments.
- To improve financial accountability and responsibility by establishing a clear link between payment of taxes and provision of services.
- To improve the capacity of local councils to plan, finance and manage the delivery of services to their constituents.
- Promote Local Economic Development in order to enhance people's incomes.

(Republic of Uganda, 1997 p. 9).

However, the five-tier decentralisation structure depicts the distance between the citizens and the political representatives. The structure is organised into administrative and

political organs: the village (LC1 – administrative), parish (LC2 – administrative), sub-county (LC3 – legislative), county (LC4 – administrative), and district (LC5 – legislative) in the rural areas, as summarised in (Table 7). The urban structure constitutes the: cell, ward, division, municipality and city.

Area / Level	Role	Political Leaders	Government Appointees
District Council Local Council 5	**Local Government**	Chairperson Council constitutes elected Councillors and minorities (women, youth, and people with disabilities	Chief Administrative Officer Resident District Commissioner (RDC)
County Local Council 4	Administrative	LC 3 Executives select LC4 Executives	Assistant Chief Administrative Officer
Sub-County Council Local Council 3	**Local Government**	Chairperson Council constitutes elected Councillors at LC2 and minorities (women, youth, and people with disabilities)	Sub-county Chief
Parish Council (Administrative)	Local Council 2 (Administrative)	Chairperson selected by LC1 executive Committee	Parish Chief
Village Council (Administrative)	Local Council 1	Chair elected by LC 1	

Table 7: Local Government structure

In essence, the local governments typically consist of two-tiers of authorities; the sub-county (LC3) and district (LC5) councils are corporate local government bodies. The district council (LC5) is the highest local government tier and the chair is the most powerful local government seat, with overall control over social service delivery in the district (Mitchinson,

2003). The LC5 council (the chair and executive), i.e. the political representatives are expected to have the final say over district decision-making.

The highest administrative position is the Chief Administrative Officer. The Resident District Commissioners are appointed by the President and are effectively the eyes and ears of central government in the districts, while Chief Administrative Officers have the overall technical responsibility for service delivery and are appointed by the Public Services Commission (Mitchinson, 2003). The Chief Administrative Officer is accountable to both central and district governments. The key relationships to note are the interactions between the citizens (who give the mandate to the elected leaders); the technical officers (who provide social services to the citizens); and the elected leaders (who supervise the technical officers). However, the interactions between the politicians and citizens are most critical. However, as discussed in section 5.3, the L5 Councillors have minimal interactions with the communities. Therefore, the feedback mechanisms between the political representatives and the citizens are poor.

The political organ at all local levels is the council, which includes special interest groups such as women, youth, and people with disabilities, whose members are elected in regular elections. The sub-county (LC3) and district (LC5) councils operate like a parliament with a speaker and deputy-speaker, which include technical officials. The LC3 and LC5 councils select a chairperson and members of sector committees for social service delivery, i.e. education, health, roads, and water production, and agriculture extension services. At the village level (LC1), the citizens elect a chairperson and committee. Similarly, there are minimal interactions by the LC3 with the communities as discussed in section 5.3. The three additional administrative levels are a semblance of citizen voice: the village council (LC1) is a deliberative, judicial and administrative space for village residents, and the LC1 chairpersons adjudicate minor offences, witness land transactions, and issue letters of certification for which villagers pay a small fee (Francis and James, 2003); the LC2 chair and committees are selected by the LC1 councillors, but have no role in the decision-making processes of the councils at LC3 and LC5, just as the LC4 councillors. The influential

political positions are the LC3 and LC5, which are distant from the local communities, as discussed in section 5.3. Moreover, the proliferation of local governments in Uganda, has not helped to foster linkages between the political representatives and the citizens.

It is important to note that local governments greatly proliferated since the National Resistance Movement (NRM) took over power in 1986, creating an expansive political structure. The local governments increased from 33 districts in 1987 to 38 districts in 1991 (at the time of decentralisation). By 2015, up to 135 districts and 2,062 sub-county local governments were created (Republic of Uganda, 2017). In summary, 96 districts were created since 1987, which is a 400 percent increase. The question, however, is: who is benefitting from the political structure, and to what extent does the political representation structure amplify citizens' voices? The proliferation of local government districts in Uganda and how starkly the Ugandan case compares in relation to selected African countries, is illustrated in (Tables 8 and 9).

Level of Administrative Unit	Census Year				
	1969	1980	1991	2002	2014
District	21	33	38	56	112
County	111	140	163	163	118
Sub-county	594	668	884	958	1,382
Parish	3,141	3,478	4,636	5,238	7,241

Table 8: Number of Administrative Units by Census 1969 – 2014
(Source: Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016 p. i).

Country	Name of Unit	Number of Units	Population/Unit
Uganda	**Districts**	**79**	**383,071**
Nigeria	States	37	3,563,784
Sudan	State	26	1,483,077
Tanzania	Region	26	1,555,923
Ethiopia	States	11	7,011,545
DR Congo	Province	11	5,694,182
Mozambique	Province	10	1,945,182
Ghana	Region	10	2,347,800
South Africa	Province	9	5,397,444
Kenya	Province	8	4,692,250

Table 9: Sub-National Administrative Units (Highest Level) for Sub-Saharan African countries with a population of more than twenty million, by number in 2006
(Source: CIA World Fact book, US Census Bureau, cited by Green, 2008 p. 2).

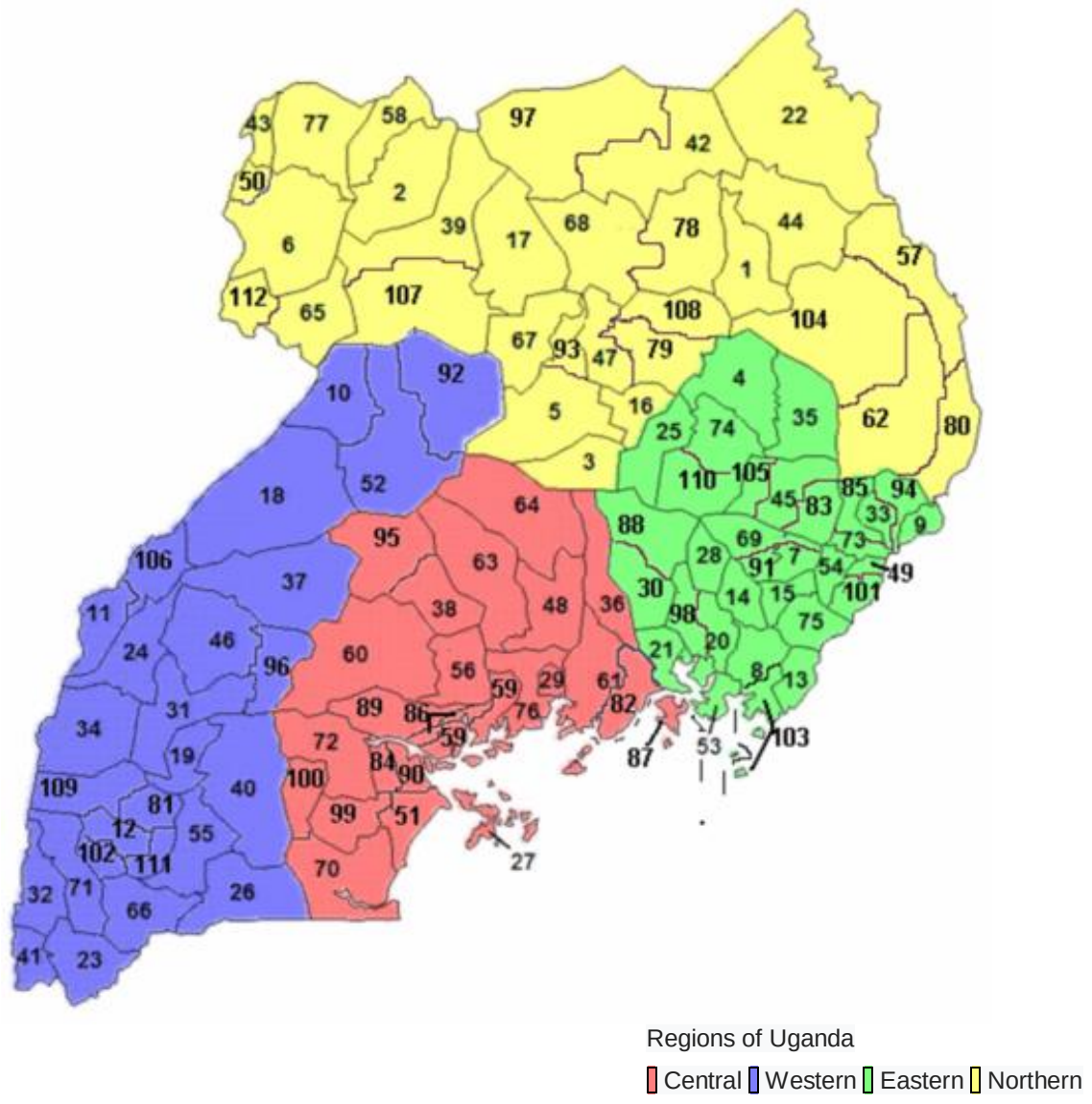

Figure 7: District Local Governments in Uganda

Source: Government of Uganda website, https://web.archive.org/web/20130510175119/http://www.molg.go.ug/local-governments

As discussed in the next section, the expansive local government structure, has not fostered political control by the local communities. The citizen's position in the decentralisation structure is at the receiving end of the local government services.

5.2.3 Citizen's role in the local government structure

It was important to understand the position that the citizen occupies in the political structure of local government. Therefore, this section examines the extent that the political structure increases the power of the citizens in the decisions and activities of the local governments, or whether the political structure concentrates power into the hands of the political leaders. I examined the role of the citizens in the design of the local-government structure, and in practice. Using the capability approach, I inquired about what a community member is able to do or be in the political structure.

As discussed in the preceding section, the local-government structure is stipulated in the Constitution and the Local Government Act. These policy documents specify the roles and responsibilities of the councillors, which include: a) execution of the legislative function; (b) *accountability to the electorate*; (c) *planning* and *budgeting* for the social services and other programmes in the district; and (d) *monitoring* the delivery of social services in their electoral areas (Republic of Uganda, 1995; Republic of Uganda, 1997). The Local Government Act and the Constitution assume the power of the citizens through their political representatives to achieve these local government functions. These policy documents indicate the role of the councillors to *initiate* interactions with the communities to ensure *planning* for the delivery of the social services and *accountability* to the electorate. It is important to note that the decentralisation policy does not stipulate the accountability mechanisms by the citizens. The state-led approach to participation, implies that the local communities are at the receiving end of the local government services.

I discussed with the communities about their interactions with their political representatives in *planning* for the social services, and the communities' experiences of the

implementation of the services. The findings on accountability by the local government leaders (which includes their monitoring role of social service delivery), are discussed in section 5.3. Figure 8 illustrates the citizen's position in the planning structure for the community development projects i.e. at the level of the village assemblies or village meetings which are supposed to occur annually.

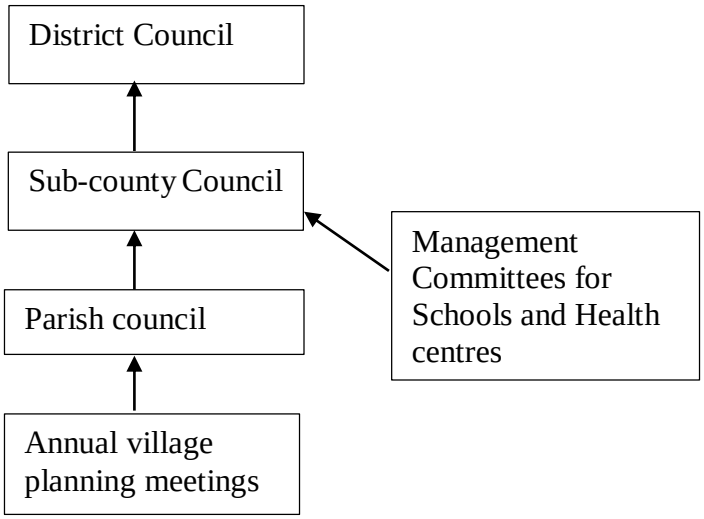

Figure 8: Spaces for participation

In principle, the village planning meetings for the community development projects are initiated by the local governments, after receipt of the indicative budget allocations from the central government. The local communities play no role in the budget allocations.[2] Rather, the role of the village local council is limited to organising annual planning meetings to identify the key social service priorities of the local communities, which are then passed on to the parish council (Government of Uganda, 1997). The parish committees incorporate the identified village priorities into the parish plans, which are then forwarded for integration into the sub-county plans. The sub-county plans are in turn submitted to the District Technical Planning Committees, which are supposed to produce an integrated district plan for discussion by different stakeholders, before approval by the District Council. The product of

[2] Interview with the Community Development Officer at Sub-County level, Bushenyi District, 28th May 2019, and the District Planning Officer, Bushenyi district, 21st May 2019.

the village meetings is typically a "wish-list by the village members".[3] The design of the local government structure dictates that the village assemblies are only able to generate wish-lists, rather than question local governments. The village planning meetings are essentially internal, and therefore do not involve the local government officials, who can respond to the communities'queries. This implies that the citizens occupy a passive role in the decentralisation structure.

In essence, the district Local Government Development Plan is driven by the National Development Plan. The Local Government Development Plan allocates resources for the community projects in line with the national budget and the priority areas of the National Development Plan, i.e. education, health, roads, water, and agricultural production. Therefore, the village-level meetings prioritise the social service needs in response to the district and national planning processes. Under the Local Government Act, each district, as a planning authority, is required to prepare and implement a development plan incorporating the village plans.

In practice, the funding for local governments dwindled in 2006, and community-based planning collapsed (as discussed in the next section). Consequently, the village planning meetings occur after every five years, rather than annually.[4] Nevertheless, I conducted focus group discussions to understand the communities' experiences of the implementation of the community development projects, the interactions and the outcomes for the communities. It became clear from the interviews that even prior to the collapse of the village meetings, there were loopholes in the community planning meetings. For instance, the district plans rarely incorporated the priorities for every lower local council, due to limited resources, so that the planning meetings raised expectations that were not met eventually[5]. While the community planning process for social service delivery is initiated in response to the local governments' receipt of the budget ceiling allocations from the central government,

[3] Interview with the Community Development Officer at Sub-County level, Bushenyi District, 28th May 2019.
[4] Interview with the Chief Administrative Officer, Bushenyi district, 21st May 2019.
[5] Interview with LC2 Chairperson, Bushenyi district, 22nd May 2019.

the local governments still let all the communities to submit requests for community development projects. Even when the plans were incorporated, they were rarely adhered to, so that the villages just made wish-lists, and waited for the councillors' decisions on the approved projects[6]. A village leader opined that:

> "The five-year interval planning is equivalent to dormancy. There are no longer any consultations with the communities. Rather, we as LC1 Chairpersons organise executive committee meetings and submit the identified needs forward to the sub-county. After all, the local government can only fund one or two projects in five years. The local government cannot do much because we have so many needs. What is the purpose of calling the meetings then?"[7]

Another village leader remarked that, "I tried to call a village planning meeting, but the residents asked that, 'if we submit our priorities, what will you do about them'? If we are fortunate to get attendance, we hold the meetings".[8] It was clear from all the villages studied that the village meetings had ceased, and as rightly described by an NGO participant, "the village planning meetings are dead".[9]

Similarly, the decentralisation structure does not involve the communities, or the village-level leaders at LC1 in project monitoring. The local government draws the Project Monitoring Committees from the local government staff and the councilors, to monitor on behalf of the communities. The village council is not involved in this process.[10] A village leader opined that:

> "we are not notified, when our projects have been approved. The implementation of the projects is always sudden, and the local government involves us only to constitute a Project Management Committee, when the project is completed. In case of road

[6] Interview with a village leader, at LC1, Bushenyi district, 26th July 2019.
[7] Interview with a village leader, at LC1, Bushenyi district, 18th July 2019.
[8] Interview with a village leader, at LC1, Bushenyi district, 9th August 2019.
[9] Interview with an NGO staff, Bushenyi district, 18th May 2019.
[10] Interview with the Community Development Officer at Sub-County level, Bushenyi District, 28th May 2019, and the District Planning Officer, Busyenyi district, 21st May 2019.

> construction, we are asked as village leaders to organise village meetings to prevent land conflicts"[11].

It is clear that the communities have no room to ask questions during the planning and implementation phases of the community projects. A village leader noted a case of shoddy construction, but was powerless to stop it because the contract is assigned by the local government, and in the end the construction had to be redone[12].

Like the planning and monitoring functions, where the communities remain on the margins, the village leaders have virtually no influence in the local government political structure. The village leaders are equally in a constrained position as the village residents. The interactions between the village leaders and the higher level councillors (LC3 and LC5) are rare, so that the position of LC1 chairperson is not influential.[13] An LC1 leader opined that, "we do not go beyond LC2, we are suppressed"[14]. When I asked the LC1 chairperson about the possibilities of the LC1 position through the tier structure, he shared the opinion that:

> "The local government offices give people the impression that the LC1 chair is very powerful because we get to settle disputes in the villages, we give letters of recommendations to residents to high-level offices for passports, birth certificates, or sign as witnesses for sale of land. We have no power beyond the village. I chose to compete for this LC1 position to mobilise community efforts for our self-help, but I know that we have no beyond the village. I see my influence in organising our collective activities. For example, I started the initiative for a revolving fund, and we are boosting our household incomes".[15]

As noted in the preceding discussion, the district councils deliver education, health, water, and agricultural services. The health and education institutions have management committees, which provide an opportunity for representation from the communities. A research participant on the school management committee, noted that the LC1 Chairperson

[11] Interview with a village leader at LC1, Bushenyi district, 13th June 2019.
[12] Interview with a village leader, at LC1, Bushenyi district, 26th July 2019.
[13] Interview with a village leader, at LC1, Bushenyi district, 18th July 2019.
[14] Interview with a village leader, at LC1, Bushenyi district, 13th June 2019.
[15] Interview with a village leader, at LC1, Bushenyi district, 8th August 2019.

can be part of the committee, if a school is located in the locality of the LC1 (Republic of Uganda, 2008). However, it was also noted that the LC1 chairpersons possess low educational qualifications, and are therefore formally excluded from the management committees for schools and health centres.[16] The representatives to the management committees of these institutions are nominated by the sub-county, and they serve as volunteers[17]. While lack of education was noted to be a constraint for the participation of the village leaders on the management committees, a participant from the health centre opined that LC1 chairpersons are excluded from the committees because "those are politicians, and we do not want politicians on the health management committees"[18]. The LC1 Chairperson, on the other hand, remarked that "the LC3 councillors do not want to involve people who are active. The Chairperson of the Health Committee is selected by the sub-county and they select whoever will work with them and not raise questions about the use of funds"[19]. It was clear that the LC1 leaders did not play an influential role in the local government structure.

Apart from the management committees for education and health, the Ugandan constitution provides for citizens to attend some council meetings, and LC1 chairpersons can attend as ex-officials. LC1 chairpersons do not participate, as previously discussed. Their limited education also implies that they lack advocacy skills to access technical information. The LC1s, therefore, are constrained to influence the local government councils. An LC3 chairperson opined that:

> "LC1 chairpersons are not educated, so they have inferiority. They are intimidated to interact with the high-level councillors and technocrats. There is a barrier in our interactions with the LC1 chairpersons. Because of their limited educated, they are structurally not included in sector service committees. They actually remain isolated. They are even intimidated to interact with wealthier residents, who are usually better educated and who may be happy to share information with LC1 chairpersons on

[16] Interview with the Head of a Health Centre, Bushenyi district, 16th July 2019.
[17] Interviews with the Heads of the Health Centres, Bushenyi district, 16th July 2019, 25th August 2019, and 7th September 2019. Also interview with the LC3 Chairperson, Bushenyi district, 20th August 2019.
[18] Interview with the Head of a Health Centre, Bushenyi district, 25th August 2019.
[19] Interview with LC1 Chairperson, Bushenyi district, 18th July 2019.

government processes. And with the migration of the educated to the cities, the LC1 chairpersons are voted by people who share similar and limited perspectives"[20].

Unlike the local government staff who are recruited on the basis of education qualifications, the elected representatives have lower education levels. This evidence is corroborated by a study on the local government councillors' level of education in 26 districts Uganda, covering LC3 and LC5 Councils as summarised in Figure 8.

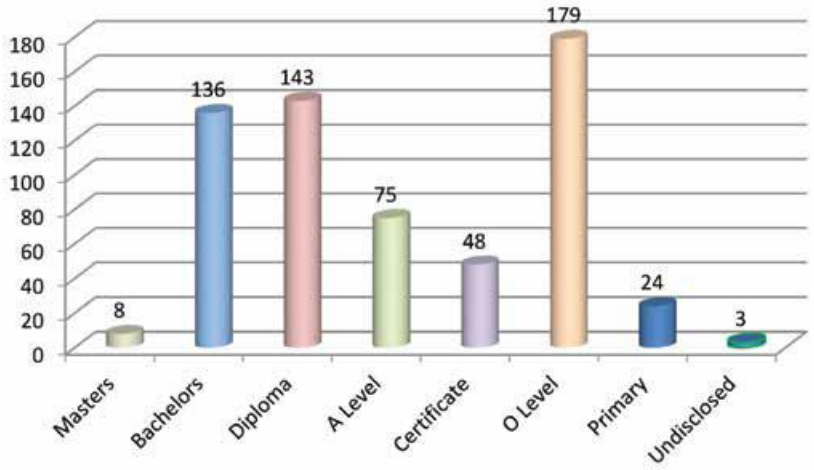

Figure 8: Councillors' Level of Education
(Source: Bainomugisha et al. (2015, p.67).

Bainomugisha's et al. (2015) study shows that the 24 out of the 661 councillors had only attained primary education. The majority of the councillors (329) had only gained high school level education, compared to the 289 who had advanced beyond diploma level. The Local Government Act of Uganda does not stipulate the education qualifications for the councillors, apart from the LC5 councillor who must possess a minimum education of Advanced Level standard or its equivalent (Republic of Uganda, 1997). Steiner's (2006, p. 22) study on Uganda indicates that "both politicians as well as civil servants often cannot fulfil their assigned functions effectively, as they are insufficiently trained…Due to low levels of education and experience, local officials frequently do not fully understand the

[20] Interview with LC3 Chairperson, Bushenyi district, 20th August 2019

instructions and procedures related with decentralisation". These perspectives confirm the significance of education levels that are typically low in a peasant context. It is not surprising that the village leaders remain excluded from political participation, just like the people who vote them.

Several important points emerge from the decentralised planning structure, namely: a) the structure places the communities at the receiving end of social service delivery, since the communities' influence in determining the social service priorities is limited. In essence, the poor are not able to influence the formulation of plans and the budget process by the central government, as they are unorganised. b) the communities are typically beneficiaries of the social services. Their role in project implementation is confined to the user committees, i.e. the Project Management Committees at village level, upon receiving the social service; c) the planning process is typically akin to making wish-lists, due to the absence of questioning on the funding options and feedback mechanisms on the approved projects. McGee and Gaventa (2010, p. 5), argue that "citizens are more likely to get involved in monitoring the implementation of government programmes if they have been involved in shaping them in the first place." d) The LC1 leaders do not play an influential role in the local government structure. Therefore, it is not surprising the local communities in the study remain passive in the local government structure.

Representational hierarchy is inevitable, as argued by the democratic theorists in section 5.2.1. However, education is a key determinant in the design of representation structures. Fischer (1993) argues that representative democracy is not generally considered participatory since it tends to assume a lack of knowledge by the citizens to contribute to policy making. Participatory democracy suggests organised groups to influence decision-making (Fischer 1993), and high education is critical for analytical capacity in voluntary organisations. Thus, representative local government, without the membership in voluntary organisations is problematic. Both representative local government and voluntary organisations are crucial and draw on high education levels. Therefore, a peasant population poses challenges to representative local government.

The next section discusses the findings on accountability by the political leaders, which is a key function of local governments in Uganda, as noted at the beginning of this section.

5.3 How Accountable are the Councillors?

As discussed in chapter two, decentralisation assumes the benevolence of the local government officials to foster accountable relationships with the citizens, and ignores that the effectiveness of the representative local government is attained through citizens' organisation to challenge the elected leaders to be accountable. Therefore, decentralisation does not consider the unrestrained power of the political leaders. The discussion shows that the village assemblies are unable to put pressure on the local government. The absence of organised groups that can engage with the local government, implies that it is up to the political representatives to organise feedback meetings with the communities. The rights-based approach marked the shift from the needs-based approach by rethinking communities as 'makers and shapers' rather than as 'users and choosers' of interventions (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2000). However, I show that this discourse remains theoretical, until organised groups emerge to challenge the power of the political representatives. As argued by Gaventa (2006, p. 24) "rarely do the powerful give up their power easily".

In representative democracies citizens delegate power to elected officials through periodic elections who are expected act in the interest of the electorate. To be accountable, is to be answerable for the actions and policies to the electorate. If governments are not accountable to the citizens, the power of the political leaders is revoked through voting. This means that accountability occurs, when the electorate is able to sanction the politician for the choices made on their behalf. Therefore, democratic governments ensure to be responsive to the citizens.

In principle, the sub-county and district councillors act as a pressure group for the citizens in the councils. The councillors represent the interests of their constituents in legislation, approval of budgets, providing oversight, and ensuring that citizens receive

quality services in their localities. The preceding section outlined these broad functions i.e. a) the *legislative* function; (b) *accountability to the electorate*; (c) *planning and budgeting for service delivery* and other programmes in the district; and (d) *monitoring* the delivery of public services in their electoral areas. The councillors have the responsibility to interact with the electorate in performing these functions. Using the capability approach, I inquired about what community members are able to do to ensure accountability by their leaders.

I conducted focus group discussions to examine the interactions of the communities with their elected leaders through the tier structure (LC1, LC2, LC3, and LC5). I inquired about the typical character of their interactions with each level of leadership to understand the significance of each level of leadership to the people. It was clear from the FGDs that the village leader at LC1 was closer to communities and identified with their community's experiences. The community members in the FGD argued that:

> "the LC1 leader is one of us. The Chairperson knows our struggles as community members. The only problem is that the LC1 has no part in the local government councils, where the decisions are made. We vote the LC1 position for the leadership of our village matters, say security, resolving conflicts, and for endorsing and certifying documents for the residents"[21].

When I asked the communities on their expectations from the other councillors in the hierarchy, it was clear that they voted for the local government councillors, based on the electoral promises to their communities.[22] However, it was also clear from the communities that the politicians were interested in advancing their own political interests, rather than those of the electorate. For instance, Members of Parliament often lodge support for the councillors at each level with the expectation to canvass support; the electioneering is inseparable at all levels.[23] Consequently, the communities often vote for the local government councillors depending on their relationships with the Member of Parliament. The issue of money laundering during the campaigns was evident. A focus group discussion remarked that "the

[21] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 5th July 2019.
[22] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 5th July 2019.
[23] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 12th August 2019.

politicians spend a lot of money in the campaigns. The politicians buy votes, and the people get interested in the quick gain, however little it is".[24]

These perspectives suggest that the communities are aware of the significance of representation in the deliberative spaces of power and that the local governments can effect changes in their communities. It is also clear that the closest leader to the village residents, the LC1, is not influential in the political structure. Nevertheless, they vote for the local government councillors, with the anticipation that a positive change could occur through the new representative. In addition, the political networks between the local government councillors with the Members of Parliament distract from scrutinising the right candidates due to popular politics. The lack of voluntary organisations to critique the predatory politicians is also evident, so that the communities did not have options to ensure effective representation.

The FGDs on the community interactions with the political leaders also aimed at understanding the local governments' presence in the remote communities. I examined the councillors' presence in the project activities, from the perspective of the communities. When I asked a focus group on the LC3's involvement in the project activities, I got the following response:

> "We last met the LC3 Chairman when he was campaigning for the last elections. The politicians are only close when they are looking for votes. Then you can expect to see them again after four years, when they want votes. We get along without the politicians. We cannot wait for them."[25]

Yet another focus group responded that they were frustrated by making repetitive requests through the LC1 chairperson to the local government to get the community roads repaired. The community members opined that:

> "We would expect the councillors, the LC3 especially, to follow-up on such reports and explain to us why this road is not repaired. For four years, we have had a very

[24] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 20th June 2019.
[25] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 7th September 2019.

> poor road. It affects us to transport the sale of our produce, and when someone is sick, it is very difficult to travel. If the councillor does not show up to explain to us about what is happening about our demands, what is his interest? The politicians are never interested in talking to us after voting for them."[26]

The village leaders similarly felt distant from the local government councillors, and complained about the lack of feedback on the community concerns about the projects. For instance, an LC1 leader complained that he had reported to the LC3 Chairperson about two water sources "but received no help"[27], while another village leader complained that:

> "the sub-county chief came and monitored a failed project. The local government knows that the project failed, but it ended there. No one follows up our concerns at the top. The president thinks that we at the lowest level are benefitting from these projects, but we are not. We cannot reach the higher authorities"[28].

The key opportunity that the LC1 leaders get to meet the local government is during the annual meeting at the sub-county, when they collect their annual allowances.[29] The LC1 Chair noted that "there are deep errors with the projects, and when we attend the sub-county meetings, we complain to the authorities as to why these failures cannot be corrected".[30] For most of the village leaders interviewed, there was no hope for action by the local government. The despair was evident in the remark by the village leader that, "all our complaints to them fall on deaf ears. The political system is dead. If you have complained this much over and over without change, you give up"[31], while another suggested that "perhaps if we protest, the authorities would take us seriously"[32].

The communities felt closest to the LC1 chairpersons, since they resided in the village and had regular interactions with the community members. However, the councillors at LC3

[26] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 5th July 2019.
[27] Interview with village a leader at LC1, Bushenyi district, 16th June 2019.
[28] Interview with village a leader at LC1, Bushenyi district, 23th May 2019.
[29] Interview with village a leader at LC1, Bushenyi district, 20th June 2019.
[30] Interview with village a leader at LC1, Bushenyi district, 24th September 2019.
[31] Interview with a village leader at LC1, Bushenyi district, 16th July 2019.
[32] Interview with a village leader at LC1, Bushenyi district, 13th July 2019.

and LC5, did not make effort to keep contact with the electorate. The village residents opined that:

> "we share the same challenges as the LC chairperson. He does not have the power to make changes for our village. We know that the LC3 is more powerful than the LC1, but he is far from us. He stays away from us, and he rarely visits the area, except during funerals, when he makes a short visit and leaves immediately. What can you discuss during funerals?"[33]

These experiences show that the local government councillors are the key liaison for the electorate, but clearly, they are aloof from the communities. There is an absence of feedback mechanisms for the local communities by these political leaders in the implementation of the social services. The decisions from the LC3 and LC5 councils on the approved community development projects are integrated into the annual District Development Plan. The councillors are expected to assess the needs and priorities on behalf of the communities as part of their monitoring function. However, the councillors are not under pressure to report back to the citizens. Therefore, the assumption that the political representatives would foster linkages between the state and the rural communities is uncritical. There is an absence of opportunities between elections, for citizens to have a voice on the specific priorities for the use of resources. The tier structure makes it easier for the councillors and the local government officials to avoid the interactions at the grassroots level, because they are distant from the electorate.

However, there was marked a contrast between the responses by the LC 3 councillors and the citizens. The political leaders at LC3 level affirmed the official role of the political representatives, but cited that they were overstretched to conduct community meetings. For instance, the LC 3 councillor was emphatic that:

> "As a councillor, I have a legislative role, and to keep in contact with the electorate. The primary responsibility is to my constituency. I represent them in sector committees and in the councils. In my own experience as a councillor, I must say that resources are limited to conduct meetings with the communities. For example,

[33] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 12th June 2019.

> transportation costs are not accounted for in our allowances. The local government has very limited resources which are spent as conditional grants for those specific services. We lack facilitation for community mobilisation."[34]

The Local Government Act mandates that councillors dedicate at least one day in a year to meet the electorate (Republic of Uganda, 1997). This implies that the interactions with the electorate are not given priority. It is not practical that a political representative can organise feedback meetings from the resolutions of council with the electorate, and gather their views in a day, at a minimum. At the same time, the councillors' complaint of the lack of funding to organise meetings with the electorate is corroborated in a study, which notes that:

> "the local government does not provide resources to facilitate convening of such meetings. As a result, 361 Councillors out 1005 and 5 out 35 Speakers did not organise and hold any meetings with their electorate in the year under review. This implies that they were not able to collect views from the electorate and present them to Council" (Bainomugisha et al. 2020 p. 70).

Therefore, the lack of revenue itself incapacitates the local leaders, which questions the relevance of decentralisation if local governments have no sources of revenue. Consequently, decentralisation maintains a political structure that remunerates the pubic officials in salaries, but with minimal services to the poor. What is the cost effectiveness of the local governments?

Since the councillors supervise the local government staff, I asked the LC3 councillors about the consequences on the technical officials for the unsatisfactory performance expressed by the communities. It was noted that the councillors have the power to challenge the poor performance of the technical staff in the council that could lead to termination of contract[35]. However, such action was noted to be very rare. Therefore, unless the councillors made effort improve the delivery of services, the communities remained helpless.

[34] Interview with LC3 Chairperson, Bushenyi district, 20th August 2019.
[35] Interview with LC3 Chairperson, Bushenyi district, 11th July 2019.

The LC1 leaders, who are closest to the communities, would be best placed to articulate the interests of the people if they were better educated. Pitkin's (1967) theorisation on symbolic representation, i.e. (the meaning that a representative has for the represented), echoes the circumstances of the village-level representation, in contrast to substantive representation (when the representative is "acting for", the interests of the represented). From the above findings, the substantive representatives are disengaged from the people they claim to represent. The significance of the symbolic role of the immediate community leaders, rather than the substantive representatives, affirms the lack of political control through the elected representatives.

It is possible that diligent councillors can consult their constituents in a variety of ways. However, the councillors' consultations are haphazard, and there is a lack of monitoring plans by the elected leaders. From the perspective of the local communities, the politicians are more interested in pursuing personal gains, than serving their constituents. The communities envisage a space for consultation on a systematic basis between elections, so that they can remain informed of the local government plans. Therefore, the communities expected feedback meetings to express their opinions as a collective. However, the interviews with the communities showed an absence of such dialogues. These experiences reveal how the lack of options is normalised in the state-led process. What then is the legitimacy of the state-led approach to participation?

Goetz and Gaventa (2001) identify numerous initiatives through which citizens can engage with their elected representatives. Although public meetings are useful when carefully facilitated, Blair (2000) argues that councillors who fear public questioning can manipulate them by, for example, holding meetings at odd times or in obscure locations. On the other hand, the public complaints system, suggestion boxes, do not necessarily mean that citizens use them or that governments take any notice of what is put into them (Goetz and Gaventa, 2001). Although other mechanisms such as opinion surveys and polls are useful to measure citizen satisfaction with government services, in the context of rural communities, this approach is not used. This evidence regarding the weak accountability relationships

suggests that a politically motivated state-led process to organise local communities fails to amplify citizens' voices.

The findings of the study depict the challenge of electoral representation, as a mechanism for democratisation. While citizens participate in electing local leaders, once these leaders assume office, they often remain effectively detached from the electorate, as they pursue their personal interests rather than the electorates' (Kakumba, 2010; Kjær and Therklidsen, 2012). Research carried out in several districts of Uganda on the frequency of interactions between the electorate with their district councillors showed that: 20.6 percent of the respondents did not meet them at all; 16.5 percent only met them when elections were imminent; 3.1 percent saw them during local fundraising; while 30.9 percent met them very rarely; and 2.1 percent only met them in bars (Kakumba, 2010 p.27). Where 70 percent cannot easily interact with their local leaders, representation becomes endangered. An earlier study by Makara (1998) indicated that the more the Local Council structures gained legal recognition and political clout, the less they became people's institutions and more like state bureaucratic institutions.

It is insufficient to suggest, as the proponents of the social capital theory do, that "in the absence of civil society, the state often needs to step in to organise individuals who are incapable of organising themselves" (Fukuyama, 2001 p.11). Similarly, the evidence from the field research confirms the misconceptions that decentralisation is an "opportunity to *link efforts of participation 'from below*'" (Gaventa, 1998 p. 50). Rather, as argued by Pitchford and Hendsen (2008, p. 94-95) the state-led processes may only succeed in "herding communities into structures and forms they neither own or relate to". Baviskar and Mathew (2009, cited by Nair, 2016 p. 1324) question "the utility in creating democratically elected and politically powerful institutions in the villages without creating enabling conditions for local communities". These perspectives illuminate the gap in citizens' organisation.

The lack of options is unjustifiable, and rather than wait for the response from the state-led process, I make the case for an organisational catalyst to create a political space.

The communities are powerless until they are organised. As argued by Webster and Engberg-Pedersen (2002, p. 11):

> "it is not sufficient for a political system to introduce institutions designed for political participation if the poor are not in position to utilise it. Nor is it likely that a space would introduce such innovations without pressure from below…a favourable policy environment and committed government may achieve little in poverty reduction if marginalised groups are unorganised, poverty is internalised, and if the interests and views of the marginalised remain excluded from the process of governance".

For Webster and Engberg-Pedersen (2002), it can be meaningful to speak of a political space when all dimensions (institutional channels, poverty discourses and organisational practices) are present in such a manner that they support the political agency of the poor.

The next section discusses the major weakness in the design of the decentralisation reforms in Uganda, i.e. the disregard of the lack of a revenue base in a peasant context and the independence of resource-stricken local governments through the central government funding.

5.4 Dependence on Central Government Funding

The study identified the problem of lack of a revenue base in a peasant context and the independence of resource-stricken local governments due to dependence on central government funding. Due to budget constraints faced by the local governments in Uganda, the participatory planning meetings at the village level ceased, as discussed above. It was also noted that the donor conditionalities for decentralisation reforms certainly did not emerge from any systematic analysis, which would have identified the dangers of populist politics and the contradiction of citizen participation through political representatives. Despite the policy argument for decentralisation, the study identified that the creation of local governments in Uganda has been driven by patronage politics. The dependency on central government for revenue was identified as key to creating patronage relations as discussed in the next section.

5.4.1 Revenue decentralisation and patronage

The question of a revenue base is at the core of decentralisation. OECD (2019, p. 31) notes that:

> "decentralisation covers three distinct but interrelated dimensions: political, administrative and fiscal. These dimensions are inter-dependent: there can (or should) be no fiscal decentralisation without political and administrative decentralisation. On the other hand, without fiscal decentralisation, political and administrative decentralisation are meaningless".

Moreover, the revenue must be sufficient and adequate (OECD, 2019 p. 32). Undoubtedly, the success of decentralisation depends on the adequate funding for local governments. In Uganda, as other developing countries, fiscal constraints have characterised the decentralisation reforms (Robinson, 2007). The scarcity of resources questions the relevance of decentralisation and its theoretical foundations in a poverty and peasant context. "While the quest for the fruits of decentralisation appears to be only increasing" (Ojambo, 2012 p. 70), the dependence of local governments on central governments in Uganda implies that politics remains central to decentralisation.

The Ugandan constitution allows for the creation of local governments (Republic of Uganda, 1995), but local governments in Uganda are increasingly constrained by the lack of revenue[36]. The Uganda's National Development Plan affirms that, "a review of the performance of Local Governments shows that local governments are faced with a number of challenges in delivering services mainly related to: financing and revenue mobilisation" (Republic of Uganda, 2015 p.38). The "direct central government transfers to local governments have declined from 25 percent of the total national budget in 2003/04 to 15.69 percent in 2014/15, a trend that has negatively affected service delivery" (Republic of Uganda, 2015 p. 73). The lack of revenue not only limits the extent of service delivery, but also the electoral promises of the local leaders. During an interview with a local government staff, it was noted that, "the majority of the households (79 percent) depend on subsistence

[36] Interview with the Chief Administrative Officer, Bushenyi district, 21st May 2019.

farming for livelihood. About 15 percent of the households depend on employment and small-scale enterprise income. That is why the local governments heavily depend on transfers from central government for their financing"[37]. On average central government transfers accounted for 92 percent of local government budgets for 2011/12 to 2014/15 (Republic of Uganda, 2015 p.73). Table 10 illustrates the proportion of local government revenue of two districts in Uganda.

Revenue sources and education allocations for Nebbi and Arua districts for the financial years 2012/2023–2014/2015 (Shillings 000)				
Revenue source	Total revenue (Nebbi)	Percentage of total	Total revenue (Arua)	Percentage of total
Central government	73,017,274	95.7	133.880.657	91.9
Local revenue	998,758	1.3	1,302,488	0.9
Donor funding	2,309,702	3.0	10,485,589	7.2
Total annual budget	**76,325,734**	**100.0**	**145,668.734**	**100.0**
Education allocation	38,940,425	51	78,162,787	53.7

Table 10: Local Government revenue for Nebbi and Arua districts
(Source: Maractho, 2017 p.117).

When asked about the extent that the local government budget for the for social services targets the poor, the local government staff opined that:

> "Government by definition is a service to the people who elect it into office. Civil society mobilise resources and contribute to government either by sensitising people… to know their rights so that they are able to claim them from the government and to hold government to account for the little resources which government gets as loans, as donations and taxes from tax payers to deliver services and backbone infrastructure. The proceeds from the local taxes and fees from the local government are extremely low that the local government depends on central government transfers for its revenue. The share of conditional grants in total grants amounts to about four-fifths, while the share of unconditional grants accounts for about one-fifth. These funds are insufficient, and the proceeds from other sources are equally marginal. That means that some of the functions and duties of local governments are unfunded"[38].

[37] Interview with the District Planning Officer, Bushenyi district, 21st May 2019.
[38] Interview with the Chief Administrative Officer, Bushenyi district, 21st May 2019.

Despite the meagre revenues, there has been a proliferation of local governments in Uganda. The costs of establishing new districts include, the construction of new buildings, i.e the council halls, district administration headquarters, departmental structures, average, salaries for civil servants and allowances for politicians, and payment of operational costs, which is a huge budget for a country that depends on donors for 50 percent of its budget (Ocwich, 2005). The government's position for creating local governments is that this would increase access to social services in the rural communities, and their participation in local governance. At the same time, the President of Uganda has argued that "although a new district takes a lot of money, this is the democracy we fought for. People must ask for what they want and get it" (Ocwich, 2005 p.1).

This evidence reveals inconsistencies in the motives for creating additional local governments. On one hand, government expresses its fundamental goal to deliver social services as an electoral promise, yet on the other hand, the government aims at accommodating the citizens' demands for new local government, in the name of democracy, although the demand for new local governments does not take into consideration the potential costs and benefits by the proliferation of local governments. From a technical perspective, what is the relevance of creating local governments, if the resources are spent on administrative costs, without providing the needed services to the citizens? The rationale for decentralisation is primarily to facilitate democratisation. In other words, decentralisation is an integral process of democratisation. In Uganda, decentralisation is primarily focused extending social services in the rural areas, so that citizens' expectations are primarily centred on the material benefits of decentralisation. It is evident that the politicians take an interest in the incessant creation of local governments.

How democratic is the process of demand for local governments? The President's argument that the creation of local governments is a democratic response to citizens' demands raises questions on the process of demand for local governments. For instance, Golola (2001, p. 14) asserts that district creation was done "in response to the wishes of important pressure groups and political supporters of the central government" while Hickey

(2003, p.36) notes that "the regime has been unable to resist pressures from local elites" for new districts. A study on 'The Dynamics of District Creation in Uganda' (DENIVA, 2011) revealed that there was minimal consultation in the process that led to the creation of some of the new districts, especially where people reported that they heard the issue of demanding for district status at a political rally attended by the president.

From the technical perspective, the interviews with the local government officials revealed that the proliferation of local governments has impacted on their revenue base. A local government staff noted that previously, there were a lot more community projects to implement. However, with reduced budgets from the central government, the local governments spread out the resources, so that at least one project per sub-county can be implemented annually. "Once the budgets were reduced, the village meetings do not seem to serve much purpose. We ask the LC1 leaders to meet as the executive committee to identify the priorities and needs. Thereafter they inform the local government on what activities can be implemented"[39].

> "Two important factors affected the revenue base for this local government, and generally local governments are in the same predicament. First of all, our local government lost revenue from the abolition of the graduated tax. Second, we lost a number of sub-counties. In total, we lost five districts, and therefore revenue to execute our functions. For instance, in 1993, Ntungamo district was curved out of this district, and in 2010 counties of Sheema, Bunyaruguru, Buhweju and Ruhinda were also elevated to District status. We used to raise 80 percent of our local revenue through the graduated tax[40], and these funds were not compensated by the central government. The reduced local government budgets has severely affected the facilitation of participatory meetings in the communities[41].

The divergence in perspectives by the technocrats of local government and the politicians is observed. The technocrats suggest that the creation of local governments, with under-resourced budgets, affects access to services. Accordingly, the financial implications

[39] Interview with District Planning Officer, Bushenyi district, 21st May 2019.

[40] A poll tax imposed on all adult males. During the presidential campaigns of 2001, President Museveni announced the abolition of the tax, without prior consultation. It was an important source of income in the districts, as the funds collected were retained at the district headquarters.

[41] Interview with the District Planning Officer, Bushenyi district, 21st May 2019.

of having more districts is enormous, as argued by the local government staff above. The implications of reduced budgets due to popular politics has affected the participatory processes. One of the unfunded activities due to loss of revenue is participation. A local government staff opined that the district could no longer afford to organise participatory meetings at the local level, noting that:

> "Meetings should be conducted at the village level… that process is very expensive and occurs in districts which have donor funding. When I joined this local government, they were not doing it. There is only the budget conference. The village wishlists are submitted by the sub-county to the budget conference. The participatory process is not happening because it is a costly exercise because funding to the local governments dwindled. The funding source for village meetings was from graduated tax, which was abolished. When it was abolished the central government advanced us unconditional grant and the unconditional grant was less, like a third of the graduated tax. Without money can you carry out any activities? I have been here for 3 years, there has never been money. But when I was in the north [northern Uganda], there was NUSAF[42] and DRDIP[43] and the planning unit would use up to USD 27,000 for those processes."[44]

The technocrats' views indicate limited evidence that the creation of new districts has benefited citizen participation. "In many instances the newly created districts have had to start from scratch without buildings or other infrastructure. Normally, they have to draw staff, with accompanying equipment, from the headquarters of the older district" (Golola, 2001 p. 14). This is corroborated by the Ministry of Local Government's annual assessments reports on district government performance (MoLG, 2004), which monitor local governments according to the guidelines set forth in the 1997 Local Government Act. Specifically, if a district does not meet a certain minimum set of requirements in areas such as accounting, auditing, capacity building, monitoring and gender mainstreaming, it will not qualify to receive central government grants. For instance, only 50% (8/16) of districts that were created since 1997 passed these minimum standards, with an even lower score of 45.5% (5/11) for

[42] The Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) is a government organisation in Uganda with $100 million of funding from the World Bank.
[43] Uganda Development Response to Displacement Project (DRDIP) for post-conflict areas in Northern Uganda.
[44] Interview with the Chief Administrative Officer, 21st May 2019.

those created since 2000 (Government of Uganda, 2004). Despite an overall improvement, in 2007 81.5% (38/44) of older district governments were able to meet minimum conditions while only 66.7% (22/33) of the districts created since 2000 were able to do the same (Government of Uganda, 2007).

The above evidence affirms the technical challenges to facilitate citizen participation arising from fiscal constraints. Similarly, an NGO representative suggested that:

> "the abolition of the graduated tax was a political strategy, because the abolition of the tax was preceded by debates that opposed the removal of presidential term limits. These debates were ripe just ahead of the 2006 presidential elections. There was no thought to the implications of the removal of the tax for the local government budgets. After abolishing the graduated tax, the community planning meetings stopped. The whole process just stopped. So we as NGOs fund these community meetings where we can, because we are not able to spread out widely".[45]

The influence of politics on local governments implies increased dependency of the local governments on the central government, rather than enhancing their fiscal autonomy. The abolition of the graduated tax in 2005 affected the local governments' ability to cover expenditures, particularly the community planning activities. District councils deliver education, health, water, and agricultural services from central government funding, although they are expected to raise local revenue from local taxes and fees. Until fiscal year 2005/06, graduated personal tax was major source of revenue. The graduated tax became highly politicised, as it mainly applied to the residents in the local communities, and it was less stringently applied to the better-off households than among the poor. The tax was a key issue in the 2001 presidential elections, leading to a widespread denial to pay the tax and a significant drop in collections. The wealthier households were increasingly evading collection. The abolition of the tax was a populist approach to garnering votes, but the consequences have included local government reliance on central government for revenue.

[45] Interview with NGO participant, Bushenyi district, 1st August 2019.

The view that politics influences local government operations is similarly suggested by scholars. Boone (2003) argues that decentralisation is a political strategy for regimes to pursue state-building since it provided an opportunity for building institutions that would link the state to the countryside in Africa, as in other developing countries. Drawing on the examples of the Senegal, Ghana, and Cote d'Ivoire in the 1950s-1980s, Boone (2003) shows that African countries have previously devised institution-building strategies to gain political leverage in the rural areas. For instance in Ghana, Nkrumah's regime built "an extensive and powerful state apparatus in the rural areas which was staffed by agents deployed from the centre", while in Senegal, "strong hierarchy and the dependency of the elite on the state—were necessary conditions for the emergence of a postcolonial power sharing system in which the regime ruled the rural areas 'indirectly,' relying upon the rural religious elite as its agents". (Boone, 2003 p. 367).

Evidently, the proliferation of districts is a source of patronage for the regime, given that through creating new local governments, a political structure is entrenched that depends on the centre for revenue and other patronage opportunities. The state-led process to organise local communities to participate in local governance, reinforces the power of political elites and the power relations. The donor support for the decentralisation frameworks did not scrutinise them as elitist governance structures and processes.

The challenge of citizen participation through political representatives is typical of representative democracy in the developing countries. The plight of the poverty-stricken peasantry in rural areas reinforces the widespread 'monetisation' of local elections, whereby those with money buy their way into power using material gifts like sugar, soap and salt (Francis and James, 2003). Thus, after the local leaders have bribed their way into office, they may not feel obliged to effectively represent their constituents. While the Ugandan Constitution grants powers to the electorate to recall their councillors and Members of Parliament who fail to effectively represent their constituents, none has been recalled so far owing to the cumbersome process. These factors have encouraged complacency among local leaders (Kakumba, 2010).

The next section discusses the proliferation of local governments in Uganda along ethnic identities.

5.4.2 Local government according to ethnic identities

The theme of ethnic identities in local government is significant in Uganda, because the country's politics is based on ethnic divisions (Kibanja et al. 2012; Sseremba, 2020). This section raises three key issues: a) ethnicity plays a key role in decentralisation. The proliferation of local governments in Uganda, demarcated along ethnic identities, reinforces patronage politics in Uganda. In a patronage set-up, politicians seek to entrench power. I show that the proliferation of local governments aims to appease the diverse ethnic groups, while it hampers the scrutiny of the government failures by the political representatives across local governments. While the field research not did not discuss the issue of ethnicity in local government with the research participants, the study draws on the secondary sources to illuminate its significance in Uganda's local governments. Moreover, the sample for the study noted experiences of splitting the local government, as discussed in the preceding section. b) The fact that local governments are demarcated along ethnic groups implies that forms of citizens' organisations in local governance would be exclusive of the different ethnic identities. Therefore, I show that the overemphasis on ethnicity does not provide fertile ground for citizens' organisation; c) This discussion builds on the theoretical critique in chapter four on citizenship learning, which challenges citizens' organisation along ethnic identities. Rather than foster cohesive societies, the political culture that emerges from the politics of patronage and manipulation (Blackburn, 2000), hampers citizenship learning, and in turn influences the nature of associations by citizens.

The decentralisation reforms envisioned the perspective of 'localism' as discussed in chapter two (the theoretical framework). The vision of 'localism' for citizen participation fails to foster a cohesive and participatory citizenry as a political culture. Rather, the creation of the new local governments is a design to create patronage networks *across* the country, to balance ethnic, tribal, religious and regional groups. The focus on efficiency by the structural

adjustments, through the development of the first Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in 1997, meant that donor support for decentralisation was skewed to poverty targeting. As discussed in the next section, the decentralisation reforms aimed at fostering democratisation through poverty targeting (service delivery provision). This approach to decentralisation is unique to the developing countries, under the good governance agenda. In the developing countries decentralisation was implemented as a means for democratisation. In the democracies, decentralisation was implemented as an aspect of democratisation and autonomy. Donor funding continued to target Uganda's successive PRSP targets by investing significant resources into meeting the Millennium Development Goals (Hickey, 2005). Craig and Porter (2006) argue that, although the PRSP processes generated awareness of the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, embedded in the PRSP discourse, the liberal construction of poverty reduction as target-driven service delivery and meeting the Millennium Development Goals via Sector Wide Approaches (SWAps), constructs citizens as beneficiaries of services. However, the "structural and political-economic causes of inequality – such as land, class and *ethnic politics*, vulnerability to the global market, militarism, debt and donor dependence – have been cut out of the picture" (Craig and Porter, 2006 p. 183).

The localism of decentralisation in Uganda derives from territorial-based ethnic identities. In Uganda, the rural communities are demarcated along ethnic lines, which Hickey (2003, p.36) describes as "ethnic citizenship", "insiders/outsiders", or "indigenes/settlers". Uganda's ethnically defined boundaries are officially categorised according to ethnic groups, known as Central, Western, Eastern, and Northern as showed in Figure 10.

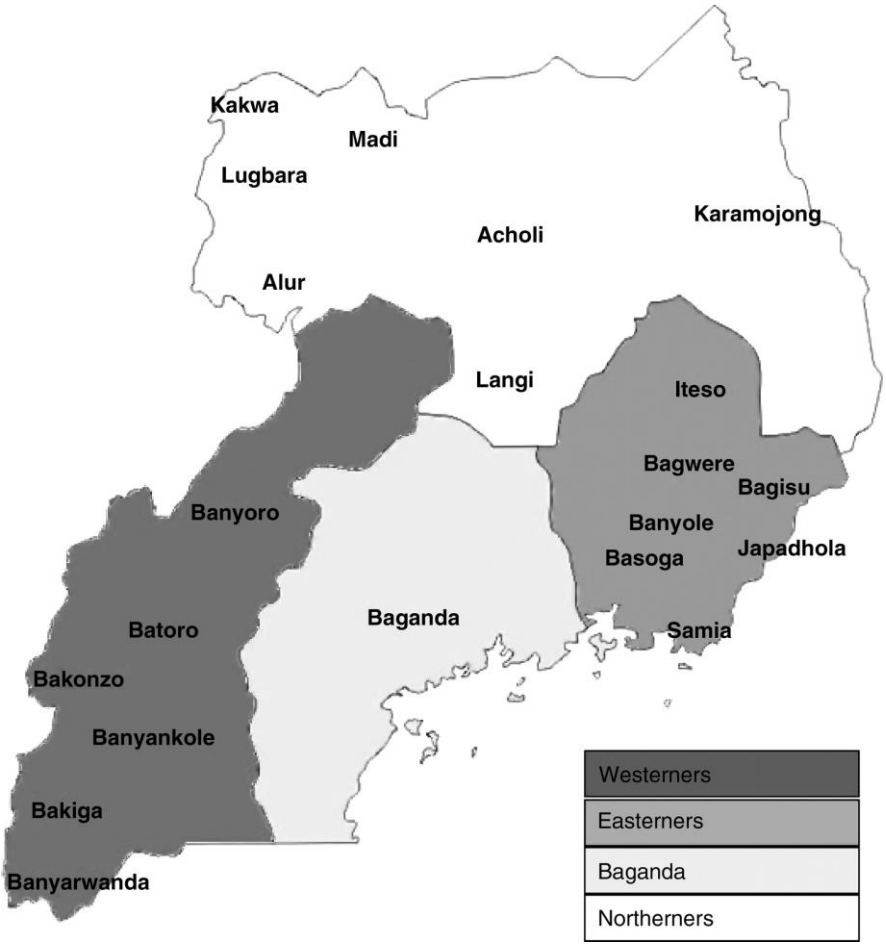

Figure 10: Ethnic and ethno-regional cleavages in Uganda
(Source: Lindemann, 2011 p. 393).

The arguments for decentralisation and the creation of new sub-national units are often based on the management of ethno-linguistic conflict (Treisman, 2007), as equally seen for instance in the example of India (Mawdsley, 2002). Therefore, the question of ethnic identities remains an underlying factor for creating local governments. In Uganda, the constitution officially recognises 65 indigenous ethnic groups, which is also makes the country one of the world's most ethnically diverse state (Alesina et al. 2003). Nevertheless, the Uganda constitution affirms that 'all organs of the state and the people of Uganda shall work towards the promotion of national unity, peace and stability; and every effort made to integrate all the people of Uganda, while at the same time recognising the existence of their

ethnic, religious, ideological, political and cultural diversity' (Republic of Uganda, 1995). The localism of decentralisation distracts national civil society initiatives.

The localism perspective has further encouraged studies that suggest local governments have helped to resolve the problem of communication (Bashaasha et al. 2011). For example, the Aringa ethnic group of northwest Uganda, who had formerly shared Arua district with the Lugbara ethnic neighbours, can now speak their own language at council meetings and articulate their specific development priorities, with the creation of Yumbe district in 2000 (Bashaasha et al. 2011). Such sub-division of local governments along ethno-linguistic parameters overemphasise ethnicity over citizenship.

Moreover, scholars show that the creation of new local governments in Uganda, has in many cases, led to ethnic tensions in Uganda (Mwenda and Mugisa, 1999). For instance, Mwenda and Mugisa (1999) reveal the ethnic tensions following the breakaway from Kabarole district with the demands of many Bakiga and Batagwenda ethnic groups in the 1990s. The district is predominantly inhabited by Toro Kingdom, and the breakaway led to a reaction from the Batoro elite in the district (the ethnic group under the cultural Toro Kingdom), who were concerned both about losing control to local resources as well as the future viability of the local Toro kingdom if the new districts refused to support the kingdom financially. Similarly, the creation of Local Government units in Tororo district of eastern Uganda, was marked by ethnic tensions. In this example, the district had been predominantly dominated by Itesot group, before the creation of the Itesot-majority Pallisa district. The breakaway left Tororo district dominated by the Japadhola ethnic group, but the number of minority Itesot residents in Tororo district petitioned the government for their own district as well leading to violent protests (Mwenda and Mugisa, 1999). Bizarre forms of protest included, for instance: the parading of the skulls by the residents of Nakaseke district of the people who had been killed and buried in the district during the civil war of the early 1980s (the district was the base for the guerilla war for the ruling regime, before taking over the government); and in Tororo district the residents demonstrated by publicly eating rats to

demonstrate the seriousness of their claim (Buwembo, 2005). Ayeko-Kümmeth (2014, p.88) summarises that:

> "in Uganda, the belief [connection] in individuals born within a given locality has divided communities and bred tribalism, endless tensions, conflict, encouraged corruption and nepotism and retarded development. It has become a form of identity used to enhance a sense of belonging and patronage...The practice is deep rooted in people's minds and wide spread in all spheres of life both in private and public sector…This has not only made it difficult for technocrats to get jobs outside their districts of birth but also obstructed chances of recruiting the much needed brilliant brains in the name of giving opportunities to people of a particular origin".

It is clear that ethnic politics underlines the creation of local governments. Decentralisation not only constructs citizens as beneficiaries, it also fails to foster networking across the country's ethnically defined boundaries. Elsewhere in the developing countries, decentralisation reforms have also been criticised for allowing national politicians to create and extend their patronage networks into the countryside (Crook, 2003). Local government administrations have been subject to elite capture perpetuating patronage relations and the channelling of resources to wealthier areas and actors (Crook and Sverrisson, 2003). Apart from gaining political positions, the patronage networks have targeted the local government civil service employment. For instance, the control of staff appointments by the District Service Commission has led to posts being granted for patronage along ethnic lines. This undermines accountability as job security depends on favour not performance (Tripp, 2010). The District Services Commission, is responsible for all local government staff appointments in a move to decentralise the accountability of public service officials. However, committee members are appointed by the council with input from the executive which can lead to undue executive influence over both the District Service Commission and local government appointments.

Evidently, donor conditionalities for decentralisation reforms did not critique the dangers of strengthening patronage networks, which continue to operate according to ethnic and elite privileges – the "network of ethno-political and economic allegiances which function alongside, within and across the boundaries of formal institutions" (Fowler, 1991 p.

54). The dynamics of a patronage-based system have led to a highly politicised service delivery environment. The strategy of creating more districts in politically marginal areas while also creating districts across the rest of the country, is extreme in Uganda but not unusual across Africa. The structural adjustment reforms reduced patronage resources available to leaders, but simultaneously gaining patronage opportunities through decentralising their states. Van de Walle (2001) argues that African politicians have been highly capable of manipulating these economic reform processes to entrench their power; it would be remiss to assume that they were not similarly capable of using decentralisation reforms to create new patronage opportunities in order to win elections and stay in power. Similarly, in Uganda, political leaders have the decentralisation reforms. If governance reforms are to aid developing countries in any significant way, they have to consider patronage.

The influence of politics in the community development projects is discussed in the next section.

5.4.2 Influence of politics in community development projects

The findings of the study show that political influence in the delivery of the community development projects in local governments is effervescent, due to the dependence on central government funding. The funds from the central government to the local governments include: a) the conditional grants for the key priority areas for poverty reduction under the donor good governance agenda; b) the central government funding to support income generation projects for the youth, women, and people with disabilities directly to the community project groups[46] (Republic of Uganda, 2015); c) Other central government funding includes the Operation Wealth Creation programme by the President's office, for community development projects for poverty reduction. Apart from the conditional grants, the rest of the central government funding to the local governments is not integrated into the local government budgets. These are managed by the central governments,

[46] Interview with the District Planning Officer, Bushenyi district, 21st May 2019.

although the local governments are instrumental in identifying the beneficiaries for these funds. Therefore, the direct central government funding to the community groups is key to creating patronage networks in the local communities, as discussed below.

In summary, the funds which are disbursed directly from the central government to the community development project groups aim to promote Local Economic Development projects to "generate wealth, create jobs, and improve social development indicators" (Republic of Uganda, 2015 p. 106). Through the Local Economic Development programme, local governments supervise the implementation of the central government-funded income generating projects (Republic of Uganda, 1997). Wealth creation and employment are identified by the government as key social transformation objectives (Republic of Uganda, 2015), and the social development sector prioritizes the mobilisation of vulnerable population groups for the funding of the community development projects by the central government. This funding targets two key programmes: the Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) and the Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP), which are managed by the Ministry of Gender Labour And Social Development, and the Ministry of Agriculture. The government initiated the Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) in 2013/14 as one of its interventions in response to the high unemployment rate and poverty among the youth. The objective of the YLP is to empower the youth to harness their socio-economic potential and increase self-employment opportunities and income levels (Republic of Uganda, 2015). The YLP provides support in form of revolving funds for skills development projects and income generating activities initiated by youth groups. While the local government oversees the identification of the project groups, and provides agricultural services to the local communities, the procurement related to farm inputs is derived from the funding by the agriculture ministry[47]. Therefore, the local government political representatives and the local communities have no scrutiny or control of the use of the funds. This is because, the funds are beyond the jurisdiction of the political representatives. Figure 11 summarises the modalities for the implementation of the community development projects. The figure shows

[47] Interview with the Community Development Officer at Sub-County level, Bushenyi District, 28th May 2019.

that the central government employs the military to oversee the coordination and implementation of the key central government-funded projects under President's Operation Wealth Creation programme. In 2014, President Yoweri Museveni set up the Operation Wealth Creation programme (within the Office of the President) and appointed the army (Operation Wealth Creation officers) to provide oversight for its coordination and implementation. Parallel to this are the central government funds directly to the community groups targeting the youth, women, and people with disabilities. The local governments identify the beneficiaries of these funds and provide technical assistance in form of advisory services.

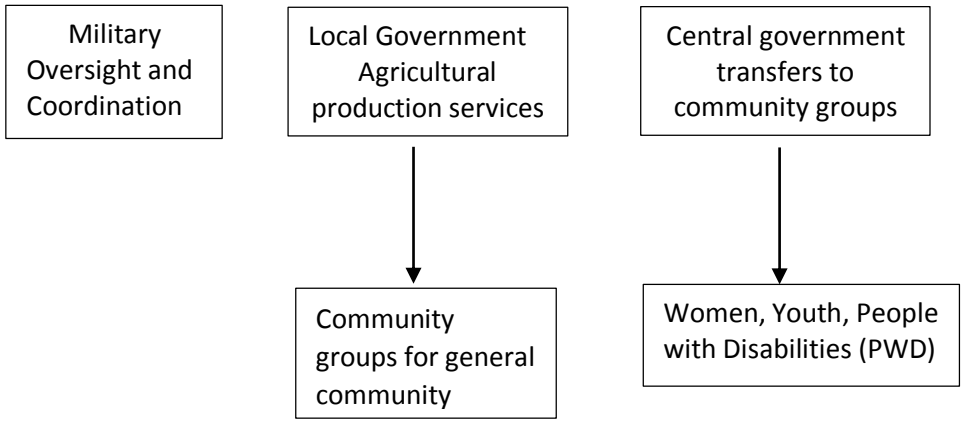

Figure 11: Funding modalities for the community development projects.

The study identified that the management of the budget for the community development projects was a key area of political influence. In 2001, the government launched the *Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture* (PMA), to transform Uganda's predominantly subsistence farming with market-oriented agriculture. The National Agricultural Advisory Service (NAADS), was established as a government agency within the Ministry of Agriculture, under the Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture to improve rural livelihoods by increasing agricultural productivity and profitability. The NAADS programme was established as a decentralised service delivery approach to address the lack of access to agricultural information, knowledge and improved technology among rural farmers. The NAADs was suspended in 2007, as it was "riddled with corruption and misappropriation of

funds, poor distribution of seedlings to farmers, and politicisation of selection of beneficiaries" (Ntambirweki-Karugonjo and Jones, 2015 p.1). The programme has been criticised to have created patronage opportunities for wealthier farmers already holding land and assets and the local elite administrators in local governments because the local government officials were selected among the model farmers as key beneficiaries (Hickey, 2005; Tumukwasibwe, 2010). The NAADS secretariat was then brought under the auspices of the Office of the President to oversee monitoring and supervision of the delivery and distribution of interventions to beneficiary households, including the selection and verification of beneficiaries. In 2014, President Yoweri Museveni set up the Operation Wealth Creation programme (within the Office of the President) and appointed the army (Operation Wealth Creation officers) to provide oversight for its coordination and implementation. However, the procurement roles are exclusively handled by NAADS at national level. In view of the 2011 election campaign, the NAADS programme was expanded to include a wider group of farmers focused on food security, providing further opportunities for patronage (Kjær and Therkildsen, 2012). The programme has been continually revised to distribute rents and generate votes (Kjær and Therkildsen, 2012). The "political interests, and elections all played a role in NAADS" (Kjær and Joughin, 2012 p. 319).

Apart from the political influence at national level, the interviews with the community groups showed that the politicians provided material benefits to the community project groups. For instance, an LC1 leader noted that he had fundraised from the Member of Parliament for the construction of a health centre at LC2.[48] Community members revealed the support to the ongoing government-funded community development projects by the Members of Parliament.[49] The community narrated the experience of the livestock contribution that was made by a Member of Parliament to boost the project activities. However, the campaign agents for the Member of Parliament had diverted the livestock supplies, so that a few groups benefited. The community members revealed that the Member

[48] Interview with LC2 Chairperson, Busheyi district, 25th August 2019.
[49] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 7th September 2019.

of Parliament had relied on the campaign agents, without making any effort to follow-up on the whether the supplies were distributed, nor make a personal visit to the community groups.[50] A community member in the focus group discussion remarked that, "the campaign agents of the Member of Parliament report one thing, but on the ground, it is a mess. So much funds have been spent to gain votes, but the people will not vote that candidate".[51]

In another field research site, the sub-county official explained that the incumbent Member of Parliament of the political party had initiated the support for the construction of the new sub-county offices, and the building was almost at its completion. However, there was a lag towards the end of the construction, and the candidate of the opposition political party attempted to provide support to the sub-county for the completion of the building. Consequently, a conflict emerged in the local government, which led to tense political relationships and divisions within the tier political structure.[52]

This evidence shows that the lack of independence of the local governments, implies that they are subsidiaries of political apparatus. It is clear that the decentralisation structure is politically motivated to ensure that the ruling party has more numbers in parliament. That way, the government can be able to control parliament, by increasing the number of parliamentarians in favor of the ruling party. It suffices to argue that it is the political wing that are gaining from this district creation, not the communities.

Vize (2012 cited by Bainomugisha et al. 2015 p.66) noted that "councillors matter to the national parties both as a barometer of support and as the foot soldiers for the general election campaign". While the political structure of decentralisation in Uganda serves to represent citizens, it also advances the interests of the political parties to garner votes. Bainomugisha's et al. (2015) study shows the political party affiliation of councillors in 26

[50] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 7th September 2019.
[51] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 7th September 2019.
[52] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 17th August 2019.

districts in Uganda (illustrated in Figure 12). The majority of councillors in local governments in Uganda represent (74%) the ruling NRM.

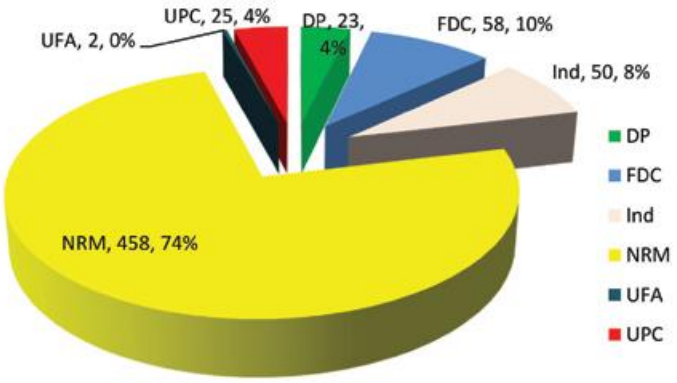

Figure 12: Political party affiliation of councillors in 26 districts
(Source: Bainomugisha et al. 2015 p.66).

5.5 The nature of the political regime in Uganda

It is important to note that the nature of a political regime greatly impacts on the responsiveness of the political representatives and the extent that citizens' organisation is tolerated. Therefore, in this section, I highlight the secondary literature on the political regime in Uganda. In particular, I highlight the role of the military, multi-party assembly, the role of NGOs, and political control by the ruling party.

It is clear from the literature that the NRM regime is increasingly authoritarian. In 2021, Uganda was rated at 34% for the exercise of political rights (electoral process, political pluralism and participation, functioning of government); and civil liberties (freedom of expression and belief, associational and organisational rights, rule of law, personal autonomy and individual rights) (Freedom House, 2021). Scholars evaluate political regimes by examining the phases in the transition to democracy. For instance, Rakner et al. (2007, p.7) summarise that:

> "democratisation can be understood as a process subdivided into three phases: (i) the liberalisation phase, when the previous authoritarian regime opens up or crumbles; (ii) a transition phase, often culminating when the first competitive elections are held; and (iii) the consolidation phase, when democratic practices are expected to become more firmly established and accepted by most relevant actors".

The third phase constitutes the ideals of democracy. Dahl (1971) identifies seven key criteria for democracy, including: i) Control over decisions about by elected officials; ii) Regular, free and fair elections; iii) Universal adult suffrage; iv) The right to run for public office; v) Freedom of expression; vi) Access to information by government; and vii) Freedom of association (i.e. the right to form and join autonomous associations such as political parties, interest groups, etc). It is important to note that donors have supported the building of democratic institutions, which is ideally a bottom-up process of democratisation. The donor-driven institution-building includes "democratisation assistance to i) elections, ii) political parties, iii) judicial reform, iv) civil society, and v) the media" (Rakner et al. 2007, p. 23).

The literature on democratisation is divided on the role of multi-party elections in authoritarian regimes. While some scholars suggest that regular elections under authoritarian regimes can advance the democratisation process (Brownlee, 2012; Donno, 2013; Lindberg, 2006), it is clear that Electoral Authoritarian Regimes fail to transition to democracy (Repucci, 2020). This is because elections are a tool by incumbents to foster patronage and coopt the opposition (Helle and Rakner, 2017). In Uganda, "elections are used to legitimise authoritarianism than advancing democratisation" (Sserwadda, 2021 p. 34). Thus, Sserwadda (2021) uses the case study of Uganda to illuminate the problem of regular elections without democracy. Despite the introduction of multiparty elections in 2005 in Uganda, and the subsequent electoral cycles (2006, 2011, 2016, and 2021), the NRM regime has greatly controlled the voting process.

This study identifies that the military has played a key role in entrenching an authoritarian regime by suppressing political opposition. As indicated in section 5.2, the ruling government came to power in 1986 through guerrilla warfare by its National Resistance Army (NRA) (Mamdani, 1996). However, from a rebel army that waged a

guerrilla war, the NRA was renamed the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces (UPDF) in the new Constitution in 1995 and became a national army. Under the 1995 Constitution, the 2005 UPDF Act was therefore enacted, which replaced the NRA Statute 1992 (later renamed UPDF Act 1992) (Naluwairo, 2018). The role of the military police is particularly noted in the restriction on political party activities.

The suppression of the political parties marked the early years of the regime. Political parties were suspended in 1986 when the ruling government assumed power. A referendum to restore a plural political system was scheduled for the year 2000 (United States Department of State, 2000). While the Uganda Constitution (promulgated in 1995), provides for freedom of association, it banned political parties from organising assemblies and establishing offices outside the capital city for five years from 1995 to 2000. Therefore, from 1986 to 2000, when the referendum on political parties was held, the NRM (the political wing of the guerrilla NRA) was renamed as "The Movement" in the Constitution, which was typically a non-party government. While the police barred political rallies by opposition leaders, prior to the referendum on political parties (United States Department of State, 2000), the suppression of political party gatherings by the police and the military persisted, even after the referendum allowed the political parties to operate. It is evident that the police and the military in Uganda have over the decades increasingly intimidated, coerced, or violently opposed the opponents of the regime and the population at large leading to elections and thereafter (Abrahamsen and Bareebe, 2016; Athumani, 2021; Khan, 2021).

Similarly, the Uganda government has curtailed NGO registration, when the NGOs oppose the government politically (United States Department of State, 1998). NGOs sign a memorandum of understanding with government, and NGO operations are approved by the District Non-Governmental Monitoring Committee (DNMC). Uganda's national policy defines NGOs as "any legally constituted private, voluntary grouping of individuals or associations involved in community work which augment government work but clearly not for profit or commercial purposes" (Republic of Uganda, 2010 p. 12). In essence, NGOs in Uganda are limited to apolitical activities. Donor-funding through NGOs for political

activities is restricted, as it is considered subversive by the government. NGOs that have openly engaged politically have faced closure of bank accounts and registration, or deportation of staff. For instance, on July 4, 2018, the Uganda Electoral Commission barred the certification of the Citizens' Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda (CCEDU) because it engaged in election-related activities, although in February 2019, the ban on the NGO was lifted. Other examples include: two foreign citizens that were deported for engaging in election-related activities; NGO foreign staff working with international NGOs, including the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF), National Democratic Institute (NDI), and International Republican Institute (IRI) that were denied entry into the country (UCNL (2021), and the closure of Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) $100 million funding in January 2021, a month before the presidential election. The NRM regime claimed that the GDF funding helped to "achieve the political objectives of the funders in Uganda" (Musinguzi, 2021). DGF provides the largest donor funding to NGOs in Uganda for the purpose of promoting good governance.

In terms of political representation, the NRM has maintained its dominance of the political scene through the legislature. In 2005, the regime scrapped term limits through the bribing of Members of Parliament, and in 2017, the removal of age limits for presidential candidates by parliament ushered the possibility of a life president. Nansonzi et al. (2020 p. 7) note that "establishing dominance has been a well-calculated strategy on the part of the government, which started with the creation of the local council system during the guerrilla war". One of the strategies by the NRM was the transition from RCs to LCs, which gave the regime political leverage at the lowest village levels through the Movement Act of 1997. Similarly, the regime has dominated the legislature through non-elected parliamentary seats set aside for the army, the youth and people with disabilities, and affirmative action for elected women representatives. These representatives have generally leaned to the NRM, rather than oppose its governance (Nansonzi et al. 2020). In summary, the NRM is progressively characterised by authoritarian power and patronage.

> "through the combination of high levels of repression and a strategy of political co-optation, picking off key opposition figures who pose a particular threat by making offers they find difficult to refuse. As in many regimes committed to maintaining dominance at all costs, these twin approaches have been central to the NRM's approach to cementing its position over several decades" (Nansonzi et al. 2020 p. 10).

5.6 Conclusion

The theorisation on empowerment draws on the civic republican idea on representative local government that citizens do well to limit the state and make it accountable through political representation in local government and voluntary organisations. In essence, representative local government is effective when citizens are organised to question their political leaders. However, the empowerment approach suggests that the poor can – through their political representatives in local government – foster accountability.

The findings of the study derive from the research question: how do the local communities organise to question their elected representatives to be accountable? The study identified two key findings. First, it was noted that the decentralisation reforms in Uganda emphasised the inclusion of the local communities in decision making, in form of village assemblies. However, the accountability mechanisms for questioning the local governments by the citizens are absent. The field research shows that the village assemblies approach, in Uganda's decentralisation policy, cannot substitute voluntary organisations. In the absence of voluntary organisations that would question the local governments, the communities lamented the unrestrained power of their political representatives. Therefore, the decentralisation reforms entrench the power of the state without organised groups. Representative local government or indeed representative democracy is not effective without citizens' organisation. Secondly, the field research showed that the fiscal dependence of the local governments in Uganda on central government funding has encouraged patronage, so that local governments are appendages of the state. Moreover, the study noted the proliferation of local governments along ethnic identities, which further fuels patronage politics. The study identified that in Uganda's patronage set-up, the political representatives

in the local governments are unresponsive to the citizens' concerns on the failures of the state, including corruption, misuse of funds, and poor service delivery.

6. Community Project Groups and Accountability

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings, derived from the critique of the social capital theory, presented in chapter two. It is important to note that the social capital theory originated in a middle-class setting, and emphasised the political function of organic social networks and associations in challenging the state. The theory was not intended to target the poor, as rationalised by the theorisation on empowerment, to catalyse associational life through projects that target poverty. Therefore, the field research examined the second research question of the thesis, i.e. *how do the social service / community development project groups foster accountability*? In effect, the thesis questions the political function of social capital theory in the context of poverty and pre-modern societies.

The specific questions that guided the field research were: a) To what extent do the community development project groups foster associational life, and how do the poor learn the democratic values through the community development projects? b) How does the understanding of poverty, in terms of social service delivery indicators, address the challenges to citizens' organisation posed by a peasant population? c) How may the citizens engage in local accountability, if they lack the skills or knowledge of their role in accountability?

The discussion addesses the above questions in turn, under three main sections. The first section questions the role of the community development project groups in fostering associational life. The proponents of social capital theory argue that, "in the absence of civil society, the state often needs to step in to organise individuals who are incapable of organising themselves" (Fukuyama, 2001 p.11). Therefore, I examined the community projects funded by both the government and NGOs. As the good governance agenda targets poverty through decentralised social service delivery, the field research explored the local government-funded community project groups. The findings of the study show that the

beneficiary project groups disintegrate at the end of the project cycle; they do not foster political networks or associations. Therefore, the study noted an absence of voluntary organisations / associations in the communities. It was clear that the motivation for group cohesion and association by the poor, even after the project cycle, was to gain an income. The capabilities that the communities attained were typically for self-help, and not political capabilities. The study concludes that social capital, as the catalyst for voluntary organisations, needs to be analysed within the context of modern societies, not the poor and isolated villages or peasant societies. Therefore, social capital is the source of voluntary organisation to the extent that the society is modern, not peasant.

The second part discusses the peasants' priorities for the community development projects. While the empowerment approach does not define the poor, it uses the concept of '*beneficiaries'* of projects (using the social capital theory), as discussed in chapter two. The field research identified that the beneficiaries of the community development projects are typically peasants, and they have specific priorities for poverty targeting through the community development projects. By examining the communities' priorities and expectations by engaging in the community development projects, it was clear that peasants prioritise participation in the projects that provide entry into the market for employment, or to improve their position in the market. The peasants see employment as the route to better incomes and access to social services. It was clear from the study findings that the market is a significant and alternative means to accessing social services in the rural areas. This shows that poverty targeting (focusing entirely on access to social services), i.e. the non-market aspects of poverty by the good governance agenda, ignores the peasants' priorities. Yet, Uganda's population is predominantly peasant. Under the good governance agenda, local governments in Uganda are typically social service-driven. Rather than focus on the local government politics in social service delivery, peasants prioritise their participation in the projects that generate employment. The peasants expressed powerlessness to use political processes to advance their interests in local government social service delivery, as they do not look to politics to offer them hopeful solutions. Rather, they have learned to devise the means for self-sustenance and resilience as a peasant culture. Therefore, the poor are not

necessarily apathetic, as claimed by the pathological analysis of communities in the cycle of deprivation (discussed in chapter two). Further, the peasants' prioritisation of participating in the community development projects that generate employment opportunities, questions the relevance of the non-market conceptualisation of poverty by the NGOs and the good governance agenda to address the challenges of citizens' organisation posed by a peasant population. Citizens' organisation derives from structural preconditions. Therefore, the conceptualisation of poverty as the lack of basic social services, ignores the understanding of poverty as structural. Therefore, I argue that peasants are a structural constraint to liberal democracy.

The third part discusses the challenges of a peasant population in accountability due to lack of education and analytical skills. The findings of the study show the irony that the communities depend on the local government to receive information. The state-led and sponsored approach to participation implies that the unresponsive public officials also determine access to information to the citizens.

6.2 Do Community Project Groups Foster Associational life?

It is important to note that while the social capital theory originated in a middle-class context, the empowerment approach principally advances the theory to target the poor. As discussed in chapter two, in the 1990s, donors advanced the argument that "'social capital' – or the dense networks of associational life that bound communities together and promote norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness – was the missing link in making democracy work" (Rakner et al. 2007 p. 39). For instance, the World Bank, in its 1990s policy report, *Social Capital: the Missing Link* (Grootaert, 1998), refers to the absence of the networks that enable people to act collectively in the low-income countries. The community project groups were envisaged to foster cooperation between individuals, which would lead to political networks, and spring into associations. Mansuri and Rao (2013, p. 298) affirm that:

> "Most participatory projects that emerge from donor agencies are designed within the same assumed trajectory as infrastructure projects. They are also forced to work

> within three-or five-year project cycles, and are approved on the belief that at the end of those three years various civic objectives will be reached such as better social capital, community empowerment, improved accountability etc…The assumption is that within the period of the project cycle, the intervention will activate civic capacity to the extent that it will repair political and market failures".

The field research examined the extent that the community development project groups are mechanisms for associational life. In effect, the research examined the relevance of social capital theory for democratisation in the context of poverty and peasant societies.

Before conducting interviews with the communities, I held initial discussions with the local government staff about the NGO and local government-funded projects in the communities over the years. It was noted that a wide range of projects had been implemented in the rural areas since the 1990s.[53] The local government prioritises increased access to social services in the remote areas.[54] The long presence of the NGO and local government-funded projects provided a relevant context to analyse the networks as a result of the projects over the years.

Therefore, the focus group discussions explored the nature of the membership groups and the activities that the members focused on. I therefore examined the beneficiary groups under the NGO and government-funded programmes to understand the life-cycle of the funded projects. I examined the long-term goals of the groups, and the functions and networks of the groups over the years. The FGDs noted that the types of groups in the communities were largely of the nature of microfinance and savings projects. These groups were typically self-help groups for generating incomes to complement subsistence farming. Accordingly, the community members did not engage in any political associations, neither did the project groups provide a space to engage politically. Thus, the study noted an absence of voluntary organisations and associations in the communities.

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[53] Interview with the Community Development Officer at Sub-County level, Bushenyi District, 28th May 2019, and the District Planning Officer, Bushenyi district, 21st May 2019.
[54] Interview with the District Planning Officer, Bushenyi district, 21st May 2019.

The analysis of the project profiles shows that the income-generation project groups are the most common in the communities. The community participants indicated that "at least every household has engaged in an income generation project group. Very often people join a group with a specific goal or income target. Membership is commonly on and off, depending on the individual's plans"[55]. Similarly, an NGO participant who managed a village savings and loans association opined that:

> "we have about six to seven groups in each village. Some groups have been in existence for ten to twelve years. We target those who do not earn a dollar a day. The village savings model forces them to think and work hard to earn money, which they can save. If you have been idle, you think of what you can do. There is no external money that comes into the group. It is their own money. We empower communities to learn to save money, then when it has accumulated, we teach them how to start income generating activities."[56]

The NGO participant added that "the groups stand a test of time. We have around 4,000 groups spread in the district. Our clientele has been at 70,000".[57] The feedback from the NGO participant depicts the focus and spread of the community groups in the rural areas in Uganda. This is a large force, which is typically involved in self-help activities. While the long-term group operations imply cohesiveness, the groups have not engaged in political networks.

Group cohesion is the building block of social capital theory. Accordingly, the preoccupation to make ends meet through self-help projects is *the key motivation for group cohesion* by the poor. This implies that when the drive to eke out a living or secure the basic needs is the motivation for association, the civic objectives become secondary for both the individual and the group. The community development projects hardly provide a space to debate the values for a democratic society. Similarly, Mansuri and Rao (2013, p. 293) note that "during the course of the project people are induced to participate and build networks. But they do so in order to benefit from the cash and other material payoffs provided by the

[55] Focus Group Discussion, Masaka district, 11th September 2019.
[56] Interview with NGO participant, Rubirizi district, 9th June 2019.
[57] Interview with NGO participant, Rubirizi district, 9th June 2019.

project, an effect that tends to melt away when the incentives are withdrawn". Therefore, Mansuri and Rao (2013, p. 293) further argue that:

> "there is little evidence that induced participation builds long-lasting cohesion, even at the community level. Group formation tends to be parochial...Only when projects explicitly link community-based organisations with markets, or provide skills training, do they tend to improve group cohesiveness and collective action beyond the life of the project".

It is not surprising that the microfinance and savings groups (in the above example by the NGO participant) have persisted beyond the project cycle, even after a decade. As discussed in section 6.3, the communities prioritise the income generation projects over the social service delivery projects by the local government, because they provide the urgently needed income. Similarly, the field research identified that the communities were motivated to join groups that encouraged risk-pooling. For instance, an NGO participant that managed a health insurance scheme posited that community solidarity assured the poor of affordable health care. The NGO participant opined that:

> "We try to show the people that: 'if we are not together, we will fall into catastrophic health expenditures. If you want to manage your health care alone as an individual family, it is very hard. But if we come up as a community and we join hands it is easier because you put in very little into the health insurance fund, but when you fall sick, you will be able to get more out of the fund than you contributed. Joining a group provides subsidised services because you will use some of the money from members who have not fallen sick'. For the group to qualify as a scheme, it should have not less than 350 beneficiaries, which is about 75 families. This number provides access to quality healthcare for a year. The success of the scheme is solidarity. Membership to the scheme minimises the risk of selling off assets to cover medical expenses by poor households. "[58].

Therefore, the key characteristic of the *organisations and networks of the poor* is the struggle to access basic needs, even after the project cycle. This is because the termination of a project does not imply secured livelihoods for the project beneficiaries to allow the building of political networks. The literature equally shows that the industrial labouring poor

[58] Interview with NGO participant, Ntugamo district, 2nd July 2019.

in Tocqueville's time, formed associations with the purpose of "saving funds so that they could invest and make their savings productive" to avoid reliance on charity (Hurtado, 2019 p. 1206). Thus, the political function of social capital theory is questionable in the context of poverty.

To better understand the relevance of social capital theory for democratisation in the context of poverty, I interviewed the NGO participants on the strategic approaches of the NGOs to the communities. It was important to examine the rationalisation for the *group methodology* by the NGOs. I inquired about why the group approach is popular. The responses from the NGOs show that their interactions with local communities are framed within the logical framework of the programme interventions, derived from the NGOs' periodical strategic plans.[59] As discussed in chapter two, the logical project framework prescribes the approach to communities by the bureaucratic institutions. Accordingly, the NGOs target members who share common concerns to ensure joint action so that the group methodology fosters experience-sharing.[60] An NGO participant opined that:

> "We work through groups. We target people in groups because we want to break their isolation. Through groups, they can interact and learn from each other. At the start, they want to be alone. We then train them in group norms. We don't encourage group projects in the first year, until the people learn to bond"[61].

While the NGO participant emphasised the importance of the project beneficiaries 'learning to bond', the NGOs actually target members who reside in the same locality, are familiar with each other, and thrive on solidarity and mutual obligation for their livelihoods, akin to Durkheim's mechanical solidarity. For instance, the focus group discussions showed that the "community members regularly engage in collective activities, such as the SACCOs and burial groups"[62]. Indeed, NGOs rely on and utilise the existing relationships of trust and mutuality through the approach of self-selection of group members to ensure group

[59] Interview with NGO participant, Rubirizi district, 10th June 2019.
[60] Interview with NGO participant, Ntugamo district, 2nd July 2019.
[61] Interview with NGO participant, Hoima district, 25th May 2019.
[62] Focus Group Discussion, Rubirizi district, 3rd August 2019.

cohesion.[63] This challenges the assumption by the capacity-building approach that communities are deficient and passive. Rather, the evidence shows that the poor have accumulated the social capital to organise collectively to address shared economic and social concerns independently and *informally*. Thus, the economic function of social capital is relevant in the context of poverty and pre-modern societies. However, it is clear that the poor lack the organising skills and resources to engage with external structures of power as *formal organisations*. Therefore, social capital as the catalyst for voluntary organisations needs to be analysed within the context of modern societies, not the small and isolated villages or traditional societies. This implies that social capital is the source of voluntary organisation to the extent that the society is modern and complex. This finding emphasises the relevance of the middle class as a precondition for associational life.

In addition to examining the motivation for group cohesion by the poor, I questioned the extent that the poor and vulnerable project beneficiaries transformed into political agents, through membership in the community development projects. Therefore, it was important to examine how the projects shape the members' interactions and networks. First, I inquired about how the NGOs identify the beneficiaries of the projects, i.e. the profiles of the members of the targeted projects. Accordingly, the geographical areas exhibited pockets of deprived residents, who are vulnerable. The local government approves the NGO interventions for those identified as poor. The NGO participant opined that:

> "Before entry is made to the communities, we follow a procedure laid out by the government. We get to a community in consultation with the local government. The national NGOs can be registered at district level with decentralisation, and the district authorities oversee the NGO interventions. So we provide evidence to the local government at the district to confirm that we are a registered NGO (in case our registration was made out of the district), and we seek their approval in identifying the priority geographical areas that need support. We explain the purpose of our work. Our interventions must be discussed with the local government, in the first instance.

[63] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 30th June 2019.

> That means that the interactions with the communities must fall under the government national development plan for poverty reduction".[64]

The NGOs' approach and interactions with the local communities ultimately augment government efforts at poverty reduction[65]. At the local level, the NGOs are involved in the health service activities (HIV/AIDS); education, economic empowerment of communities; agriculture; the environment; water and sanitation; training and capacity building; peace-building and conflict resolution; accountability for good governance (Republic of Uganda, 2010). Beyond the efforts at poverty reduction, the social capital theory envisages that these vulnerable groups can indeed foster the growth of voluntary associations to balance the state.

Given the diverse concepts of poverty, the community development projects address various aspects of vulnerability. The focus group discussions therefore covered several areas, including health insurance, income generation projects in diverse sectors (mostly agriculture and savings), and the diverse categories of the project members (the youth, women, and people with disabilities). First, I examined the expectations and goals through membership in the projects, from the perspective of the NGOs. For instance, an NGO participant from a gender-focused NGO opined that:

> "we are concerned about household welfare, and 70 per cent of the members of the groups are women. The groups constitute 15 to 30 people. We ask them to form homogeneous groups, according to their socio-economic status, with the same income levels. The idea is that people can set goals and achieve them deriving from their experiences and motivation, and the unity of purpose.[66]

Despite the diverse categories of the poor targeted by the projects, their expectations and goals focused on the benefits during the project life. I discussed with the project groups on their motivation, and their prospects for the future. However, the project beneficiaries did

[64] Interview with NGO participant, Bushenyi district, 1st August 2019.
[65] Interview with NGO participant, Bushenyi district, 20th July 2019.
[66] Interview with NGO participant, Rubirizi district, 9th June 2019.

not have clear plans at the termination of the projects. The project beneficiaries in an FGD opined that:

> "we do not have a written constitution for our group, but we set meetings at least every month to assess our progress. Our aim for these meetings is to ensure that we can meet our target to repay the loan to our group, and we can't misuse our time during the meetings. We discuss the challenges and the demands of our project. Wag will the politics help our project? We self-selected the members of the group because we know what we want. This is now a peak time for harvesting the coffee and we have to ensure that it meets the quality".[67]

Another member of a project group remarked that: "we take turns to take our produce to the market, and sometimes one of us has to go to the market to track the prices before we make our next sale. We are constantly alert to get updates on prices, to avoid making losses".[68] These discussions show that the project groups generally constitute closely-knit members, who reside in the villages, and meet for the purpose of the project goals. Discussions on political matters during their group meetings are irrelevant.

Therefore, how likely would the projects shape the members' interactions and networks beyond the project life? I inquired from the project groups on their groups' networks and linkages. A project group member of the people with disabilities opined that:

> "we chose an activity that is less hectic than what others would normally engage in because we are cannot me so mobile. When we have to meet, we are careful to take care other members in the groups, who have greater difficulties with mobility. And if we can, we send messages to update each other. Apart from our project activities, we don't get involved in other meetings".[69]

These perspectives confirm that the poor and vulnerable face difficulties to create networks. The poverty reduction strategies rationalise the bonding of social capital to lift communities from poverty. Thus, the preoccupation of the project groups is project efficiency. Therefore, the political networks between community project groups are absent despite the duration of

[67] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 30th June 2019.
[68] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 27th July 2019.
[69] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 4th September 2019.

the groups. Alcock (1993, p. 212) refers to the "debilitating consequences of poverty and deprivation for participation in political activity", since the socio-economic inequalities translate into political inequalities. Thus, the social capital theory is a fragile premise as a precondition for the growth of associational life in the context of poverty.

Although the project groups did not have political networks, I examined the NGO exit strategies for the project groups to understand the envisaged role of the groups by the NGOs. When asked about the exit strategy, an NGO participant noted that:

> "We have been encouraging the groups to register with the local government, so that they can be linked to the government since government has some funding for community groups. We set up those groups when we had funding from different donors, and the funding expired. We were able to set up 200 groups with funding from an international NGO and the funding ended. Now we link them to the local government to be sustainable. We have also been advising them to merge up and make a Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisation. We want those groups to stand a test of time. So we force them to register with local government to tap support from government".[70]

The exit strategy by the NGOs generally involves the registration of the groups with the local government in order to tap funding. For instance, another NGO participant opined that:

> "we have project accountability committees at community level for the programmes that we fund. The committees are an exit strategy. We start our exit from the very start, by putting in place those structures that will carry on the work after five years, so that if we go away, there are things they will carry on without funds. And if they form a community based organisation, may be they can look for funds from the district, because districts give funds to organised groups. They can easily approach the district".[71]

The above findings show that the rural communities are broadly targeted through the social capital theory as the 'poor' and the projects have no strategies to support the community groups beyond the project cycle. I compared the NGO-supported community project groups with the government-supported groups, and there were no difference in the

[70] Interview with NGO participant, Rubirizi district, 9th June 2019.
[71] Interview with NGO participant, Hoima district, 25th May 2019.

the interactions and networks around the project groups. At the end of the project cycle, the NGOs try to link the project groups to government for funding. Similarly, the local government-funded project groups remain on the lookout for upcoming funding. This implies that the groups remain economically dependent despite the initial assistance to the groups. Moreover, by linking the project groups to government, the NGOs do not question the patronage relations that they themselves initiate. Although democracy is shaped and strengthened by civil society, through membership in voluntary associations (Monno and Khakee, 2012), it is clear that poverty targeting, through the community project groups, does not foster political networks. In practice, the community project groups disintegrate at the end of the project cycle.

The next section shows that the project beneficiaries are typically peasants, with distinct priorities for poverty targeting through the community development projects.

6.3 The Peasants' Priorities for Poverty Targeting

In this discussion I examine the local government-funded projects under the good governance agenda, whereby poverty targeting focuses entirely on social services, or the non-market aspects of poverty. I show that the prioritisation of the non-market idea of poverty ignores the peasants' priorities for challenging poverty. The discussion shows that the understanding of poverty, in terms of social service delivery indicators, does not address the challenges of a peasant context which hamper voluntary organisation.

Chapter five indicated the minimal participation in the local governments' social services projects by the local communities. It was noted that the planning processes for the community development projects for the social services were largely dormant, and the communities had limited involvement in the implementation of the projects. Further, the local communities did not foster 'pressure from below', as envisaged by the rights-based approach. The discussions with the communities on the reasons for their minimal participation in the social service projects by the local government noted both the constraints to put pressure on

the political representatives, and the struggles to balance the demands of their subsistence and off-farm activities to gain an income. The drive to join the market was prioritised over engaging the local government for the delivery of the social services in their communities, as discussed in the next section.

The pursuit of employment

The subsistence farmers are increasingly under pressure to diversify activities to raise incomes, so that it is difficult for the communities to participate in the village meetings on social services delivery. I noted the challenge to mobilise the focus group discussions in some communities, as the village residents were always engaged during the morning hours. Therefore, the meetings with the communities were scheduled in the afternoons, when the people would be able to spare time for the interviews. For instance, in mobilising the focus group discussions, an LC2 Chairperson noted that:

> "people are out of their houses very early to work. It is very difficult to mobilise communities for local government meetings. Sometimes we want to hold village meetings on security, gender-based violence, and on other government programmes, but people never have time these days. Everyone wants to earn an income. The government programmes on wealth creation are keeping the residents very busy. No one is willing to spend their time on non-profitable activities. Everyone wants to get somewhere. It feels like a competition. If one's neighbour has roofed a house with modern roofing, the person next wants to do exactly that. If one has educated children, the neighbour will also strive to educate theirs. The people are out and about. No one wants to be left behind. Educating children is now the major target for households. The communities have seen that the families that have educated their children have become wealthier. All the beautiful houses that you see across the hill view have been built by the educated children for their parents".[72]

The above experiences are not unique to the the local government community mobilisers. An NGO participant similarly shared that: "it is not easy to gather community members. It is becoming hard for everyone. It s difficult to call people for a meeting and they turn up, unless

[72] Interview with a village leader at LC 2 level, Bushenyi district, 10th June 2019.

they expect monetary benefits."[73] Even in the case of the NGO community health insurance scheme to which they contribute, the NGO participant who managed the project opined that:

> "the scheme members may not at all turn up for their monthly meetings. They always feel that meetings are a waste of time. Therefore, we incorporated the income generating activities into the health insurance scheme to encourage regular attendance for the healthcare scheme meetings. The income generating activities are a motivating factor for their participation. So, within the health scheme, they have a savings programme, and we target to reach out to them on the day of the savings meeting"[74].

I asked the community members about the typical demands of the off-farm activities. A community member noted the pressure to meet the demands of the several microfinance groups that they participate in:

> "We are now congested on the farming land. We cannot depend on farming alone. We must engage in multiple activities to get an income. The land gives me food to eat, but I cannot grow enough crops on a commercial basis to earn some money. I have a small piece of land. What most of us do, is to enroll in the savings groups, the SACCOs[75] so that at the end of each week we can plan to get some money to meet our needs. That way, I can plan to pay school fees, or expand my business. The pressure of participating in just two SACCOs is enough to deal with. Tell me, how can I spare any time for the politics in local government? It is a waste of time to put any hope in those people [the local government]."[76]

Yet another village resident noted the demands of working in a tea plantation noting that the employees of the tea plantation must reside at the plantation during the week, until the weekend when they get a day-off.[77] The community member noted the strains of harvesting tea adding that it would be impossible to request a day off from the job to attend a village assembly. The labourers on the tea plantations found it reasonable to utilise the break from the strenuous work to rest or catch up on personal activities. A village resident opined that:

> "Besides the cost of transportation to attend such village meetings is not worth it. The politicians offer empty promises. I would rather use that money to pay for the labour

[73] Interview with NGO participant, Bushenyi district, 1st August 2019.
[74] Interview with NGO participant, Ntugamo district, 2nd July 2019.
[75] Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisations.
[76] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 27th July 2019.
[77] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 21st August 2019.

> to help on the family farm during the peak times. If I do not supplement the farm labour at home with my income from the tea plantation, my wife would not cope by herself"[78].

The communities were able to diversify their livelihoods, rather than rely on subsistence production. At the same time, they preferred enterprise to off-farm labouring. They considered that the returns from the labor would be too meagre to meet their subsistence needs. "It would be inconceivable to depend on the job in a tea plantation, because you would not afford to buy food for your family"[79]. Therefore, the communities reasoned to keep both subsistence farming and income generating activities.

It was also common for the men to rent land to grow tea, and pay the landlord from the returns of the tea harvests. For this kind of work, the demand to pay the landlord on a weekly basis was immense. A village member opined that:

> "The tea must be collected at the right time, otherwise it would not pass the standard test by the buyers. I must collect the tea several days in a week, and I cannot employ any labourers. I would not be cost-effective. Since I have to do this work alone, I hardly find time for anything else. When the children are on holiday, they help me to pick the tea. My wife attends the crops, but I have to help her too, when I am not working on the tea plantation".

Both the men and women share the pressure of the demands for off-farm employment. The women typically cultivate the food crops, although they engaged in income generating activities based at their homes. While waiting to conduct a focus group discussion on one afternoon, some female participants were late to the meeting as they had to take care of the coffee as it dried in the sun. They discussed the demands to guard the coffee as it dried because the village experienced coffee thefts. "If the coffee is unattended to when it is out in the sun, it gets stolen. You must be present all the time"[80]. The female participants in the focus group discussion were beneficiaries of the government-funded programme, and it

[78] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 21st August 2019.
[79] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 21st August 2019.
[80] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 30th June 2019.

supported the group to trade in coffee produce. The participants noted the fear of arrest if the loan was not paid on time.

Similarly, I noted that the women's group leader that mobilised a focus group discussion was tailoring in her home, before the rest of the participants joined us. She therefore stopped tailoring, and spared her time to attend the focus group discussion. Other income generating activities that were reported by the female participants included grocery shops at the homes, tailoring, poultry, and animal husbandry. They reported that the star-up capital for these projects was obtained from the SACCOs[81].

The above responses from the research participants show that the communities prioritise their participation in income generation activities over the village assemblies to talk about the problems in local government social service delivery projects. It was clear that the constraints to their participation in the local government assemblies include the lack of hope in the local government promises to deliver the services, and the intense pressure to diversify activities to gain an income. It is also clear that they base the security of their livelihoods on subsistence farming. Generally, the community participants noted that they maintained a subsistence farm, while they worked near the home.

The findings show that the idea of a 'resourceful community' in social capital theory (Cleaver, 1999) does not apply to peasants. Some critical theorists underline the competing demands of work and time for the poor (Cornwall, 2008) and reject 'unreasonable' demands on their time (Casswell, 2001). From this perspective, it is reasonable that the communities are not willing to spare their time for 'unpaid' work, otherwise the risks of non-payment of the loans is greater than the spending time on discussing the unreliable community project plans by the local government. This implies that the communities are not necessarily apathetic, as claimed by the pathological analysis of communities in the cycle of deprivation (discussed in chapter two). Rather they have limited expectations of local government

[81] Focus Group Discussion, Rubirizi district, 3rd August 2019 Focus Group Discussion, Rubirizi district, 3rd August 2019.

programmes, nor do they anticipate positive change through their village assemblies. Section 5.2.3 shows that the role of the communities in the planning processes for the community development projects is equivalent to making wish-lists, and this keeps the communities at the receiving end.

In comparison to the social service delivery projects by the local government, the communities were greatly involved in the central government-funded projects as they prioritised income generation. As discussed in section 5.4.2, some of the central government-funding that the communities tapped included, the Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) and the Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP), which are managed by the Ministry of Gender Labour And Social Development, and the Ministry of Agriculture. The Operation Wealth Creation programme by the office of the President was another key source of funding. The communities' goals for participating in the central government-funded projects, and their perceived roles in the projects, aligned with those of the state, i.e. getting the peasants to join the market.

While the good governance agenda prioritises basic social service delivery by the local governments, the state maintains the structural transformation approach to poverty. In Uganda, as in most developing countries, decentralisation is a mechanism for poverty targeting through social service delivery, as discussed in section 5.2.1. The rights-based approach targets the local communities as the poor per se, while the state maintains the idea of poverty in terms of the peasantry. Similarly, the findings of the study evidence that the participants in the social service projects by the local government are typically peasants. Uganda is predominantly a peasant and low-income country. While some scholars suggest that the rural areas have "little or no interaction with the market" (Mwangi and Markelova, 2008 p. 8), the findings of the study emphasise the diverse off-farm activities by the peasants. The rural population in Uganda constitutes (18.5 percent) wage employment, and the majority (72 per cent) remaining largely in subsistence agriculture (Republic of Uganda, 2015 p.4). Their subsistence livelihoods imply that they consume the goods they produce or

barter them for other goods. The question then is whether they should be targeted as the 'poor', or as 'peasants'.

The pursuit of employment was noted as the key priority for the community development projects as the communities would be able to access better social services in the private sector, than the subsidised services provided by the local government. The next section clarifies on this finding.

Access to better social services on the market

This discussion shows that accessing the subsidised local government social services was not the main priority for the rural communities. Rather than focus on the local government politics in social service delivery, the communities prioritised their participation in the projects that generate employment. They expressed powerlessness to use political processes to advance their interests in local government social service delivery, as they do not look to politics to offer them hopeful solutions.

I discussed with the communities on their experiences as end-users of the local government services, i.e education, health care, water, roads, and agriculture extension services. The focus groups discussed how the communities felt about their access to the local government services, and the key concern they raised was that the services were distant despite decentralisation. For instance, the participants in a focus group discussion opined that: "we have constantly requested for a school closer to us, but we have received no response. The nearest school is about 6kms away. All the children in the neighbouring villages must walk that long distance daily"[82]. It was commonly suggested by the focus group discussions that access to the social services provided by the local government was poor. In the case of healthcare, the participants in a focus group discussion noted that:

> "the health centres provide basic services, and the quality of care is poor, compared to the private sector. Although the government says healthcare is free, we must buy

[82] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district 17th August 2019.

> drugs. Only the consultation is free. Therefore, it is better to use the private hospitals where the healthcare services are of better quality"[83].

Similarly, an NGO that provided community health insurance opined that:

> "we are using local leaders to mobilise communities to pay for health services, which is contradictory to the government free healthcare policy. The local leaders understand the challenges to access quality healthcare and they take part in the mobilisation."[84]

These perceptions on distance and the quality of services, corroborate a previous study by an NGO as illustrated in Figure 13. The study by the NGO revealed that more than half (56.1%) of the respondents ranked the quality of primary education under the Uganda government's programmme of Universal Primary Education (UPE) as fair (WACSOF, 2018). For the district under study, the rating for the quality of primary education under the Universal Primary Education programmme was 1.4% (Very Poor), 11.4% (Poor), 51.8% (Fair), and 34.8% (Good) (WACSOF, 2018 p. 33).

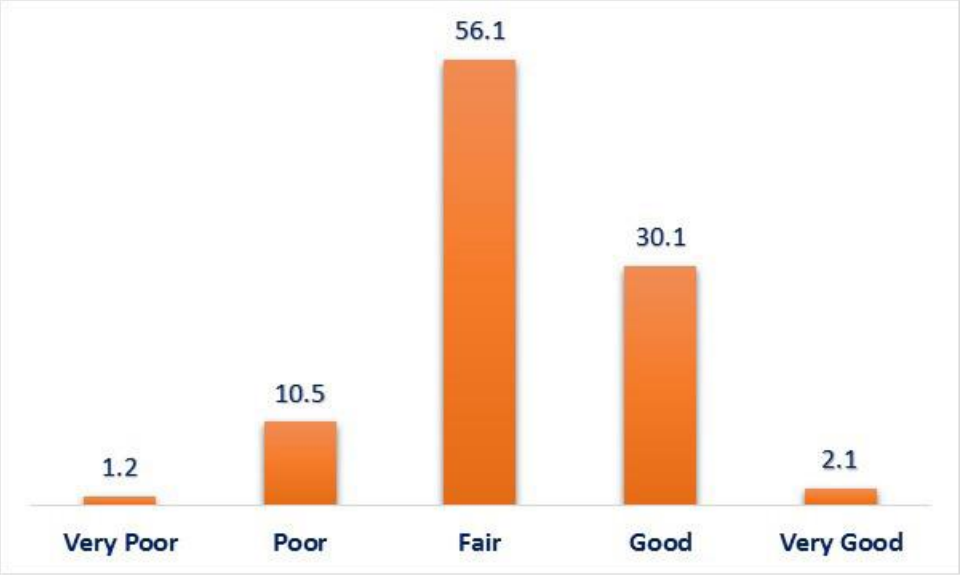

Figure 13: Rating the quality of primary education in UPE Schools
(Source: WACSOF, 2018 p. 33).

[83] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district 12th August 2019.
[84] Interview with NGO participant, Ntugamo district, 2nd July 2019.

Similarly, the communities' perceptions on access to health centres by the NGO study, corroborated the views of the focus group discussions for this field research. For instance, Figures 14 and 15 show the problem of distance to the local government health centres. The nearest health facilities are located at LC2 level, according to the decentralisation policy in Uganda. However, the health centres are absent in some areas. An NGO study shows that 38.7% of the respondents said that they accessed the nearest health care services at Health Centre II (LC 3), followed by Health Centre IIIs at LC2 (30.4%) and Health Centre IVs LC4 (18.2%) (Figure 14), while in Figure 15, 18.8% of respondents travel for less than one kilometre from a government health facility while 32.3% and 23.1% are live within between one and two kilometres and two to three kilometres from a government health facility respectively. A significant number of respondents indicated that they are in a distance of more than five kilometres from a government health facility.

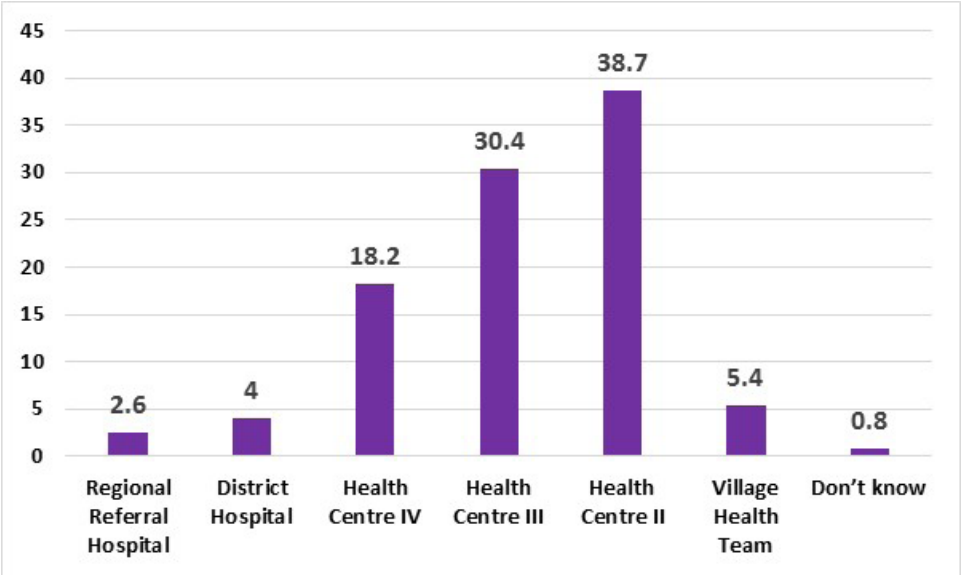

Figure 14: Nearest government health facility
(Source: WACSOF, 2018 p. 43).

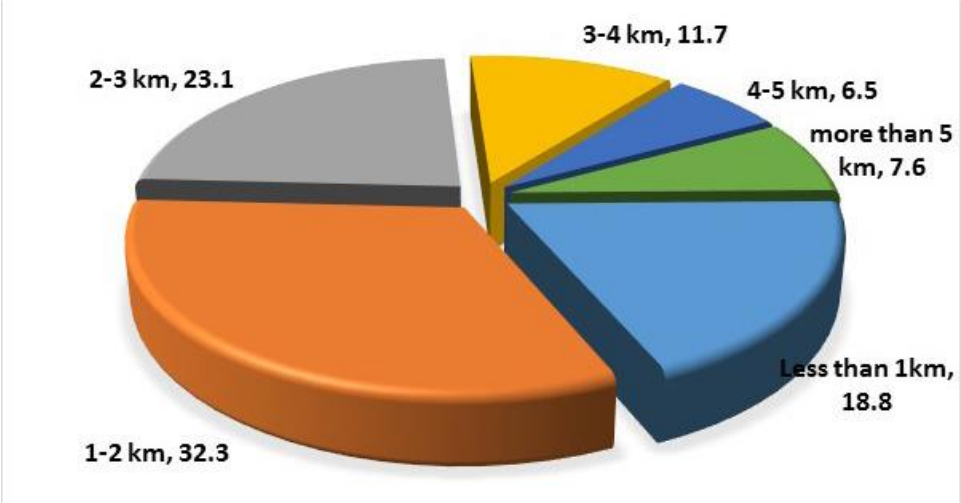

Figure 15: Distance to the nearest government health facility
(Source: WACSOF, 2018 p. 44).

Clearly, the local government social services are not generally utilised by he people, as they are scanty, of poor quality, sometimes absent. Therefore, the social services do not respond to their core priority, which is to gain an income. The communities prefer to buy these services from the private sector.[85] It was also evident that the rural communities in Uganda felt that the local government social services were disproportionate, compared to the town councils. There was limited expectation that the local government budgets would cover areas beyond the district capital. It is reasonable that the communities prioritise the community development projects that provide entry into the market for employment, in order to access better quality services in the private sector. Similarly, Byekwaso (2010, p. 523) agrees that "these are the services, which in any case could be afforded by individuals if the people are earning enough from the products of their labour, like a better price from the crops they grow and high wages from industrial employment". It is not surprising that the communities find the microfinance projects preferable to local government projects.

[85] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 20th June 2019.

Therefore, the field research suggests important conclusions on the understanding of poverty. First, the conceptualisation of poverty, in terms of social service delivery indicators, does not address the challenges of a peasant population which hamper voluntary organisation. Secondly, poverty targeting through basic social services is essentially a democratic values issue, rather than a strategy for promoting associationalism. Democratic societies see poverty as a deprivation of the human value to care for the suffering. These ideas are discussed below.

The significance of understanding poverty as structural

The understanding of poverty as structural, explains why the poor are unorganised. On the contrary, the idea of poverty in terms of social service delivery by the good governance agenda does not address the lack of citizens' organisation by the poor. Social capital theory is not intended to target the poor, and does not foster associational life through the community development projects. The idea of poverty in terms of social service delivery, derives from the basic needs approach to poverty that was popularised in the 1970s in the developing countries, as indicated in Table 11. It contrasts with the income measure of poverty by the modernisation approach because it does not focus on the market, as discussed in the findings. The understanding of poverty in terms of structural transformation or modernisation, enables the transition from peasantry to a market economy. Table 11 shows other concepts of poverty in the low-income countries since the 1960s, which inform the approaches to the local communities through the community projects.

Concept of poverty	**Poverty reduction strategies**
• Income or consumption poverty • Relative deprivation	Modernisation approach
• Lack of basic needs	Basic Needs approach
• Vulnerability	Asset-Based approach
• (Un)sutainable Livelihoods	Sustainable Livelihoods approach
• Human development	

• Ill-being (Wellbeing) • Lack of capability and functioning	Human Development approach Capabilities approach

Table 11: The concepts of poverty

Uganda's the National Development Plan is hinged on modernisation, not only "to propel the country towards middle income status through…sustainable wealth creation, employment and inclusive growth", but to also achieve a reduction in the people living on less than one dollar a day (Republic of Uganda, 2015 p. xvii). The National Plan prioritises agriculture, among the five investment areas with the greatest multiplier effect on the economy, and for poverty reduction. The National Development Plan aims at increasing per capita income from USD 788 to USD 1,039, so as to reduce the poverty rate from 19.7 per cent to 14.2 per cent (Republic of Uganda, 2015 p. xxiii). The predominance of peasant production in Uganda explains the country's poor terms of trade, and hence the dependency on aid. The undiversified economy, i.e. the absence of an industrial sector that could create better employment and incomes to enable the purchase of goods and services, explains the conditions for the poverty in the country (Whitworth and Williamson, 2010). The government strategizes that:

> "Uganda will implement a tripartite strategic policy aimed at accelerating planned and controlled urbanisation; ensuring a critical link between urbanisation and modernisation of agriculture where the urbanising community frees land for commercial agriculture as well as create a market for the increased output and quality of agro products; and the reorganisation of these communities into cooperatives to utilise their increased incomes to contribute to the creation of vibrant provident funds" (Republic of Uganda, 2015 p. 104).

The National Development Plan derives from the "Uganda Vision 2040 strategy which aims at transforming the country from being a predominantly peasant and low income to a competitive, upper middle-income status with a per capita income averaging at USD 9,500 by 2040 (Republic of Uganda, 2015 p. 2).

However, the structural preconditions for the growth of voluntary organisations is slow. Makumbe (1998, p. 310) notes that "in essence, Africa has had only one decade in which to set about developing its own civil society…To expect Africa's civil society to be as vibrant and dynamic as that in some developed countries after so short a period is to be grossly inconsiderate".

Poverty targeting through basic social services as democratic values issue

It questionable to articulate poverty reduction through social service provision, as a strategy for promoting associationalism. Prior to the advancement of the rights-based approach in the 1990s, scholars have clarified the significance of poverty reduction from two major perspectives: a) as a democratic value, and b) as a question of structural transformation. The latter perspective, affirms that associational life emerges from a middle class, noting that a significant number of people need to make the transition from poverty into the middle class for democratisation or associational life to emerge (Moore, 1966). Thus, Wietzke (2019, p. 937) affirms the "recognition that poverty reduction can increase the chances of successful democratisation" through structural transformation.

On the other hand, poverty targeting through social service delivery promoted by the good governance agenda, needs to be contextualised within the longstanding discourse on poverty reduction as a democratic value. The discourse on poverty reduction as the fulfillment of democratic values suggests that "poverty violates democratic values", i.e. liberty, equality, and solidarity (Lötter, 2008 p. 178). The democratic values discourse contends that food, shelter, or health care, are basic human interests, and to protect those interests, is a fundamental democratic value (Lötter, 2008). The idea that "poverty violates

the principle of the equal consideration of every citizen's interests" (Lötter, 2008 p. 180). Therefore, the prioritisation of poverty reduction through social service provision of basic needs, by the local government is essentially a government response to fulfill democratic values. Similarly, donor support to the low-income country governments, is rightly understood to be principally geared to the fulfillment of the democratic value of equal concern for every individual citizen.

The democratic values discourse derives from Joseph Rowntree's thesis in 1901, that the "eradication of poverty is in the self-interest of societies… no country can be sound or stable if it harbours large numbers of poor people…described as a mass of stunted life" (Rowntree 1901 cited by Lötter, 2008 p. 177). Lötter (2008, p. 182), further argued that:

> "clearly, for anyone to watch people suffer – and even die – as a result of poverty while they are able to ameliorate the situation without harming themselves in any morally significant way brings us to the end of all notions of human equality and respect for human life… concern for the fundamental interests of suffering poor people implies willingness to relieve their suffering through providing them with all purpose means to satisfy their basic needs".

Donor support through the good governance agenda, makes sense from this perspective, rather than promoting associationalism through the projects for social services.

The service delivery approach advanced by the social capital theory and the rights-based approach similarly draws on the human development paradigm (1990s), which shares the rationale of the democratic values discourse on poverty reduction that:

> "people suffering from poverty have inadequate resources to provide for their basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, and self-development. To ignore their interest in securing these things in their quest to enable their physical survival as human beings and to strive for flourishing lives, while others in society have an abundance of such means, violates the principle of the equal consideration of each citizen's interests…to ignore their interests in having healthy bodies and developed capacities implies treating them as beings that do not possess human characteristics" (Lötter, 2008 p. 181).

It is also clear from the findings that the poor, struggling to access the basic needs are unlikely to oppose the same government that is providing for them, from what they have not contributed through tax revenues. Similarly, the democratic values discourse on poverty reduction does not only focus on the fulfillment of values, but is derived from the evidence that poor people are unable to influence political decisions to favour their interests and views. Poverty as a lack of economic resources implies that the poor cannot fully participate in the range of activities in society, including "the governance of a community's shared life" (Lötter, 2008 p. 180). Scholars previously affirmed that, "one cannot describe poor citizens as possessing adequately functioning political capacities" (Bohman, 1996 p. 124) because "poverty leads to unequal political participation" (Lötter, 2008 p. 182).

The rights-based approach promotes the discourse on poverty, which recognises that the poor peoples' "needs are often overlooked, neglected, or very insufficiently provided for" (Gewirth, 1984 p. 564), but also that the poor cannot effectively make their needs and interests heard, nor fully employ their collective political voice for the fulfilment of their rights (Bohman, 1996). Berlin (1969 cited by Lötter, 2008) illuminates the significance of the immediate interests of the people suffering from poverty i.e. inadequate resources to provide for basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, and health, *rather than* the 'advanced' forms of liberty, such as freedom of the press. Berlin (1969 cited by Lötter, 2008 p. 182) questions: "how could they be concerned about the details of liberty rights, if they do not have enough food, adequate shelter, sufficient warmth, or a minimum degree of security".

Therefore, the next section discusses the findings on the challenges to undertake accountability by unorganised citizens.

6.4 Lack of Education and Analytical Skills

The preceding chapter indicated that the communities have not been able to challenge their unresponsive political representatives in local government. This discussion examines the constraints to challenging government, posed by the lack of education, so that communities are unable to access information on the government failures in social service

delivery. The lack of education, analytical skills portray the challenges of a peasant population in accountability. The question that guides this discussion therefore is: how may the citizens engage in local accountability, if they lack the skills or knowledge of their role in accountability? The findings show the irony that the communities depend on the local government to receive information. The state-led and sponsored approach to participation implies that the unresponsive public officials also determine access to information.

As discussed in the preceding section, the quality of the social services by the local government was poor so that the communities preferred the services provided by the private sector. Therefore, I discussed with the communities on their role in improving the quality of government. The discussions on the quality of government focused on the negligence of the public officials. The communities felt that the local government was negligent in its social service delivery duty. However, they felt powerless to make the local government responsive.

The focus group discussions mainly noted the shoddy construction work by the private contractors and the poor quality of schools. The participants in a focus group discussion opined that: "the government should follow up on whether the teachers are doing their work or not."[86] The discussions reiterated the negligence by the local government. This shows the communities' perception of the public officials as public servants that should do their work without a watchdog.

I noted that the communities had greater expectations of the local government staff at the health centres, the teachers, agriculture extension workers, and the community development officers, with whom they most interacted. The communities had fewer interactions with the political representatives. I noted that the community members made references to the names of the local government staff, than to their technical positions. Although the communities lacked clarify on the distinct roles of the political representatives and the local government staff, they thought that the local government staff connived with the political representatives. They were aware that the local government staff are negligent,

[86] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district 12th August 2019.

because they can get away with it, noting that local government staff have permanent contracts.[87] The participants in the focus group discussion opined that:

> "the local government staff are untouchable. We had a case where a community development officer demanded a bribe before he could approve our project. When one of our members reported to the finance officer the problem, the community development officer got to know that we reported him and told us. It backfired. Reporting the problem did not help us to get our project approved, because we still had to pay the bribe to the community development officer. This is how it works. We have heard from others in the village that if we had reported to the LC5 Councilor, we could have got help. We cannot reach the LC 5 Councillor."[88]

This shows that the communities see their role in reporting the failures of the local government staff to the close networks or connections in local government. In the above example, the anticipated 'connection' in the local government was not able to stop the community development officer from demanding a bribe. The political representatives are not only distant, they do not punish the local government staff for their misconduct despite being aware of the incidents. I noted that an LC2 Chairperson asked for a tip from the Chairperson of a women's group because he had shared information on upcoming funding by the local government with the group. The LC2 Chairperson had previously served as a community development officer, and in similar roles in the local government. When I probed the LC2 Chairperson, he did not find any problem in asking for the tip, because he reasoned that he helped the group in getting the information that it would have otherwise missed. This depicts the normalisation of corruption by the local government, rather than questioning wrongdoing.

The community project groups discussed the problem of lack of access to information on local government programmes. Typically the councillors, parish chiefs (at LC2), and the community development officers, are the key sources of information for the communities. The LC 2 Chairpersons receive information on the planned projects from the community development officers at LC 3 level, and they pass it on to the communities. However, the

[87] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 1st August 2019.
[88] Focus Group Discussion, Bushenyi district, 1st August 2019.

community development officers also organise meetings with the communities, when they have been facilitated by the local government[89]. There is no clear flow of information from the local government staff to the communities, while the political leaders also claimed to disseminate information through the political structure. As discussed in the preceding chapter, there is limited interaction and an absence of feedback mechanisms between the communities and the political representatives. The closest interaction with the communities is with the LC1 leaders, who are uninformed about the approved local government budgets in the District Development Plan. A village leader opined that, "we are in the dark about the local government processes."[90] Without information, accountability work is thwarted. It is also ironical that the communities depend on the local government to receive information. However, the state-led and sponsored approach to participation implies that the unresponsive public officials also determine what information can be shared, how and when it can be disclosed. While the Public Information Act of Uganda empowers the citizens to demand disclosure of information from the public officials, the local communities lack this information.

I identified that the service delivery institutions (i.e. schools, health centres), and the local governments are required to display information about the fiscal transfers received from the centre, so that citizens can question those responsible about the use of the money[91]. The absence of the mechanisms for the citizens to question the local government, as discussed in the preceding chapter, implies that the communities never question. I asked a local government participant at a health centre whether the communities get to talk about the displayed budgets, and it was clear that the health centre did not organise meetings with the people. The rights-based approach assumes that the village residents can ably approach the local government accountability as a collective, but it is never defined how the communities

[89] Interview with the Community Development Officer at Sub-County level, Bushenyi District, 28th May 2019.
[90] Interview with a village leader, at LC1, Bushenyi district, 18th July 2019.
[91] Interviews with the Heads of the Health Centres, Bushenyi district, 16th July 2019, 25th August 2019, and 7th September 2019. Also interview with the LC3 Chairperson, Bushenyi district, 20th August 2019.

may be organised. Similarly, individual citizens are cannot undertake accountability; it must be an organised effort, because power is derived from organisation.

Although many of the social service institutions have complied with this government requirement to display information on the notice boards, [92]another NGO participant opined that:

> "the community does not have information on the local government processes. The issue is that government does no share information. They cannot share it, and that is why we took them to court, because even when we requested the information according to the law, they never released it. They know the impact of releasing that information."[93]

The NGOs, as watchdog are able to challenge the violation of the Public Information Act. The NGOs search for information to challenge the state, beyond what is displayed on the notice boards. The NGOs rejected the excuses by the local government for failing to display information on the notice boards. The NGO participant remarked that:

> "the district cannot keep telling the communities that it has no funds. The local government does not share information. Don't they know that they should share information? It is possible to share information on the public notice boards, but they cannot dare to do that. They do not. So this is a deliberate move to withhold information".[94]

The focus group discussions similarly showed that the communities were not aware of the displayed information. An LC1 Chairperson opined that:

> "the display of information at the health centres is insufficient. The figures they display on the notice board are one thing, and the actual expenditure is another. Who knows how they arrive at those figures on the displayed expenditures? As LC1 chairpersons, we are not part of monitoring these expenses because we are not members of the health centre committees. We see the figures, but what do the figures

[92] Interview with the NGO participant, Bushenyi district, 18th May 2019.
[93] Interview with NGO participant, Ntungamo district, 2nd July 2019.
[94] Interview with NGO participant, Masaka district, 9th September 2019.

> mean? After all, very often the health services have no medicines, and people opt to go to the private clinics"[95].

Further to the problem of information dissemination through the political leaders and the notice boards, the local governments are not in control of the projects that are directly funded by the central government. As discussed in chapter five (section 5.2), it is important to note that while the participatory planning meetings specifically targeting social service delivery (education, health, water, and agriculture extension services) are dormant, the central government provides funding to support income generation projects for the youth, women, and people with disabilities[96] (Republic of Uganda, 2015). However, this funding is not integrated into the local government budget and plan. It is directly transferred from the central government to the community groups for joint projects for self-help, and the village leaders are excluded from the information dissemination on these projects. An LC1 opined that:

> "the problem that we face as LC1 Chairpersons is that we are never notified of the planned community projects. For example, I recently heard from a community member that one of the residents received a goat under the government programme for the youth. I have no idea about the process. We are not informed".[97]

I corroborated these perspectives with the local government staff, who noted that:

> "the government aims at equity – to try to give those who must get something – what happens now, those who get the information search for the services, the few. Say, we have an indicative figure of such an amount for the youth, those who pick the information get mobilised and apply and get that little. We use radio, write circulars, notices, and those who are able apply and use it".[98]

The lack of information, implies an absence of bottom-up pressure from the communities on the political representatives. This is because the village-level leaders at LC1 level are not able to put pressure on the sub-county (LC 3) and district (LC 5) leaders to

[95] Interview with the village leader, at LC1, Bushenyi district, 24th July 2019.
[96] Interview with the District Planning Officer, Busyenyi district, 21st May 2019.
[97] Interview with the village leader, at LC1, Bushenyi district, 24th July 2019.
[98] Interview with the Chief Administrative Officer, Bushenyi district, 21st May 2019.

demand accountability. The mechanism of using notice boards to disseminate information is unhelpful because unorganised citizens cannot question it. It is the civil society's role to sensitise citizens through information dissemination, so that they can in turn hold government accountable. It is ironical to expect the political leaders to effectively share information. As discussed in chapter five, the lack of information on funding for the projects has encouraged patronage.

This evidence depicts the challenges of the absence of voluntary organisations. Since the poor lack education and advocacy skills, they are unable to engage as specialised interest organisations. Monno and Khakee (2012, p. 88) note that:

> " citizens participate through membership in local associations or non-governmental organisations (NGOs)…the more specialised an NGO, the greater knowledge it has on specific factual matter and the greater the possibility to influence decision-making…it is only the well-to-do and educated citizens who show a significant propensity to participate".

For instance, Table 12 illustrates the education status of Uganda's population), which confirms the challenges of lack of formal education for participation.

Level completed	**2014**		
	Male	Female	Total
None	15.8	21.6	18.9
Primary	59.1	57.8	58.4
Secondary	20.2	16.9	18.5
O Level	16.4	14.6	15.4
A Level	3.8	2.3	3.0
Tertiary	4.8	3.7	4.3

Table 12: Education status of Uganda's population
(Source: Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016 p. 26).

The Uganda government is cognisant that "like any other developing country, Uganda needs citizens who can actively participate in democracy…Literacy does not only concern reading and writing, but also…the right to participate, the empowerment of the marginalised and excluded" (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2002 p. 43). This show that the political leadership in Uganda is aware that the uneducated are unlikely to challenge the government, and the politicians exploit this education gap to advance their political interests.

The structuralist approach to democratisation rationalised that democracy derived from structural prerequisites, involving industrialisation, the transformation of class structure, urbanisation, and education. For instance, Barro (1996) identified a relationship between the income share of the middle class and democracy. Accordingly, industrialisation, high incomes, and education, engender a society whose citizens are politically aware and assertive; the spread of education and urbanisation leads to demands for democracy (Almond and Verba, 1963). Barro's (1996) study on the 'Determinants of Democracy' specifically noted the correlation between education, especially primary education and democracy. According to Barro (1996), education and knowledge imply that citizens are less predisposed to the manipulating populist and authoritarian leaders. However, the community development projects do not respond to the gaps in knowledge and skills that are necessary for accountability. This underlines the significance of understanding poverty and the lack of education as structural constraints.

The uneducated do not possess the analytical, political, and operational capacity to organise themselves (Table 13) and therefore are not able contribute to political accountability.

Policy capacity levels	**Political capacity**	**Analytical capacity**	**Operational capacity**
Organisational	• Availability of individuals with analytical capacity • Machinery and processes for collecting and analysing data	• Legitimacy of the policy process •Processes for stakeholder Engagement • Access to key policy makers	• Organisational commitment to achieving goals • Availability of fiscal and personnel resources

Policy capacity levels	Political capacity	Analytical capacity	Operational capacity
	• Organisational commitment to evidence-based policy		• Coordination of internal processes • Performance management • Administrative accountability

Table 13: Policy capacity skills and resources of civil society
Source: Wu, et al. (2018).

Clearly, accountability requires publicly accessible information about resource availability and use, and about the ways in which services are being provided. Cornwall and Leach (2010) argue that only when civil society is armed with such information can there be informed public debate. Without the expertise of the NGOs, local communities are unable to access information from the local governments, as discussed in the next chapter. Wu et al. (2018, p.13) argue that:

> "in a policy system with a high level of political capacity, policy failures can be exposed, and the parties responsible for formulating and implementing the policy are held accountable, without undermining the principles upon which the government was founded. In this regard, an active civil society, an independent media, and freedom of speech and assembly play a key role in enhancing political accountability".

The accessibility of information by non-government organisations and private sectors organisations can play a key role in determining the analytical capacity at the system level. The increased emphasis on accountability, transparency, and participatory governance in recent years has accentuated the importance of information systems in governments and societies (Oh, 1997). Accessibility to information requires transparency on the part of the government (Haider et al. 2011). Freedom of information or the right to information is essential precondition for citizens to participate in the policy process (Bennett and Raab, 2003).

Communication with stakeholders and the general public is a critical component of organisational political capacity and is essential for effective policy and governance because

it enhances understanding of and support for government policies. Skillful communication by agencies can increase support for government policy objectives and make the task of governance and policy-making easier and more effective. To succeed, governments need to define an issue and engage the public in its resolution (Haider et al. 2011). Without communication structures and processes that enable the two-way exchange of information between state and citizens, it is difficult for states to be responsive to public needs and expectations (Haider et al. 2011).

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings, derived from the critique of the social capital theory, as used by the empowerment approach, to catalyse associational life through projects that target poverty. I indicated that the social capital theory originated in a middle-class setting, to analyse the political role of the social networks and associations in challenging the state. Therefore, the theory was not intended to target the poor. I questioned the political role and relevance of the theory in the context of poverty and pre-modern societies for democratisation.

The field research studied the role of the social service delivery/community projects in fostering accountability, as theorised by the empowerment approach. It examined the extent that the community development project groups foster voluntary associations, and whether the poor learn the democratic values through the community development projects. It further questioned the understanding of poverty, in terms of social service delivery indicators, and the extent that this understanding addresses the challenges to citizens' organisation, posed by a peasant context. Another important aspect of the field research was how the lack the education by the poor hampered their role in accountability.

The findings of the study indicated that the project groups disintegrate at the end of the project cycle; they do not foster political networks or associations. Moreover, it was identified that the community project groups are often mechanisms for clientelism by the state, rather than limiting it. Secondly, the findings on the relationship between *poverty,*

social capital theory, and *accountability* showed that the beneficiaries of the community development projects in Uganda are typically peasants, and they have specific priorities for poverty targeting through the community development projects. It was clear that peasants prioritise participation in the projects that provide entry into the market for employment, or to improve their position in the market. The peasants see employment as the route to better incomes and access to social services. Thirdly, due to lack of education and analytical skills by the poor to question the state, the findings show the irony that the communities depend on the local government to receive information. The state-led and sponsored approach to participation implies that the unresponsive public officials also determine access to information to the citizens.

The key conclusion from the chapter is that the conceptualisation of poverty as the lack of basic social services, ignores the understanding of poverty as structural. Therefore, I argue that peasants are a structural constraint to liberal democracy. Their role in accountability is hampered by the lack of incomes, education and political learning. Therefore, the application of social capital theory in a poverty context, has not fostered voluntary organisations.

The next chapter discusses the role of the NGOs in substituting the absent voluntary organisations to undertake accountability. It questions the extent that the NGO organise communities to challenge the state.

7. NGOs and Political Accountability

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings on the role of the NGOs in fostering the accountability of local government. As discussed in chapter two, the rights-based approach suggests the concept of social accountability, whereby NGOs support the poor to foster the responsiveness of the local governments for social service delivery. NGO funding became a priority from the mid-1990s with the assumption that they would connect with the poor (Carothers, 1999; Rakner et al. 2007).

The theorisation on empowerment suggests two approaches through which the NGOs can connect with the local communities to challenge their political leaders: a) *social accountability.* As discussed in chapter two, the "potential pitfalls of decentralisation are that it is no more likely, in and of itself, to be more accountable" (DFID, 2010 p.47). In other words, it became clear that the state was not responsive, despite decentralisation, which implied the need to increase its responsiveness through the NGOs; b) the theorisation on empowerment integrates an *activist approach* as discussed in chapter two. This approach draws on the role of the critical community organiser, as opposed to the technical or professional community facilitator. Therefore, NGOs are expected to mobilise the poor to oppose the failures of the state.

The field research examined the organisational role of the NGOs in the local communities through social accountability and the activist approach. The field research was guided by the first research question of the study: *How do the NGOs organise communities to undertake accountability?* With regards to social accountability, the research examined how the NGOs organise the communities to link them with their political leaders in local government. As capacity-building organisations, NGOs draw on the *capacity-building approach* (as discussed in chapter two). The field study examined the capacity-building role of NGOs to understand their impact on the communities' capability to organise and mobilise

for local accountability. Drawing on the capability approach, I examined what the communities are able to do through the NGOs' support. The study also examined the NGO capacity-building outcomes for the political representatives. Secondly, the chapter examines the NGO experiences in the mobilisation of communities for activism against the local government. It is important to note that the activist approach is marginal in the theorisation on empowerment, as discussed in chapters two, three, and four. The chapter discusses the findings on these contrasting approaches by the NGOs in local government accountability i.e. the activist approach and capacity-building in social accountability.

The research identified key problems in social accountability, as discussed in the next sections, under the following themes: a) the distorted notion of accountability, b) structural capacity constraints to accountability; c) political accountability as a democratic values issue; d) organisational structures and; f) political learning. I show that the rights-based approach and the capacity-building approach fail to solve these key problems in accountability.

7.2 The Distorted Notion of Accountability

The discussion shows that the NGO role of bridging the gap between the local communities and their political leaders in local government, changes the understanding of accountability, i.e from *political accountability* to *social accountability*. From the civic republican perspective, accountability (political accountability) implies the self-organisation of citizens to limit the state. Therefore, if the poor were organised as voluntary associations, they would expose the failures in government as watchdog in the first place. However, the local communities are unorganised to act as watchdog. The watchdog role by voluntary organisations, to expose government failures, would contribute to the sanctioning of the political leaders through elections. As discussed in chapter five, in democracies, accountability occurs when the electorate is able to sanction the politician for the irresponsible choices made on their behalf by voting them out. Since the local governments are not accountable, or voted out in the low-income countries, the promotion of democracy devised the idea of "social accountability", which maintains partnership with the

irresponsible state. I argue that this is akin to 'making a pact with the devil'. The rights-based approach suggests the idea of *social accountability*, whereby the NGOs play the role of linking the local communities to their political representatives in local government to "demand accountability". I show that the idea of "demanding accountability" (DFID, 2010 p. 54), in social accountability is misleading in the civic republican theorisation. Social accountability is rationalised by the NGOs as axiomatic, since the empowerment theorisation does not question *why the poor are unorganised*. On the other hand, the communities can only praise its usefulness because the approach has provided the rare opportunity to question the local government. They lack political learning on the role of association, and the state-led civic education programmes are not effective mechanisms for promoting associations.

The rationale for accountability was discussed in the preceding chapter. The liberal democratic model posits that the politicians (who oversee the bureaucrats) must be responsive to the citizens, i.e. political accountability. Accountability is 'political' in the sense that the "state has a contract with the public and is held accountable for its actions through periodic elections" and through "the input of opposition groups", including the voluntary organisations (civil society) (Moncrieffe, 1998 p. 388). Wu et al. (2018, p. 13) note that "an active civil society…play a key role in enhancing political accountability" as watchdog. As discussed in chapter six, in the low-income countries, NGOs are promoted by the donors to scrutinise such leadership failures. Since there is no place for NGOs (i.e. non-membership organisations) in the civic republican theorisation, I argue that, the idea that the NGOs can undertake accountability on behalf of the citizens is misleading. Thus, this section examines the role of NGOs as (non-membership) organisations, and their linkages with the citizens and the political leaders through the notion of *social accountability*. Figure 16 illustrates the incongruity between political accountability and social accountability. A conceptual analysis reveals that social accountability re-orients the citizen/state relations, with the NGOs assuming a new role as intermediary between the citizens and the political representatives.

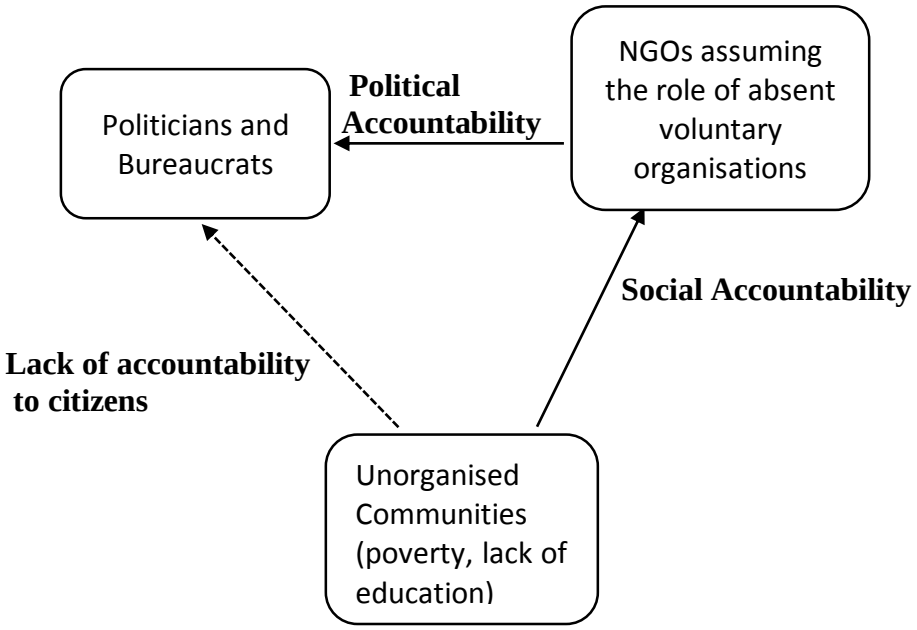

Figure 16: The incongruity of political accountability and social accountability

I asked the NGO participants the difference that social accountability work made in the communities. An NGO participant that stated that:

> "the social accountability programmes aim at providing information to the citizens through community dialogues that bring the local government leaders with the communities. These meetings allow the people to ask their leaders questions. The dialogues are really a time for the leaders to respond with facts. The community dialogues rely on evidence, which is verified by the communities".[99]

Therefore, the proponents of the rights-based approach identify the lack of information as the constraint to local accountability. In summary, social accountability envisages that NGOs can mobilise citizens, as members of the local government constituency, and "teach the communities to know their rights so that they can put pressure on the local government to do their work."[100] The NGOs' arguments on social accountability are clearly resonate with the view that through the capacity-building approach, the NGOs involve citizens in either

[99] Interview with NGO participant, Masaka district, 9th September 2019.
[100] Interview with NGO participant, Rubirizi district, 10th June 2019.

seeking information from government in such areas as budgets, expenditures or in investigating new information about access to and quality of services (public expenditure tracking) (Houtzager and Joshi, 2008). The NGOs aim at providing information to the citizens about their rights and the legal entitlements to citizens. Building awareness of these issues is often a first step to enabling citizens to engage in local government accountability (Gaventa and Barrett, 2010). Consequently, they envisage that the social accountability initiatives can improve the efficiency of service delivery (Houtzager and Joshi, 2008). Holla, et al. (2011, cited by Bainomugisha et al. 2020 pp. 60-61) summarises that:

> "Citizens and users of services can affect social services by influencing the decisions of policy makers through voice and by influencing the behaviour of service providers through client power. To exert this influence, they need access to information about services and the capacity and opportunities to use the information and transform it into action. Increasing transparency and providing access to information require efforts to improve the availability of information, as well as investments in the quality, relevance, and timeliness of information. Expanding opportunities for using information also involves building the capacity of users to understand and leverage information for action and opening channels to use it".

This shows that the significance of education to foster information analysis and research, which is crucial in accountability. This role is performed by the poor on behalf of the citizens. Chapter four discusses the gap in education and learning by the poor, which hampers the critique of government.

In addition to the role of information dissemination undertaken by the NGOs in social accountability, the NGO participants show that social accountability is expected "to force the political leaders to undertake their responsibilities. Since we started the assessments, we have observed remarkable improvement in the performance of local government leaders, in the execution of their mandates. The scores for a number of councillors have improved with these ratings".[101] It is clear that social accountability is not a substitute for political accountability. Without the NGOs putting pressure on the local government, the communities are

[101] Interview with NGO participant, Bushenyi district, 20th July 2019.

constrained to lead the process. Therefore, the NGOs' role needs to be analysed from the understanding that they are scattered and a temporary structure.

In chapter two, I discussed that the concept of social accountability is fabricated as a response to the lack of accountability by the local governments. I argued that the notion of social accountability, evades questioning why political accountability fails in the low-income countries. In other words, the empowerment approach fails to resolve why the state in the low-income countries is unaccountable. This is because the empowerment approach fails to question why the poor are unorganised. The thesis links the lack of accountability by the state to the absence of voluntary organisations due to poverty as a structural constraint, as discussed earlier.

Further, the NGO participants emphasised the role of the social accountability programmes to involve:

> "educating the citizens on their rights and the need to get involved in monitoring the local governments. The citizens need to understand the roles and responsibilities of their elected leaders, and their own rights and responsibilities as citizens. Then they can do something to create changes in local government. They have to demand better service delivery. It is all about building the capacity of the local government leaders to do the job they have been mandated to do, and building the capacity of citizens to hold them accountable".[102]

However, the rights-based approach is not an education approach.

The above overview on the role of social accountability from the NGO perspective raises important questions that are discussed in the next sections. Section 7.4 examines the question: How does the capacity-building approach address the lack of political accountability, which is typically a problem of the lack of democratic values by the political leaders? NGOs are cognisant of the complicity in local governments by the political leaders and the public officials. Is this a capacity problem? Section 7.5 discusses the question: how do the NGOs envisage community-led organisation for accountability? Section 7.6 questions:

[102] Interview with NGO participant, Bushenyi district, 1st August 2019.

How effective is citizen learning through the NGO projects and social accountability programmes?

The next section discusses the structural capacity constraints to accountability.

7.3 Structural Capacity Constraints and Accountability

Technically, political accountability is conceptualised as a capacity problem in leadership, in the sense that, policy failures are capacity issues in leadership. Policy capacity is therefore central to the leadership of the elected leaders and appointed officials, defined as the "set of skills and resources — or competences and capabilities — necessary to perform policy functions" (Wu et al. (2015, p. 166). In other words, the policy failures result from the capacity gaps in skills, resources, capabilities, and competences. Policy capacity in the public sector context is "premised on responsibility and accountability being shared by elected and career officials" (Anne, 2015 p. 209). Anne (2015) emphasises that political capacity is essential for policy-makers and officials, both elected and appointed. The capacity to effectively implement policy plans and programmes is crucial to the success of nations. Indeed, having a capable public sector that is able to optimally align resources with actions and actually implement designed policies, is widely considered to be a crucial factor in any state's quality of government (Anne, 2015; Davis, 2000). However, the structural resource gaps are not considered capacity problems in political accountability. This is because decentralisation presupposes economic independence, as discussed in chapter six. It is possible that since decentralisation presupposes economic independence and economic prosperity, the design of the decentralisation reforms ignored the question of the structural resource capacity gaps. This questions the relevance of decentralisation without revenue. Moreover, decentralisation by depending on the central government fosters patronage.

Although capacity-building is one of the most prevalent concepts in the literature about public policy and development (Anne, 2015), it does not consider the structural resource capacity gaps. Yet, the study findings show that local governments are resource-

stricken. For the low-income countries, inadequate capacity has an adverse impact on the outputs and outcomes of government activities in the provision of vital public services such as education or health. Capacity-building in local government in the developing countries depicts the experiences of the "40 years of public sector reformers that have lamented the lack of 'leadership skills'" and to bring "successive waves of change aimed at making the public service more efficient, agile and responsive" (Anne, 2015 p. 209).

However, the study findings show that the public officials in local governments fail to be accountable to the citizens, not just because they lack policy capacity. Rather, the lack of accountability by the public officials, is a problem that depicts structural capacity gaps. The NGOs, through the capacity-building approach, are not able to address the structural challenges, because these are addressed through structural transformation. Therefore, I argue that the NGO efforts to address the lack of political accountability in local government merely as a problem of capacity gaps in skills, and competences of the local government, rather than as a structural challenge, is problematic. This is the crux of the discussion in this section.

The field research identified that the NGOs address the unresponsiveness of the political leaders, as a capacity problem, as illustrated an NGO's performance rating template for the elected representatives in Table 14.

Performance Rating of Local Governments by the NGOs		
1. LEGISLATIVE ROLE	(25)	Comments
i) Participation in plenary: a) Attend at least four times b) Debate at least four times c) Debate issues related to service delivery		
ii) Participation in committees a) Attend at least four times b) Debate at least four times c) Debate issues related to service delivery		
iii) Moved a motion for approval as resolution of council:		

Performance Rating of Local Governments by the NGOs		
a) Moved at least one motion b) Moved at least in relation to NPPA		
iv) Provided special skills / knowledge to the council or a) Wrote and presented a paper to guide council b) Wrote and presented a paper to guide c) Evidence of having provided explanation / guidance on the special issues during the council proceedings after request by the speaker		
2. CONTACT WITH ELECTORATES		
i) Meeting with electorates a) Evidence of programme of meetings b) At least four community meetings held c) Giving of official communication on service delivery at least four d) Organising of the community to demand accountability		
ii) Office or coordinating centre in the constituency a) Existence of an office / centre b) Evidence of the electorates visiting the office c) Evidence of documents and records		

Table 14: Performance Rating of Local Governments by the NGOs[103]

The NGO participant opined that: "we conduct performance ratings of the elected representatives, based on the roles and responsibilities set out in the Local Government Act for the local government councilors".[104] The four parameters of the performance ratings, conducted by the NGOs, include: (a) execution of their legislative function; (b) accountability to the electorate; (c) planning and budgeting for service delivery and other programmes in the district; and (d) monitoring the delivery of public services in their electoral areas. Table 14 summarises the performance ratings for the legislative role, and accountability to the electorate, in terms of meetings. The performance ratings are then integrated into a citizens' report card, which is also a capacity-building tool for assessing the performance of district-

[103] Interview with NGO participant, Ntungamo district, 2nd July 2019.
[104] Interview with NGO participant, Masaka district, 9th September 2019.

level elected officials[105]. Figure 17 illustrates a scorecard of the district local government leaders, while Figure 18 shows the overall performance of the district councils.

[105] Interview with NGO participant, Ntungamo district, 28th May 2019.

Identifiers				Performance			Legislation					Contact Electorate			LLG	Monitoring NPPAs							
Political	Constituency	Gender	Terms Served	2016/17	2018/2019	% Change	Plenary	Committee	Motion	Special Skills	Sub Total	Meeting Electorate	Office	Sub Total	Sub county Meetings	Health	Education	Agriculture	Water	Roads	FAL	ENR	Sub Total
				100	100		8	8	5	4	25	11	9	20	10	7	7	7	7	7	5	5	45
FDC	Western Div/Rukungiri Muncipal	M	2	80	**92**	15	8	8	5	0	**21**	11	9	**20**	**6**	7	7	7	7	7	5	5	**45**
NRM	Ruhinda/Buhunga S/C	F	3	86	**90**	5	8	8	5	0	**21**	11	9	**20**	**6**	7	5	7	7	7	5	5	**43**
NRM	Kebisoni/Buyanja S/C	F	2	72	**87**	21	3	8	2	0	**13**	11	9	**20**	**10**	6	7	7	7	7	5	5	**44**
IND	Buhunga S/C	M	1	75	**84**	12	8	8	5	0	**21**	11	9	**20**	**10**	7	7	3	3	3	5	5	**33**
NRM	PWD	F	4	60	**79**	32	1	8	5	0	**14**	11	9	**20**	**0**	7	7	7	7	7	5	5	**45**
NRM	Bugangari S/C	M	1	51	**77**	51	1	3	2	0	**6**	11	9	**20**	**6**	7	7	7	7	7	5	5	**45**
NRM	Nyakishenyi S/C	M	1	72	**76**	6	8	0	0	0	**8**	11	9	**20**	**10**	7	7	7	0	7	5	5	**38**
FDC	Ruhinda S/C	M	1	64	**76**	19	3	8	5	0	**16**	4	9	**13**	**10**	7	7	7	3	3	5	5	**37**
NRM	Bwambara S/C	M	1	27	**75**	178	8	8	2	0	**18**	11	9	**20**	**10**	5	5	5	5	5	1	1	**27**
NRM	Kebisoni TC	F	1		**72**		8	3	0	0	**11**	8	9	**17**	**2**	7	7	7	7	7	2	5	**42**
FDC	Youth	F	2	53	**70**	32	8	8	2	0	**18**	7	9	**16**	**0**	7	6	7	7	2	2	5	**36**
FDC	Nyakagyeme/Rwerere T/C	F	2	74	**67**	-9	1	8	0	0	**9**	6	9	**15**	**6**	7	7	3	6	7	5	2	**37**
FDC	Buyanja TC	M	1		**65**		3	8	0	0	**11**	11	9	**20**	**2**	3	3	7	7	7	0	5	**32**
NRM	Older Persons	M	1	14	**65**	364	1	8	2	0	**11**	0	9	**9**	**0**	7	7	7	7	7	5	5	**45**
NRM	Nyakagyeme S/C	M		71	**62**	-13	1	8	5	0	**14**	1	9	**10**	**0**	7	7	7	3	7	2	5	**38**
FDC	Eastern Div	M	1		**60**		8	8	2	0	**18**	8	9	**17**	**0**	1	7	7	7	1	0	2	**25**
NRM	Nyakishenyi	F	2	43	**60**	40	8	8	5	2	**23**	7	9	**16**	**0**	2	7	0	0	7	5	0	**21**
NRM	Nyarushanje S/C	F	1	52	**58**	12	8	8	5	0	**21**	1	9	**10**	**6**	3	7	3	3	0	0	5	**21**
FDC	Buyanja S/C	M	1	49	**57**	16	1	8	2	0	**11**	4	9	**13**	**2**	1	7	7	4	7	0	5	**31**
FDC	Buyanja TC	F	1		**55**		1	8	0	0	**9**	11	9	**20**	**2**	3	3	7	7	3	0	1	**24**
NRM	Bikurungu TC	M	1		**54**		1	8	5	0	**14**	6	6	**12**	**0**	7	7	3	3	3	0	5	**28**
FDC	Southern & Eastern Div	F	1	55	**52**	-5	1	8	2	0	**11**	6	5	**11**	**2**	3	7	0	6	7	0	5	**28**
FDC	Rwerere TC	M	1		**51**		1	8	0	0	**9**	4	9	**13**	**2**	3	7	3	7	7	0	0	**27**
FDC	Western Div	F	2	57	**51**	-11	1	8	0	0	**9**	4	9	**13**	**6**	3	3	3	3	7	2	2	**23**

Figure 17: Local government scorecard (Source: Bainomugisha et al. 2020 p. 179)

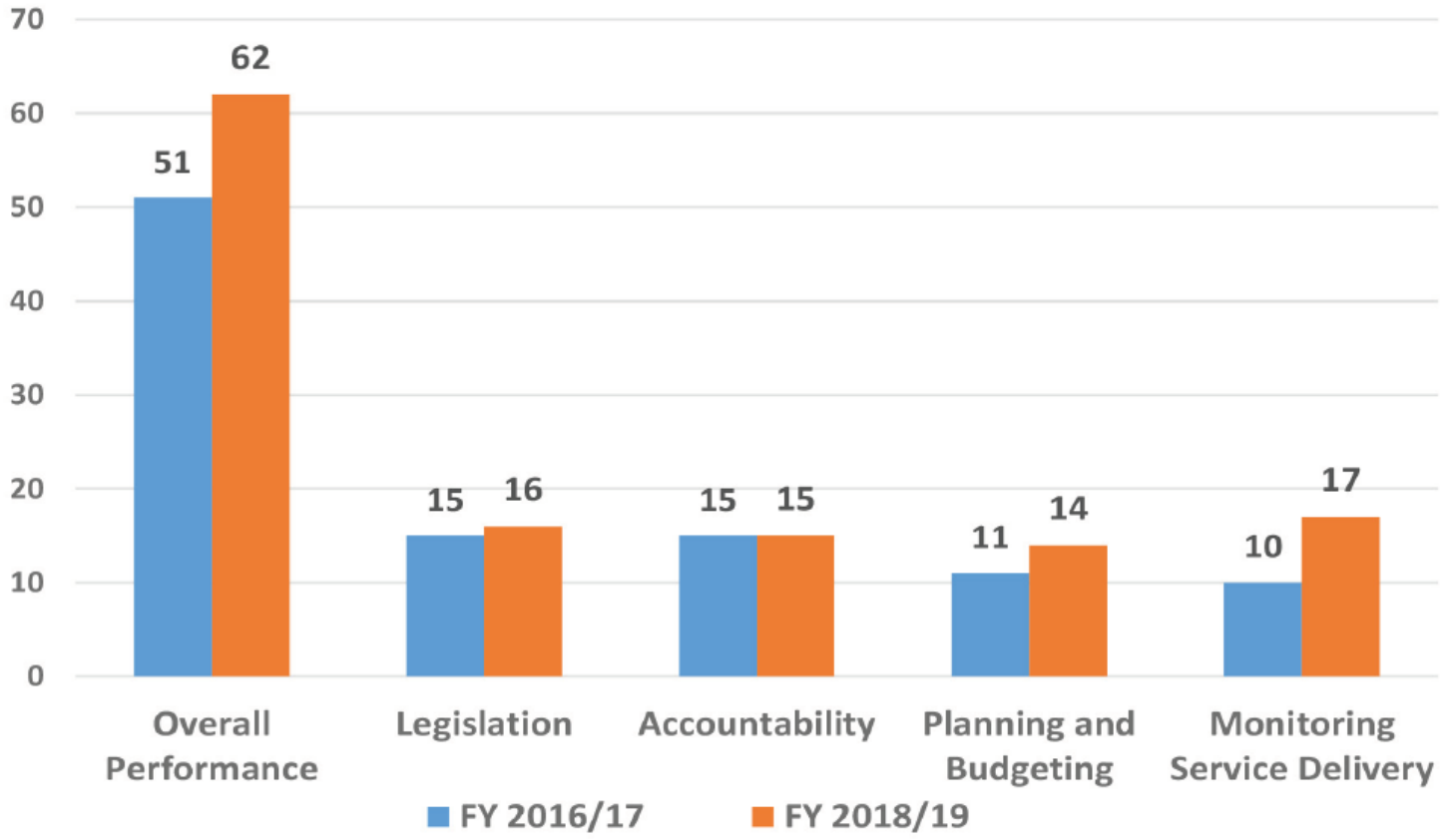

Figure 18: Overall performance of district councils
(Source: Bainomugisha et al. 2020 p. 35)

The figures show the poor performance of the district councils, and the indicated improvement is negligible. Figure 18 indicates improvement in the average performance of the district councils from 51 per cent in 2015/16 to 62 per cent in 2018/19. Some improvement is equally observed in the local government functions, from 15 per cent to 16 per cent (legislative), 11 per cent to 14 per cent (accountability to citizens), and 10 per cent to 17 per cent (monitoring service delivery). Both the accountability and the service delivery functions are poor, which leads to questioning the extent that poor social service delivery is a problem of accountability.

The evidence in chapter five, on the revenue constraints (a structural problem) faced by the local governments is equally supported by secondary sources on Uganda. An NGO study on local governments in Uganda affirms that, "if revenue collections are low, then, Councils will have very limited resources available to finance activities of Council. With such resource constraints, Councils were found unable to conduct all meetings of standing committees, capacity-building of Councils and political monitoring" (Bainomugisha et al. 2020 p. 71). This evidence aligns with the feedback from the political leaders (in chapter five), on the factors affecting accountability. The political leaders complained that they are overstretched by the lack of resources to undertake monitoring, and consequently used personal funds for this purpose.

It is not surprising that the NGOs rate the councillors' contact with the electorate (conducting meetings), and the legislative duties as capacity issues (Figure 17 on the scorecard). The latter include: participation in plenary sessions, participation in committees, moving motions for approval as resolutions, and providing special skills and knowledge to the council or committee. Indeed, in many ways, the empirical evidence (Figures 19 and 20) confirm that the lack of resources is a significant factor for the poor performance service delivery, and indeed monitoring. However, the question is why does the state maintain an extensive structure of local governments, if the local governments are poor? Clearly, popular politics implies that the state prioritises the political structure (as discussed in chapter five).

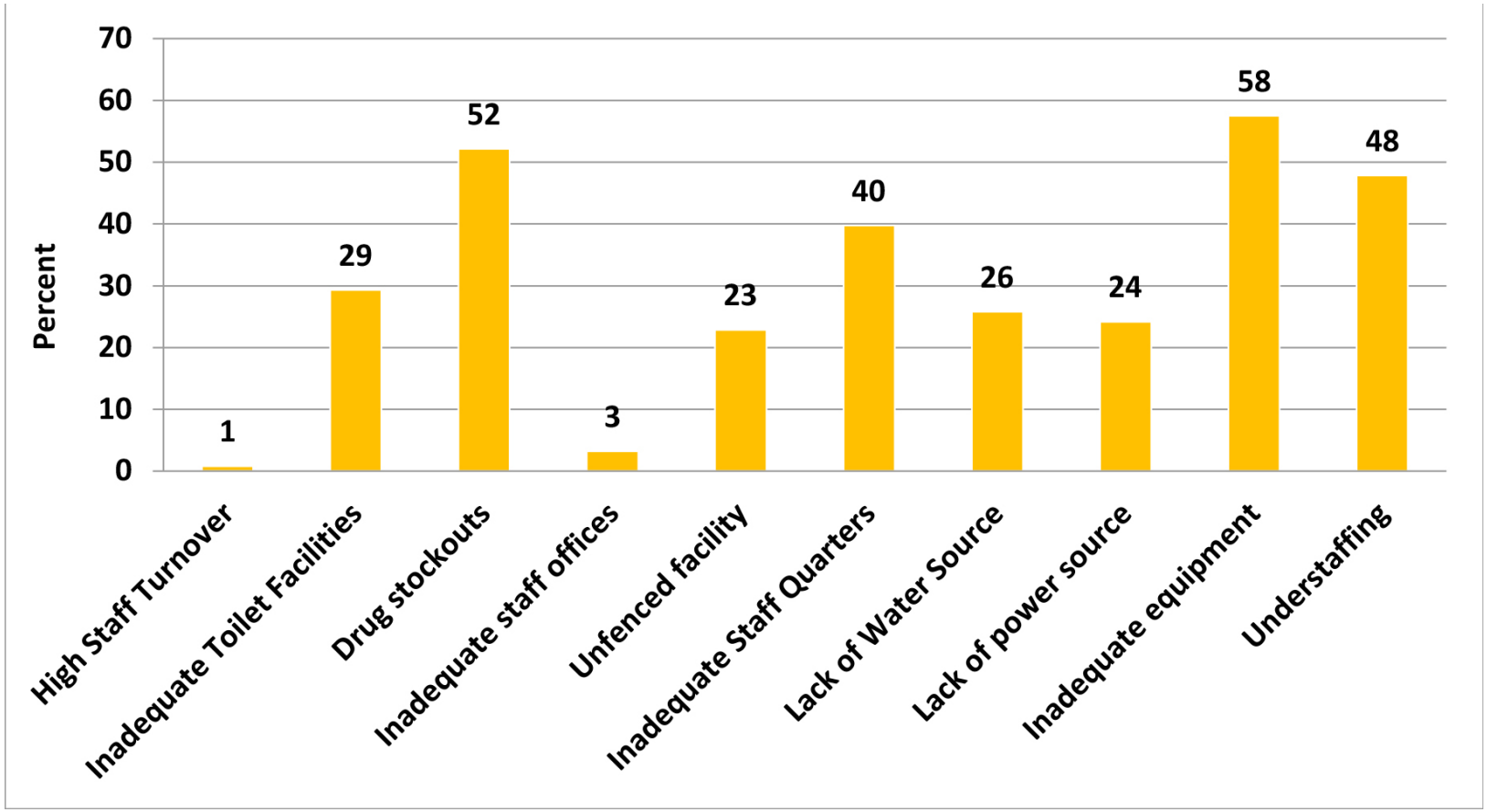

Figure 19: Capacity Challenges at the Health Centres

(Source: Bainomugisha et al. 2020 p. 65).

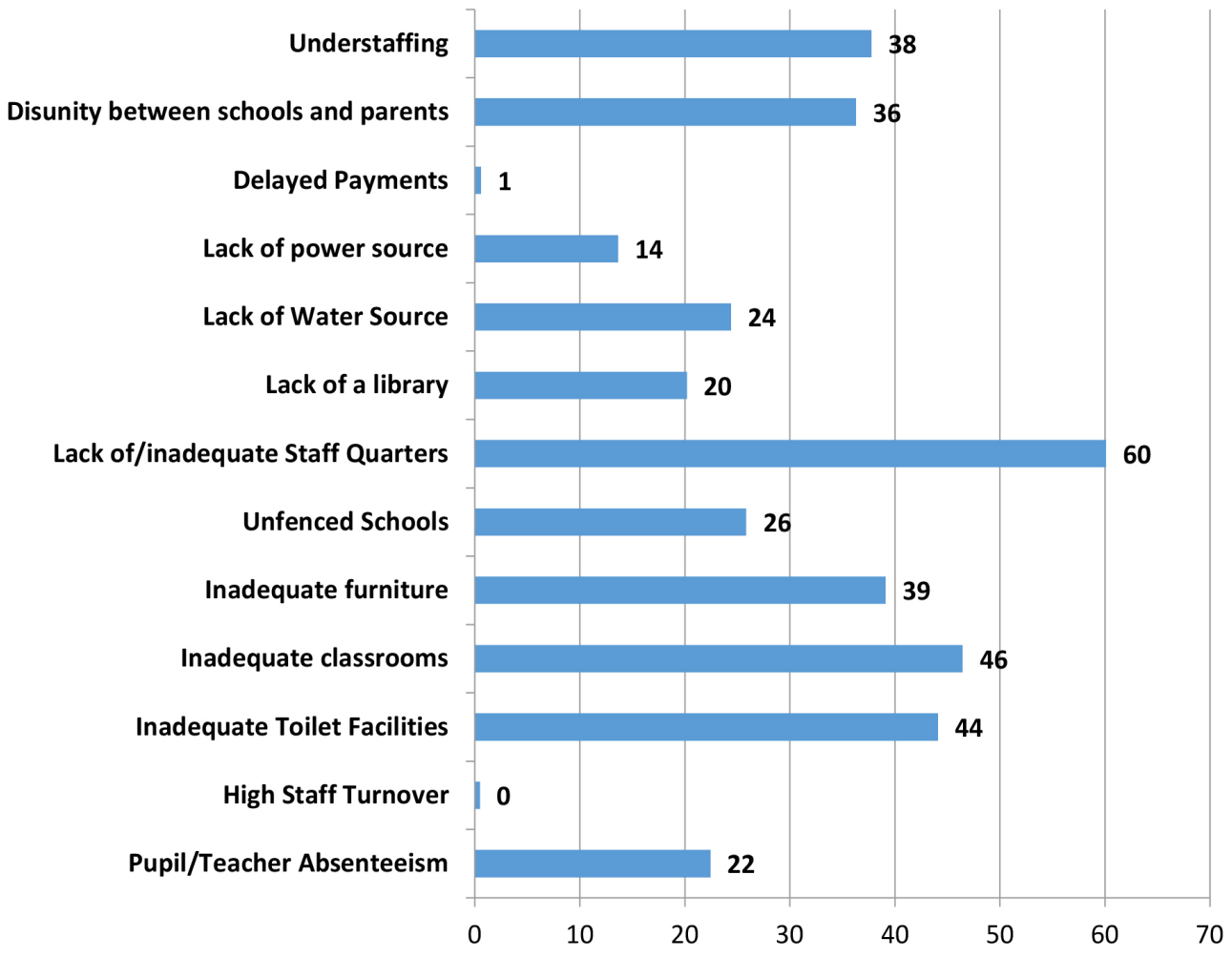
Understaffing
38
Disunity between schools and parents
36
Delayed Payments
1
Lack of power source
14
Lack of Water Source
24
Lack of a library
20
Lack of/inadequate Staff Quarters
60
Unfenced Schools
26
Inadequate furniture
39
Inadequate classrooms
46
Inadequate Toilet Facilities
44
High Staff Turnover
0
Pupil/Teacher Absenteeism
22
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70

Figure 20: Capacity Challenges at the primary schools
(Source: Bainomugisha et al. 2020 p. 66).

The capacity problems at the Health Centres in Figure 19 shows that that 58 per cent, 52 per cent; 48 per cent and 40 per cent of health workers at the various health centres experience inadequate health equipment; drug stock-outs; are understaffed and without adequate accommodation for staff respectively. Similarly, Figure 20 shows that at the primary schools, the common capacity problems include: inadequate staff quarters (60 per cent); inadequate classrooms (46 per cent); inadequate toilet facilities (44 per cent), and understaffing (38 per cent).

Clearly, these constraints depict resource gaps, which impact on the level of service delivery. This also contributes to the problem of poor service delivery. Moreover, these capacity gaps are structural, so that they cannot be addressed by the few NGOs through their capacity-building approach. I therefore corroborated the evidence from the secondary sources with the responses from the NGO participants. The comparison was important to understand how the NGOs defined and categorised the areas for capacity-building for the local government leaders.

I discussed with the NGO participants on the type of capacity gaps that the NGOs prioritise, and the anticipated impacts of the capacity-building approach. Despite the obvious problem of revenue, and costs of local government administration incurred due to the expansive local government structures, the NGOs capacity-building strategy focuses on the lack of skills by the leaders. For instance, the NGO participant opined that:

> "we focus on continuous training in order to equip political leaders to effectively fulfill their mandates. For instance, the introduction of Universal Primary Education resulted into increased school enrolment of children but the completion rates for pupils under the UPE programme, had not been impressive especially for the girls. The health sector has also continued to experience drug stock-outs, absenteeism of health workers and so on. Although the government increased funding for the roads sector, the quality of roads remained very poor across the country. The communities were not coming together to question their elected leaders."[106]

[106] Interview with NGO participant, Bushenyi district, 20th July 2019.

Yet, it is evident from the secondary sources that education levels of the councillors, impacts on accountability because it provides the necessary leadership skills as illustrated in Figure 21.

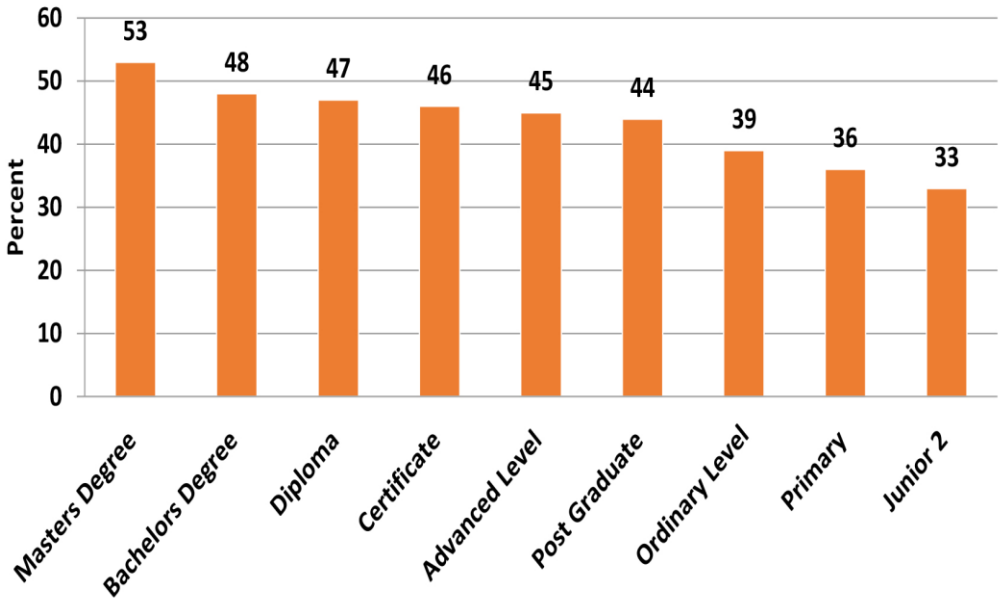

Figure 21: Level of Education and Average Scores of Councillors
(Source: Bainomugisha et al. (2020, p. 59).

Figure 21 shows that the Councillors' average performance varies with their education levels. Councillors with higher performance averages tend to possess higher education levels, i.e. the Councillors with the Masters degrees obtained the highest average scores of 53 per cent compared to those with lower qualifications. The Councillors with Bachelor's degrees came in the second position with an average performance rate of 48 per cent followed by the diploma holders in the third position with 47 per cent and the trend goes down as the level of education diminishes. Consequently, the study suggests that "for Council to perform better, the level of education of Councillors matters. This suggests that it's important to have minimum education qualification for Councillors so that Councils are able to attract better performing leaders" (Bainomugisha et al. 2020 p. 60).

Although the NGOs prioritise the capacity gaps in skills, over the resource gaps in local governments, it was clear that the NGO mandate is limited to trainings, rather than the structural problems. An NGO participant opined that: "we do not fund infrastructure such as buildings for schools or health centres. That is outside of our budget framework"[107]. The restrictions on NGO funding implies that NGO work in social accountability is limited to the meagre local government budgets on social service delivery. For instance, the NGOs have not put pressure on the government for the proliferation of local governments, even if it is clear that the political structure has limited impact on the improvement in social services in the communities. The mounting administrative costs for the proliferation of local governments administration of local governments, could be instrumental for funding the much needed change in the communities.

In addition, the notion of social accountability questions the effectiveness of the NGO role as mediators between citizens and the political leaders. The accounts of rundown health centres, inadequate classrooms, inadequacies in staffing and drugs in health centres, corruption, and elite capture are some of the common challenges in decentralisation (Bashaasha et al. 2011) rooted in the lack of political accountability. As a watchdog in the democratisation process, the NGOs are expected to challenge the state on behalf of the citizens. However, the citizens remained disengaged, with limited voice in the running of local governments.

Even so, secondary sources show that local governments are understaffed. "Local governments are handicapped by shortages of staff, largely attributed to limitations in the wage bill and inability to attract and retain highly qualified personnel. Current staffing levels across Local Governments stand at 56 per cent and 57 per cent for Districts and Municipal Councils respectively; and 49 per cent for key strategic positions. In addition, 80 per cent of the filled positions are administrative and support staff, leaving a vast majority of core

[107] Interview with NGO participant, Bushenyi district, 20th July 2019.

technical positions vacant" (Republic of Uganda, 2019 p. 12). In summary, social accountability fails to discuss the structural gaps in local government capacity.

These evidences confirm that policy capacity of the elected leaders and appointed officials, i.e. the "set of skills and resources — or competences and capabilities—necessary to perform policy functions" (Wu et al. (2015, p. 166) derive from structural changes in education. They are not imparted through seminars for the uneducated citizens. Wu et al. (2015) suggest three such critical policy capacity skills which influence policy and governance outcomes, i.e. political, managerial and analytical capacity at systemic and individual levels as indicated in Table 15.

Policy capacity levels	**Political capacity**	**Analytical capacity**	**Operational capacity**
Individual	• Knowledge about policy process and stakeholders positions • Skills in communication, negotiation and consensus building	• Knowledge and skills in policy analysis and evaluation	• Expertise in planning, staffing, budgeting, delegating, directing, and coordinating
Systemic	•Political accountability for policies • Trust in government • Participation of non-state actors in the policy process • Presence of policy entrepreneurs	• Systems for collecting and disseminating information • Access to competitive policy advisory systems • Political support for rigorous policy analysis and evaluation	• Inter-governmental and inter-agency coordination • Coherence of policy communities and networks • Clarity in agencies' roles and responsibilities

Table 15: Policy capacity skills and resources
Source: Wu et al. (2018).

Both the elected leaders and the appointed officials require these skills as minimum qualifications. In contrast, Uganda does not stipulate any minimum education qualifications for the position of councillor at all levels (Republic of Uganda, 1997). Drawing from Anne (2015), as discussed at the beginning of this section, it is not surprising that the lack of leadership in local governments in Uganda is deep-seated. The NGO's capacity-building approach cannot foster the political and analytical skills of the local government leaders because it does not challenge the structural causes for the lack of education and citizenship learning.

Moreover, the capacity-building approach ignores democratic values, as discussed in the next section.

7.4 Political Accountability as a Democratic Values Issue

The data analysis identified that the capacity-building approach and the rights-based approach, fail to suggest a mechanism for addressing the lack of political accountability as a lack of democratic values by the political leaders. I show that the lack of accountability by the public officials, is a problem that depicts a lack of democratic values and a failure of governance. The discussion posits that the NGOs, through the capacity-building approach, are not able to address the problem of democratic values because these are attained through socialisation into a democratic culture. Therefore, I argue that the NGO efforts to address the lack of political accountability in local government merely as a capacity problem, rather than a democratic values issue is problematic.

The study findings in chapter five revealed the weak interactions between the councillors and the communities, and that elections have not been a successful mechanisms for fostering accountability because of elite capture. Therefore, typically, the political representatives in the local governments, make decisions on behalf of the citizens, with little or no input from the citizens between elections. The chapter showed that, between elections the decisions are undertaken with minimal contact with voters, and the mechanisms for

holding elected representatives accountable for the use of resources or for the performance of service delivery are generally weak or non-existent. Therefore, the choices presented to the citizens at election, bear little relationship to the detailed policy and budgetary decisions.

Therefore, apart from the structural constraints to accountability and resource-constrained local governments, representative local government exposes the weaknesses of decentralisation as a strategy for democratisation in the low-income countries. The transfer of political power from the central government level to elected representatives at the subnational level is a façade. It became clear that the local government was not responsive (DFID, 2010). Decentralisation derives from the democratic theory of representation, and stipulates that the representative is the individual that is held to account (Pitkin, 1967) and "should be responsive to what people want" (Arnesen and Peters 2017, p. 873). In other words, it is the right of the "constituents to punish their representative for failing to act in accordance with their wishes (e.g. voting an elected official out of office)" (Dovi, 2018).

The secondary sources on Uganda attest to the communities' perspectives in chapter five that once the elected representatives assume office, they often remain effectively detached from the electorate, as they pursue their personal interests rather than the electorates' (Kakumba, 2010; Kjær and Therklidsen, 2012). While the Ugandan Constitution grants powers to the electorate to recall their councillors who fail to effectively represent their constituents, none has been recalled so far owing to the cumbersome process. These factors have encouraged complacency among the local leaders (Kakumba, 2010).

The field research examined the experiences of representative local government, pertaining to the fact that representatives "should be responsive to what people want" (Arnesen and Peters 2017, p. 873). The feedback form the communities and the NGOs particularly provide significant insights into the problem of lack of democratic values by the leaders. A key theme from the study findings is complicity between the political representatives and the local government staff concerning the misuse of funds and corruption.

This is a critical factor for the failure of political accountability, as elaborated below. I argue that complicity depicts the lack of democratic values.

Apart from the weak accountability relationships between the elected representatives and the communities, interviews with the NGOs identified the problem of collusion between the elected leaders and the appointed officials in local government. The activist-oriented NGOs were particularly informative on their watchdog experiences and activism against complicity in the local government. For instance, an NGO narrated the protest against the complicity between the technical officers and the political leaders noting:

> "We have discussed with the district about the poor supervision of the social services. We had several conversations, but we reach a point where we say 'we cannot continue with the conversation'. The entire planning process and how citizens should be involved is dead. It is a dead process. It ceased to make meaning to the local people. Now, when things get to that point, the citizens have to do things differently as well. We organise people to take action against this madness, because the fact that you do not plan means that you do not know what will come your way. The roads are very poor, community services are not working, many things are not working. Politics has taken centre stage. So we said we will sort the politics. So, we do organising. We decided to create a movement, to build a movement.[108]

The above NGO perspective critiques the complacency and failure of the local government in their obligation to give a satisfactory explanation to the public of their exercise of power, authority and the resources entrusted to them. The NGO's critique points at the accountability relationships in the local governments in Uganda, which favour upward control systems, as opposed to downward accountability to the citizenry. The NGO is cognisant that although local governments lack resources to organise community planning meetings, the complacency depicts a lack of responsibility. The NGOs emphasise that "most of the problems are not related to lack of a budget, such as supervisory issues of local government staff at health centres and in education, and utilisation of the existing budget"[109].

[108] Interview with NGO participant, Bushenyi district, 1st August 2019.
[109] Interview with NGO participant, Bushenyi district, 1st August 2019.

The field research identified several examples of complacency emanating from the complicity between the elected representatives and the local government staff. For instance, an NGO participant narrated the experiences of activism against the local government for failing to recruit a District Service Commission that is worth quoting at length. The NGO participant opined that:

> "We had spent a whole year without a District Service Commission. We talked to the community to do something, highlighting the consequences of not having a Commission. The community said that even if we engage the government in a conversation about the issue, they would not listen. They are stubborn. The people said, we can do something. So the community said 'we should take them to court'. So we took them to the high court. After filing the case, there was no hearing, and the judge would disappear. We knew they would bribe the judge. Then months later, we went back to the community to discuss further action. We agreed on full-scale activism, that the people would take charge. So we organised a demonstration to the district offices. The demonstration worked. It was massive and we had visibility on media. It was intimidating to the authorities."[110]

The case portrays the complexity of corruption cases in the local government. In this example, the parties involved included the political representatives in local government, the local government staff at all levels of the tier-structure of local government, and the judge at district, who had planned protect the public officials that were involved. The NGO participant petitioned the President's appointee at district level to be heard. The NGO participant added that:

> "We gave our petition to the Resident District Commissioner who in turn gave it to the Chief Administrative Officer, and it reached the President, who instructed the Chief Justice to follow it up. Then the Chief Justice called me and inquired about the action I required. He asked, "Do you want me to rule in your favour? They wanted mediation with me and others, but I said, 'mediate with the community'. The judge invited me that day and the entire Council. We did not agree with the mediation because we thought it as already biased. The Council passed a resolution to instate Commission. They went on radio and said they would recruit new members of the Commission. And we too went on radio and said 'do not bring your own people here, because we already have a Commission in place'. Meanwhile the LC5, had brought

[110] Interview with NGO participant, Bushenyi district, 20th July 2019.

> his supporters and Members of Parliament around and they wanted to bulldoze us because they said 'they are community members, we can intimidate them'"[111].

In this case study, the District Service Commission is a mandatory body that is responsible for the technical recruitments for the local government. Without the Commission, the implementation of the social services is derailed. In this example, the local government was complacent to instate a Commission for a year, because of the power struggles in the district, so that the President of Uganda had to intervene in response to the NGO activism. Moreover, the LC5 councillor, who would be expected to advocate for the electorate, was in opposition to the NGO efforts. Clearly, the LC5 councillor, preferred to protect the interests of the network of the local government staff. The case study also highlights the popular politics, whereby the councillor instead mobilised some of the electorate to oppose the failures of the local government. In addition, the involvement of the Members of Parliament, the bribery of the police, and the judge depicts deep-seated failures of government. These failures cannot be addressed through the capacity-building approach and social accountability. The case also affirms the findings in chapter five, that the local government political structure entrenched the powerlessness of the citizens. An activist approach seems to be justified. The NGO participant opined that:

> "After we refused the process of mediation, we wrote to the judge and formally requested to continue with the court process. The judge said he was too busy. When they did not respond in four days, then we closed the district. The intention of closing the district was to attract the attention of the State Attorney, who is housed in the district building. He is the only one who could speak to the judge to listen to our matter. The judge had no option but to organise a court hearing. The other side was not happy with this process, the Members of Parliament and their supporters. They had lodged a case. The chairman of the Public Accounts Committee had done this, paid for by the LC5 councillor. That day, when their case was heard, some journalists started a scuffle and reported that I assaulted a journalist. The journalist framed an accusation against me, got hospitalised. Then, they said he was dead and that I should be arrested. It was a ploy. There were political interests, and did not want to lose. I faced a lot of threats"[112].

[111] Interview with NGO participant, Bushenyi district, 20th July 2019.
[112] Interview with NGO participant, Bushenyi district, 20th July 2019.

The NGO participants noted experiences of corruption in the implementation of local government projects. An NGO participant opined that:

> "The allocation of contracts in the local government has not been transparent. The contracts are awarded to a network of business people, with the endorsement of the councillors. It's a connivance between the political wing and the technical staff. They connive to pursue their personal interests to the detriment of the larger public interest."[113]

The findings of the study show that the activist NGOs are playing a critical role in scrutinising and questioning the local government in service delivery. Since the political organs, (at sub-county and district levels) control the budget, which is implemented by the administrative organs, the above contract process for the social services is a typical example of connivance. The technical planning committees are responsible for accounting, coordination, monitoring, and implementation of sectoral plans, with approval of the local government councillors. I discussed with the LC3 councillors on their role in the approval of budgets, and providing oversight on local government expenditures. An LC3 councillor affirmed that:

> "There is no budget that is passed without the endorsement of the councillors. After the district technical planning committees have received and integrated plans of lower local governments, they bring them to the council for discussion and approval. The council approves all the local government activities. There can be no expenditure for the implementation of the project activities, without the approval of the councillors".[114]

It is important to note that the political leaders did not raise concerns about corruption and misappropriation of funds in the local governments. This paints a perspective of transparency in the local governments. Rather the councillors were quick to note the lack of resources as a key capacity gap in their role. The responses from the political leaders oppose the evidence that, in many developing countries, there is widespread dissatisfaction about the

[113] Interview with NGO participant, Ntungamo district, 28th May 2019.
[114] Interview with LC3 Chairperson, Bushenyi district, 11th July 2019.

lack of responsiveness of public institutions to citizens, and their lack of voice in service delivery (Narayan et al. 2000).

Despite the experiences of complicity in the local governments, the NGOs that employ the capacity-building approach ignore these problems. The NGO capacity-building activities follow the performance assessments of the local governments, and are integral to the local governments' capacity-building plan for the officials and the political leaders. With donor funding, Uganda's Ministry of Local Government developed the National Local Government Capacity-Building Policy in 2005 to target both the elected and appointed officials of the local governments. The policy defines "'capacity' as the ability of individuals, institutions and societies to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve objectives in a sustainable manner" (Republic of Uganda, 2013 p. 2). In line with the National Local Government Capacity-Building Policy, local governments conduct *capacity needs assessments* in order to identify gaps in the performance of the local government staff and councillors. Although local governments select training providers through the pre-qualification procurement processes, NGOs typically contribute to the local governments' capacity-building plan, by funding similar capacity gaps through training from their own resources (as discussed in the preceding section).

Therefore, the NGOs dwell on the technical capacity gaps of the local governments, and conceptualise unresponsiveness as a capacity problem (Table 14). Like the NGOs, the capacity framework indices by the donors identify the lack of political accountability as a capacity problem. For instance, the World Bank's "Worldwide Governance Indicators" (World Bank, 2017) link the various dimensions of capacity for good governance comprising six sub-indicators: government effectiveness; *control of corruption*; political stability; regulatory quality; rule of law; and *voice and accountability*. Accordingly, the World Bank indices conceptualise voice and accountability and the corruption, as gaps in leadership or policy capacity problems, rather than democratic values.

Thus, Painter and Pierre (2005), argue that capacity-building requires designing and implementing systems that enhance government's implementation and delivery capabilities. However, the normative values underlying the reform efforts should be first identified, followed by support systems and indicators for evaluation as illustrated in Table 16. The preceding discussion illuminated the problem of complacency and negligence by the local government in Uganda, which highlights the value of responsibility as crucial aspect of how administrative capacity needs to be built. This is a value or competence that should not be addressed as a capacity problem, as discussed earlier. Table 15 provides a detailed overview of the necessary operational, and systematic capacity that completes the value of responsibility. The table shows that responsibility is one of the key values for effective public service. In the case of public expenditure management, responsible public officials ensure effective resource management.

Values/criteria	Support systems	Indicators
Efficiency Economy **Responsibility** Probity Equity	Civil service (merit) system Public expenditure management Audit and inspection	Effective resource management

Table 16: Building administrative capacity – from values to indicators
(Source: Painter and Pierre, 2005 p. 12).

Since the public officials did not articulate any corruption problems by the local governments in the interviews, the public reports corroborate the misuse of funds by local governments as a key constraint. For instance, Nabwiiso (2019b, p. 1) indicates that:

> "according to Global Financial Integrity (2017) report, Uganda annually loses approximately US $1 billion to corruption. A local report by the Black Monday Movement, a coalition of anti-corruption civil society organisations, estimates that

> between the years 2000 and 2015, the government of Uganda lost more than Shs. 24 trillion to corruption; enough to finance the country's 2015/2016 budget".

The majority of the corruption cases at district and Sub county levels relate to mismanaging of the resources government allocates to finance infrastructure projects such as markets, schools, health centres, among others (Nabwiiso, 2019a p.3).

Since the failures in the implementation of government projects by the public officials is conceptualised as a capacity problem, the Ugandan government established several anti-corruption bodies to strengthen the institutional capacity for political accountability. These include: the Inspector General of Government, State House Anti-Corruption Unit, Financial Intelligence Authority, the Auditor General, among others (Kiva, 2019). Similarly, donor funding by the Democratic Governance Facility initiated the "strengthening partnership for anti-corruption responsiveness and citizen engagement (SPARC)" project, coordinated by an NGO (the Anti-Corruption Coalition Uganda) to "support the improvement in the implementation of anti-corruption laws, policies and recommendations by government Ministries, Departments and Agencies" (Nabwiiso, 2019a p.1).

Nabwiiso (2019b) indicates the case of the state institutions corruption in the local government; the State House Anti-corruption Unit (in the President's Office) in conjunction with the Ministry of Local Government. The political leadership of the local government raised an alarm to the state institutions to investigate corruption allegations. The investigation involved funds from donors meant to finance HIV and AIDS-related activities in the local government, among others (Nabwiiso, 2019b). Consequently, the technical staff who swindled the funds were arrested, and the Ministry of Local Government took over the responsibilities of the local government, pending the review by the Criminal Investigations Department (Nabwiiso, 2019b).

However, it is evident that the majority of corruption cases have not been effectively handled by the state institutions, and often marked by collusion between the technical officers and the political leaders. Rather, Kiva (2019) notes that "patronage and lack of political will

were still evidently undermining the war on corruption" in Uganda. For example, Nabwiiso (2019a) notes the struggle by Anti-corruption civil society organisations in Uganda to pressure government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and other semi-autonomous government institutions to delete civil servants from the government pay roll once they are found guilty of corruption by courts of Law; the government institutions were still paying civil servants who were convicted by competent anti-corruption courts.

> "About 28 officials from various government institutions that were convicted by the anti-corruption courts for cases such as embezzlement, abuse of office, among others but still access government payment yet the law requires them to be out of public services for 10 years without holding any public office" (Nabwiiso, 2019b p. 1).

The consensus or partnership approach by the NGOs with the state does not put pressure on the state to be accountable. For instance, Nabwiiso (2019b, p. 5) notes "a dialogue, which was attended by various representatives of anti-corruption CSOs and officials from government such as Ministry of Public Service, Ministry of Health, among other stakeholders, in the fight against corruption". During the dialogue, the CSO representative 'requested' the government institutions to remove the convicted civil servants from payroll noting that:

> "As anti-corruption activists, we are calling on all relevant government Institutions such as the Ministry of Public Service, Public Service Commission and other agencies to delete convicted civil servants from the government payrolls; this will save taxpayers' money. Why do we still have civil servants convicted of corruption related cases appearing on the payroll and drawing a salary?" (Nabwiiso, 2019b p. 2).

The lack of political will is noted by the government bureaucrat's justification that the payroll records are centralised for all government institutions, so that poor coordination between the various government institutions hinders the flow of information on court judgment about the convicted officers (Nabwiiso, 2019b). While the Ministry of Public Service can block salary payments to the convicted officers, the courts all must authoriseto delete the records of a convicted civil servant from the payroll. The government representative from the Ministry of Public Service responded that: "The courts of law should share the information on the judgment sheets with the responsible government agencies; this

will make it easier for the agencies to implement the recommendation from the court Judgment. That is the only way to effectively remove these officers from the Government payroll," (Nabwiiso, 2019b p. 1).

In summary, the complicity in local government is less to do with the lack of capacity, and more to do with the lack of transparency and democratic values. The governance leadership and policy-making are a collective endeavor, undertaken by the elected representatives and the bureaucrats (Anne, 2015). Although Howlett and Rajesh (2014, p. 21) argue that "the unclear division of responsibilities between elected and appointed officials makes it difficult for the latter to exercise leadership", it is clear that the elected leaders have a role to supervise the technical officers. However, the above evidences portray the collusion in the technical and political roles of public officials.

Scholars have questioned the effectiveness of local governments in Uganda due to corruption and the lack of transparency (Golola, 2001). Despite the role of the elected representatives, corruption and the misappropriation of local government funds has remained rampant, so that scholars have described the local government functioning in Uganda, as the 'decentralisation of corruption' (Golola, 2001). Reinikka and Svensson (2004) provide examples of the misuse of education funds in local governments in Uganda, to the detriment of the local schools (Reinikka and Svensson, 2004). Some scholars criticisethe idea of decentralisation, arguing that there is no inherent reason why local governments should automatically be more pro-poor than national governments. Manor (1999) notes the absence of evidence that local elites are more benevolent than those at higher levels. Similarly, apart from the pressure from civil society, there is no reason that elected representatives can be responsive to the citizens, unless they uphold democratic values. Blair (2000) argues that, when local elites gain representation on local councils, the wider public is unlikely to be well served, since the elite will most likely collude in favour of their own material interests.

7.5 Community Organisation Structures for accountability

The idea of *social accountability*, whereby the NGOs play the role of linking the local communities to question their political representatives in local government, implies that NGOs are a permanent, rather than a temporary structure. The success of civil society is not measured by the number of NGOs, rather, it is by organisation, by the citizens themselves. Therefore, the study questions the organisational capabilities for citizen-led action through the NGOs.

The analysis on the community organisational structures derives from questioning the extent that the rights-based approach and the capacity-building approach can foster organisational capabilities. Therefore, the field research examined the organisation structures in the communities, established by the NGOs, to monitor local governments. I also examined the experiences of the community organisation structures, i.e. their achievements, and how the NGOs envisaged sustainable community-led accountability. On the other hand, I interviewed the NGOs which embed the activist approach. The activist approach rejects the concept of capacity-building. The question that guides this discussion therefore is how effective are the rights-based approach and the capacity-building approach as mechanisms for promoting community-led accountability?

Chapter six showed that the communities are constrained to foster 'pressure from below' as individual citizens. This section, examines the NGOs' idea of 'strengthening civil society' to understand the difference that they make through social accountability. I interviewed the NGOs on the nature of accountability initiatives, in terms of getting the communities organised as a collective for this purpose. Similarly, I examined the contribution of the activist NGOs to creating community organisation structures.

The interviews with the NGOs therefore examined their strategies to build the organisational capacity of the communities to 'demand' accountability. The interviews specifically explored the organisational structures that the NGOs initiated to put pressure

from below. The NGOs that embedded an activist approach were national organisations; the activist approach was approved by the Board of Directors of the NGOs. Although these NGOs also had donor-funded service delivery programmes, they identified themselves as civil society organisations. Through the social movement approach, the NGOs initiated new spaces for the communities to negotiate with the local governments.

The discussions with the NGOs revealed a clear distinction between the community organisation structures initiated by the NGOs that adopted a capacity-building/project cycle intervention approach, and those that adopted the social movement approach. The former focus purely on local government service delivery, but the latter prioritise scrutiny of irresponsible actions by the local government, such as corruption, embezzlement of funds, shoddy services, and similar failures of leadership, so that they challenged the local government through court hearings, and protests. For instance, an activist NGO participant opined that:

> "if a citizen makes a query as an individual, the local government will not listen. If masses collectively come up, they quickly listen. If a health centre is not functional, citizens cannot complain. Our work is to engage with the service provider. We respond to issues in local government, and mobilise masses around an issue to ensure that those who are supposed to address it listen. Our government purposely neglects its responsibility to deliver and account for services."[115]

The NGOs that choose to oppose the local government failures, organise the communities to take action. Such action is explicated in the case where the local government issued a completion certificate for a construction that never existed. "The completion certificate was duly signed by the district engineer, in the knowledge of the Chief Administrative Officer. The LC5 chairman was equally aware of this. So it was a racket and you know breaking a racket is not easy. They plan and execute it, you can only know when it is already done"[116]

[115] Interview with NGO participant, Ntungamo district, 28th May 2019.
[116] Interview with NGO participant, Ntungamo district, 28th May 2019.

The NGOs explained numerous experiences of their struggle to challenge the local government, despite the threats to their lives. For instance, an NGO participant opined that, "the challenges to community organising are too many, sometimes you do not want to go through them. Organising is hard politics"[117]. "We are never free because of the threat of harm on our lives as CSO leaders. You are contributing to the empowerment of the community in governance, but you are not safe"[118].

It was clear that the community organisation strategy by the 'critical' NGO's varied greatly from the donor-funded social accountability initiatives that focused on monitoring tools, such as the scorecards. For the critical NGOs, "community mobilisation is key in every struggle"[119]. This is because, the complicity in local government necessitated pressure on the leaders. As indicated above, the NGOs could not sit back and watch the failures in leadership. As watchdog, the NGOs (preferred to be identified as CSOs), argued that their "logic is to improve services for the long-term"[120] through ensuring responsible leadership. The NGOs reasoned that their community organising strategy derived from the passion and commitment to create change. "There is no budget. It is all about commitment. There is no logframe or work-plan. The community members contribute for the costs of the campaigns. If you have interest in what you are going to do, they will contribute".[121] Because of the high intensity of criticism to the state, the NGOs argued that "donors are not interested in that. Donors want simple things. They are not partners with movement building"[122]

The activist approach was justified to uproot and establish durable community organisation structure for future action. Such a case of uprooting wrongdoing involved the censure of a councillor. The NGO participant opined that:

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[117] Interview with NGO participant, Bushenyi district, 1st August 2019.
[118] Interview with NGO participant, Hoima district, 25th May 2019.
[119] Interview with NGO participant, Ntungamo district, 28th May 2019.
[120] Interview with NGO participant, Masaka district, 17th September 2019.
[121] Interview with NGO participant, Bushenyi district, 1st August 2019.
[122] Interview with NGO participant, Bushenyi district, 1st August 2019.

> "we wanted to censure a councillor because he was doing wrong things. So we met councillors and convinced them. We made a petition for censure. Which donor will give money for that? Because a problem comes and you must respond to it. These problems in governance are not predictable. You do not know when someone will take a bribe, or when a leader will make a wrong decision. Are you going to ask a donor for money you will keep until someone makes a wrong decision? If the politicians make a wrong decision, who does it impact? The donor in Europe, or USA is not affected by the poor decisions here. Those decisions affect the people. And our idea is that people must be able to push for action".[123]

These perspectives the activist NGOs clarify on the motivation for the organising strategy in the communities. They envisage that through community mobilisation, the communities can directly get involved to challenge the state. Passivity is not tolerated by the activist NGOs. They envisage continuous struggle to oppose the failures in leadership, which cannot be addressed through the capacity-building approach. The above cases illustrate the connivance in local government between the political leaders and the technical staff, so that the power lies in organising the citizens to contribute to the desired change. In other words, if no action is taken to challenge the failures in government, the activist NGOs see that as a betrayal of their principles as watchdog, and as individuals. The non-monetary goal for their actions, i.e. commitment is invaluable. An NGO activist opined that:

> "the biggest problem with NGOs is to want to earn from everything you do. An NGO will go to the community and say, let's do this, and people follow them. May be there are inducements, or allowances. With a movement, people say there is a poor road somewhere. A movement does not require a budget. To connect with the people as an organiser, I do not need money. And that is the beauty of it. You do not need logframes, or work-plans. They will always respond. The movement is an initiative to organise people and keep it sustainable. From the beginning, we run low-cost organising. The reason we moved from boardroom organising to community organising is to make sure that we do things that last longer with impact – that communities take charge. Sustainability has nothing to do with funding. Sustainability has a lot to do with commitment from the people that are involved. Funding is not an important thing in these monitoring processes"[124]

[123] Interview with NGO participant, Masaka district, 17th September 2019.
[124] Interview with NGO participant, Bushenyi district, 1st August 2019.

Moreover, the activist NGOs were frustrated with the monitoring tools by the donors, i.e the scorecards. They argued that the report card was useful, "but you reach a point where things don't work. So you do not go back to the village to do a scorecard. If we see issues that we cannot solve ordinarily, then we take action to exact accountability."[125] The proponents of social accountability similarly critique that the NGO accountability initiatives, i.e. the citizen report cards and scorecards are akin to as basic consumer satisfaction surveys (Joshi and Houtzager, 2012). The report card primarily relies on citizens' opinions through surveys on the service delivery provision by local government. In contrast, the scorecard is derived from evidence-based research, from document reviews, key informant interviews, and observations as discussed in the preceding section. The literature indicates other social accountability mechanisms include participatory budgeting, gender budgeting, citizen juries and other forms of public hearings, participatory monitoring of donor commitments to advance the Millennium Development Goals. These are generally targeted at the urban populations.

It is clear from the foregoing that in undemocratic contexts, the activist approach is the most effective means to getting results, until the political leaders gain the sensitivity to act responsibly. As argued by Contini (2008, p. 2), "without accountability, what is left is a political structure that has absolute power to act without conscience or atonement". What then is the relevance of maintaining ineffective approaches, such as the scorecards, which conceal the failures in leadership? Clearly, the NGO's motivation by funding, implies that they ignore the key challenges in governance, even if their approaches are not workable.

I interviewed the NGOs participants on their experiences in donor-funded NGOs accountability initiatives. These NGOs, specifically emphasised the notion of 'strengthening civil society'. However, they did not justify the choice for their strategy for engaging with the communities. Their strategies were designed by the donors. It was clear that at the end of the funding, the community organisation structures for monitoring local government

[125] Interview with NGO participant, Hoima district, 25th May 2019.

crumbled. For instance, an NGO participant opined that: "we have several community monitors, but after the project ended, they could not continue. The work is voluntary and they are not willing to continue. When we get funded for new activities, we always call them back".[126] In an FGD with the community monitors for the donor-funded NGOs, they remarked that they are recruited as volunteers, but in fact receive from allowances from the NGOs for every task. Without the allowances, they are constrained to do the work.[127]The monitors argued that "it was impossible to undertake the task of monitoring without any facilitation. The area of coverage is too large for an individual monitor. We monitor every month".[128] It is clear that the community monitors are temporary, and the teams of monitors disperse at the end of the project cycle.

Despite the numerous successes by the activist NGOs, to challenge the irresponsible local governments, it was important to identify their impact on the sustainability of the community organisation structures. Similarly, what is the added value by the donor-funded NGOs in social accountability? I interviewed the NGOs on the nature of accountability initiatives, in terms of how they get communities organised as a collective for accountability. Generally, the community organisation structures are illustrated in Table 17.

	Donor-funded accountability initiatives	**NGO Activist approach to accountability**
1.	Community Monitors at LC1, LC2, LC3	NGO Key organiser at district level
2.	Community Dialogues involving the political representatives at LC3	Community Teams at LC2, LC3, and LC5
3.	Community Action Plan at LC3 on service delivery	Meetings with Political Leaders and community at all levels to influence decisions on government failures.

Table 17: Community Organisation Structures

The NGOs employ distinct approaches in their interactions with the communities. The donor-funded accountability initiatives typically enroll a team of monitors who are

[126] Interview with NGO participant, Ntungamo district, 28th May 2019.
[127] Focus Group Discussion with Field Monitors, Hoima district, 26th May 2019.
[128] Focus Group Discussion with Field Monitors, Hoima district, 26th May 2019.

trained in the use of tools for data collection. The NGO participant stressed that: "they are volunteers, not paid researchers, and we provide technical assistance for the analysis of the information they collect". [129] The next key stage involves organising dialogues at Parish level (LC2) to validate the data collected by the monitors. Thereafter, larger dialogues are organised at Sub-County level (LC3; these dialogues bring together the local government (both the political leaders and the technical staff). It is in these dialogues, that a Community Action Plan is drawn. The sub-county meetings are conducted on a quarterly basis. The district dialogues are organised once a year, a few community monitors represent the communities at this district level management meeting. It is clear that the monitoring tools by the NGOs do not allow confronting local government budgets. The NGOs that employ the capacity-building approach, rely on the information given to them by the local governments. NGOs remain apolitical, even when they are aware of the malpractices of the local governments. Therefore, the question whether the community organisational structures by the NGOs enable and sustain community-led accountability, reveals an absence of politically motivated community groups.

The selection of process of the field monitors is done by the NGOs, through their consultations with their partners. The NGO participant opined that: "identify people of outstanding character through our consultations. The monitors are selected from the community. When we are doing our work, we identify people who are active. When we have meetings in the community, we will see someone very active."[130] One of the problems with the top-down selection of the community monitors is that they do not identify with the communities. The people identify them as "employees of the NGO" [131], rather than community leaders. The communities do not see the NGO monitors as change agents. The community members opined that: "the LC1chairperson is not involved in monitoring, and the monitor cannot represent us. They organise meetings at the sub-county, but few people

[129] Interview with NGO participant, Hoima, district, 25th May 2019.
[130] Interview with NGO participant, Ntungamo district, 2nd July 2019.
[131] Focus Group Discussion, Masaka district, 11th September 2019.

attend. What has changed anyway, after these meetings?"[132] Mansuri and Rao (2012, p. 33) compare the extrinsically motivated salaried staff in community development to the "self-motivated leaders who work tirelessly, with little compensation, often at a high opportunity cost. They are constantly innovating, networking, and organising" to get the organic processes to succeed. Therefore, the argument that community capacity-building fosters community leadership is equally inadequate, if this leadership is not a source of organic processes. Moreover, the dependency on donor funding implies that NGOs hardly sustain their work in local communities. Thus, the NGOs remain 'outsiders' to the communities they intend to serve. It is not surprising that the community monitors by the NGOs stop the work, and the teams disperse at the end of the project cycle.

The activist NGOs, on the other hand, identify community leaders who are knowledgeable, and ready to mobilise communities. The NGO participant remarked that:

> "They are members from the community. The teams at Sub-County level are usually non-political, but the teams at District level are political. You do not expect them to be herdsmen, but they have different political affiliations. Some are leaders of a political party. The work we are doing is not focused on political parties. We are focused on say, 'official A stole our money, because that is the point."[133]

Another NGO participant remarked that:

> "Our strategy is identification of key players, and go for them. Those key players within the community take the lead in mobilising others. The moment you say to the people that we need to rise up over this issue, you will have a number of voices. We identify allies at the local level, those who will quickly understand what you are doing. The issue that you are parading is their issue, but they have been crying about how to approach it, because they do not know how to go about it".[134]

Contrary to the NGOs that employ a capacity-building approach, the critical NGOs hope in challenging the local governments. However, it was clear that the state opposes the mobilisation of communities to critique the state. Walls (2015) argues that the role of

[132] Focus Group Discussion, Masaka district, 11th September 2019.
[133] Interview with NGO participant, Rubirizi district, 9th June 2019.
[134] Interview with NGO participant, Bushenyi district, 1st August 2019.

community leadership is traditionally that of mobilising, organising, and informing. Laverack and Laverack (2001) emphasise the influential role of reputational leaders in their informal position as critical for community organisation. Reputational leaders are essentially organic leaders. According to Laverack and Laverack (2001), the reputational leaders have a better chance of leading than the positional leaders (who are elected or appointed). Moreover, the idea of organic leaders, as potentially placed to lead community processes, resonates with the asset-based approach that rejects the assumption that the professional practitioner is better equipped in skills, knowledge, and experience than the community leader (Kenny and Clarke, 2010).

The above show that for the activist NGOs, the sustainability of the community organisation structures derived from the leadership of the community organiser, i.e. the NGO. The difference the activist NGOs make involves fostering political learning, providing durable leadership, and ensuring the flow of information to the communities. For instance, the NGO participant opined that:

> "we make the effort to find out if the district has received funds, for instance, to work on a specific road. If we get that information that there is money at the district to work on such a road in a financial year, and that road is not done, the question is, did that money go back to the central government? Citizens are not aware that those funds were available and allocated for the roads. If I am aware and want to make a contribution, I have to make the citizens aware that this money is available".

On the other hand, the fact that the monitors under the donor-funded accountability initiatives are selected by the NGOs, it is unlikely that their teams can create sustainable community organisation structures. The monitors for the donor-funded accountability initiatives are attracted by the financial benefits of the task. Moreover, when the funding dwindles, and the project phases out, the NGO equally closes its office. The monitors are then on their own. Since they were selected top-down, there is no continuity. The activist NGOs, on the other hand, are motivated to undertake the task driven by the passion for change. Therefore, capacity-building fails to foster community leadership, because the community leadership teams by the NGOs do not translate into sources of organic processes. Moreover,

the dependency on donor funding implies that NGOs hardly sustain their work in local communities. For instance, Bhattacharya (2004, p. 18) notes that:

> "foundations and government aid agencies seeking to promote voluntary associations have often simply managed to create a stratum of local elites who become skilled at writing grant proposals; the organisations they found tend to have little durability once the outside source of funds dries up". Inevitably, funding is a factor to initiating organic processes".

However, the activist NGOs indicated the challenges to mobilisation, which they constantly have to confront to ensure sustainability of their community organisation structures. An NGO participant noted that: "citizen apathy is a key challenge to our mobilisation. It is this 'I don't care attitude'. The citizens are not interested in governance. However, we see our role as raising awareness that they have a role to play in governance".[135] Other NGO participants identified politics as a key challenge to sustainable community organisation structures. It was emphasised that "government is doing all it can to restrain community mobilisation. The Public Order Management Act is intended to restrain mobilisation. That is the rationale for that Act – to refrain citizen mobilisation, because they know the effect of mobilising citizens".[136] Moreover, the NGOs noted that patronage has encouraged a "hand-outs mentality, which competes with rights claims. We have a President who has become an institution. If you raise any problem, people think it should be solved by the President. It is a big challenge to have a spectator population, just looking on, opening their hands to the President to drop in hand-outs."[137] It therefore not surprising that some members of the mobilisation teams by the activist NGOs defected to compete for political positions, and some joined the government[138].

These evidences confirm that critique by (Cornwall, 2002 p. 22) that opening new political spaces for the poor through spontaneous community organising, is increasingly "de-

[135]Interview with NGO participant, Masaka district, 17th September 2019.
[136] Interview with NGO participant, Bushenyi district, 20th July 2019.
[137] Interview with NGO participant, Masaka district, 9th September 2019.
[138] Interview with NGO participant, Masaka district, 17th September 2019.

legitimised by governments…whose expansive consultative gestures come to constitute preferred channels for citizen voice".

7.6 Political Learning through NGOs

Chapter six (section 6.2) discussed the failure of social capital theory to promote associational life through the project approach. Therefore, the absence of voluntary organisations in the communities implied the absence of the 'schools of citizenship'.

This section discusses citizen learning through the rights-based approach. The approach suggests that community project groups can learn through training on rights, which is embedded in the NGO-funded projects. It is envisioned that the poor can in turn 'demand' accountability from their local governments. Therefore, this analysis on political learning derives from questioning that, if the rights-based approach is not an education approach, how does learning through the NGO self-help projects foster accountability? The field research examined the NGO approaches to enhance political learning in the communities, through the self-help projects.

The rights-based approach is integral to the NGO project activities. An NGO participant noted that:

> "Our area of intervention is primary education, and we inform our beneficiaries that they have a responsibility to ask their local leaders to explain the government plans and budgets for their community development. We raise awareness of rights during project implementation because communities do not know about the government services".[139]

Similar assertions were made by the NGO participant that:

> "the communities do not know their entitlements. So we have been teaching them to know their rights. They do not know that government is supposed to deliver these services, so we open their eyes and they are now able to hold government to account. There is a village that was able to come to the district and ask to get the road repaired.

[139] Interview with NGO participant, Rubirizi district, 10th June 2019.

> When you empower communities, they are able to demand. It is all about awareness, telling them you are entitled to this and that."[140]

I conducted focus group discussions with the community project groups to compare their experiences in social accountability. The group that had engaged the local government constituted a team of community leaders that were influential, which made it possible to negotiate with the local government[141]. Generally, the community project groups were passive. The passivity is further corroborated by an NGO participant who opined that: "we had donor funding for a project to conduct civic education in the communities. There was no change. Everything remained the same. And people ask you, 'what have you achieved over the years'? We observed that even when civic education was conducted, there was no action from the communities to demand accountability. We saw that people needed to be organised and mobilised to take action for improved service delivery".[142]

The absence of organisational structures for accountability, and the passivity of the communities, shows that merely highlighting the duties of the state and the entitlements of citizens during the implementation of community development projects, does not lead to community-led accountability. Further, the role of the community organiser to continuously support the communities, is significant, as discussed in the preceding section.

Evidently, since the rights-based approach is not an education approach, political learning through NGO-funded projects is questionable. In turn, the communities are unable to organise community-led accountability. The evidence on learning theories shows that, the rights-based approach does not suggest a pedagogy of learning. How can the communities learn, without a pedagogy? The social movement approach identifies a pedagogy, which is critical consciousness, as discussed in chapter four on citizenship learning. Tocqueville similarly suggests a pedagogy through the schools of citizenship, and it is clear that citizens

[140] Interview with NGO participant, Ntungamo district, 2nd July 2019.
[141] Focus Group Discussion, Ntungamo district, 4th July 2019.
[142] Interview with NGO participant, Masaka district, 9th September 2019.

learn through socialisation. Accordingly, learning through socialisation embeds social learning theory, social constructivism, and experiential learning.

Carl Rogers, an influential proponent of experiential learning, suggests that we 'learn by doing', about meaningful experiences in our daily lives to improve our knowledge and behaviour. Moreover, people are inclined to learn when they are fully involved in the learning process (Weil and McGill, 1989). With regards to social learning theory, Albert Bandura suggests that people learn within a social context, by observing and imitating others. More specifically, the social learning theory posits that learning is facilitated through reciprocal determinism, i.e that a person's behaviour, environment and personal qualities all reciprocally influence each other (Bandura, 1963). Therefore, children learn from observing others as well as from "model" behaviour. And social constructivism posits that learners are not passive recipients of information, but that they actively construct their knowledge. Merriam and Caffarella (1999, p. 261) notes that "A constructivist stance maintains that learning is a process of constructing meaning; it is how people make sense of their experience." McLaren (2009, p. 63) suggest that knowledge is "deeply rooted in a nexus of power relations...Critical pedagogy asks how our everyday common-sense understandings – our social constructions or "subjectivities" – get produced and lived out. ... The crucial factor here is that some forms of knowledge have more power and legitimacy than others."

Some adult learning theories emphasise the role of the educator. For instance, Paulo Freire (1970), targeted the adults, and suggests critical learning as a pedagogy. For Freire (1970, p. 53), "knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient continuing, hopeful inquiry [we] pursue in the world, with the world and with each other." This type of learning rejects the 'banking education', whereby the learner receives information from the teacher. Therefore, the NGO's rights-based approach cannot 'empower' the communities to take action because the rights-based approach does not suggest a pedagogy whatsoever.

The NGOs cannot assume the role of educator, because agenda-setting is criticised for indoctrination. Freire's (1970) idea of critical consciousness, was critiqued for indoctrination. Snook (1972, p. 66) argues that indoctrination is presenting information, "a manner which is likely to distort [students'] ability to access the evidence on its own merit". Therefore, the literature shows that some NGOs have adopted the transformative learning theory (Kimura, 2019). Transformative learning theory avoids agenda-setting. Mezirow's (1989) transformative learning, or transformation theory was particularly influenced by Freire's (1970). Mezirow (1989, p. 172) rejects an "an overtly political agenda", and guiding the learners' decisions, as it risks indoctrination. Therefore, it must be the decision of the learner, to take action, just as the agenda is set by the learner rather than the educator.

Therefore, the learning through the NGO projects is questionable. Contrary to the social constructionist theory, the findings of the study show that the communities have nothing powerful to learn through the self-help projects. There is no clear agenda of learning that would instigate action by the communities. Evidently, the avoidance of politics, implies that the NGOs cannot be critical educators. I argue that learning should specify an agenda, be critical, and suggest action.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter examined the role of the NGOs in fostering accountability. I discussed that NGO funding became a priority for the donors to support the poor to challenge their political representatives. The empowerment theorisation suggests two approaches through which the NGOs can create linkages with the local communities to challenge their political leaders, i.e. *social accountability,* and the *activist* approach.

The discussion problematises the reconceptualisation of *accountability*, i.e from *political accountability* to *social accountability* by the rights-based approach. The rights-based approach distorts the idea of accountability from the civic republican perspective. The latter suggests the self-organisation of citizens to limit the state. The concept of social

accountability promotes NGOs to bridge the gap between the local communities and their political leaders in local government. Moreover, the idea of "demanding accountability" (DFID, 2010 p. 54), in social accountability is misleading in the civic republican theorisation. Political accountability occurs when the electorate is able to sanction the politician for the irresponsible choices made on their behalf by voting them out. Since the local governments are not accountable, or voted out in the low-income countries, the promotion of democracy devised the idea of "social accountability", which maintains partnership with the irresponsible state. I argue that this is akin to 'making a pact with the devil'.

The study identified key problems in social accountability, which include the structural capacity constraints to accountability; the failure to integrate the democratic values in accountability; the failure to foster durable organisational structures for accountability, as the NGOs barely create community organisation structures for the future; and the absence of an education approach. I show that the rights-based approach and the capacity-building approach fail to solve these key problems in accountability.

8. Conclusion

The central idea of the thesis

The thesis problematises the absence of citizens' organisation in a poverty and peasant context, as a major constraint to achieving accountability. It examines the gap in understanding on how to foster citizens' organisation and accountability in this context.

We know from the literature that the civic republican idea of limiting/making the state accountable through voluntary organisations has been successful in the context of the middle class. The civic republican theory clarifies why citizens are able to organise themselves; the preconditions for associational life are paramount, i.e. a process of structural transformation of society from a peasant context to a middle class and liberal capitalist context. These preconditions include: a political culture of liberal democratic values; the citizens' capability for analysis (public intellectuals), which is attained through education; and economic prosperity (the market), which enables membership in organisations. Therefore, members in voluntary organisations provide analytic, research, and communication skills, and are socialised into a political culture of liberal democratic values. Similarly, the idea of spontaneous community organising requires organic organisers who are educated, with the capability to organise, mobilise, provide political learning, and raise community leaders to spearhead advocacy for the communities. However, the peasant and poverty context is not a fertile ground for voluntary organisations and the cadre of community organisers and leaders is equally missing.

Clearly, the civic republican theory emphasises abridged socio-economic inequalities and the self-organisation of citizens; its relevance in a peasant and poverty context is debatable. The deliberate targeting of the poor in democratisation is suggested by the concept of empowerment through an alloy of theorisation. The fact that the theorisation on theorisation does not question *why the poor are unorganised* is a major weakness. Its supposition that state policy actions for an institutional-led approach – through the *NGOs,*

social service projects, and *political representatives in local government* – can engender critique of the state by the poor is inconclusive. The state-led and sponsored approach to induce the participation of the poor, gives an illusion of democracy, as it cannot substitute the role of voluntary organisations. The political philosophers warned against the state acting in a top-down manner, not only to avoid domination, but also that individuals would lose the idea of association. Therefore, the thesis challenges the tendency to take the state-led and sponsored approach to participation as axiomatic and its positive role in democratisation as self-evident.

Theoretical contribution of the thesis

The study identifies the following gaps in the empowerment theorisation on fostering accountability and citizen's organisation in a poverty and peasant context:

First, its conceptualisation of poverty in terms of social service delivery indicators is problematic, because it ignores the fact that peasants are a structural constraint to liberal democracy. Liberal democracy is capitalist. By entirely targeting the poor through social service delivery/community development projects, the empowerment approach disregards the significance of understanding poverty as structural. It is structural transformation from peasantry to a middle class, characterised by a political culture of liberal democratic values, the market, high education levels, and political learning, rather than the social services delivery projects that can usher in the preconditions for citizens' organisation. Thus, the study problematises the predominance of a peasant citizenry in the low-income countries.

Secondly, while the study illuminates the significance of the market/economy, it emphasises learning of the democratic values, as crucial to citizens' organisation. Political learning is attained through socialisation to a democratic political culture and membership in voluntary organisations. Therefore, the thesis questions political learning of the liberal democratic values through community development projects. The civic education programmes in a state-led approach are not an effective substitute.

Thirdly, the idea that the political representatives in local government would bridge the gap between the poor and the state is uncritical. Representative local government or indeed representative democracy is not effective without citizens' organisation. Since the poor are unorganised, the study questions the effectiveness of representative local government in the context of poverty.

Fourthly, the theorisation promotes non-membership organisations (the NGOs) to foster the responsiveness of the political representatives in local government. NGOs do this by linking the communities to their political representatives. However, this approach misses the understanding of *political accountability*. From the civic republican perspective, accountability or political accountability implies the self-organisation of citizens to limit the state. Therefore, if the poor were organised as voluntary associations, they would expose the failures in government as watchdog in the first place. This watchdog role by organised groups to expose government failures, would contribute to the electorate sanctioning the leaders by voting. Moreover, I argue that the idea of demanding accountability is misleading in the civic republican theorisation. In democracies, accountability occurs when the electorate is able to sanction the politician for the irresponsible choices made on their behalf by voting them out. Since the local governments are not accountable, or voted out in the low-income countries, the promotion of democracy devised the idea of "social accountability", which maintains partnership with the irresponsible state. I argue that this is akin to 'making a pact with the devil'.

Therefore, the idea of *social accountability*, whereby the NGOs play the role of linking the local communities to their political representatives in local government, implies that NGOs are a permanent, rather than a temporary structure. The success of civil society is not measured by the number of NGOs, rather, it is by organisation, by the citizens themselves. Therefore, the study questions the organisational capabilities for citizen-led action through the NGOs.

8.1 Summary of Findings

The study set out to addresses three key research questions, which inform the discussion on the findings. Each research question is addressed under the following three case studies: a) the *political representatives* in local government; b) *NGOs*, and c) *social service delivery/community poverty projects*.

8.1.1 Political representatives in local government

The discussion on the findings on the case of the political representatives in Uganda's local governments is covered in chapter five. The case study derives from the research question: *How do the communities organise to question their elected representatives to be accountable?* The research question is examined within the framework and rationale of local government or decentralisation, i.e. to give citizens – through their elected representatives – increased power in decision-making. The theorisation on empowerment influenced the good governance agenda in the 1990s, so that Uganda's decentralisation policy aimed at addressing *poverty*, the deliberate *inclusion of the poor in decision-making*, and *accountability* by the political representatives in local government.

The field research identified two key findings that contribute to the critique on representative local government. First, the study examines a major weakness in the design of the decentralisation reforms in Uganda, namely: the disregard of the lack of a revenue base in a peasant context and the independence of resource-stricken local governments due to dependence on central government funding. The study identified the overdependence of local governments on central government funding. It is not surprising that local governments are appendages of state in Uganda. The civic republican perspective emphasises the independence of local governments, deriving from economic prosperity. Their independence from the state has historically derived from enterprise and the economy as the backbone. In addition, it was clear that politicians take advantage of the dependence on central government funding to create networks of patronage. The field research particularly noted the

proliferation of local governments as a mechanism for patronage, which poses constraints for unorganised citizens to challenge the politicians. Moreover, the fact that local governments in Uganda are demarcated along ethnic identities, implies that their proliferation reinforces ethnically-divided citizens.

The other significant finding of the study is that the decentralisation reforms in Uganda emphasised the inclusion of the local communities in decision making in form of village assemblies, but at the receiving end of the service delivery projects, and without accountability mechanisms for questioning the local governments by the citizens. The findings show how that the village assemblies approach, in Uganda's decentralisation policy, cannot substitute voluntary organisations. The study identified that the absence of voluntary organisations, that would question the local governments, implies the unrestrained power of the political representatives. It was clear that the political and elite structure of decentralisation is politically-motivated, and works in favour of the state, rather than the citizens.

8.1.2 Social service delivery/community development projects

The empirical study on the role of the community development projects in accountability is covered in chapter six. The case study derives from the research question: *How do the social service / community development project groups foster accountability*? I questioned the political role and relevance of social capital theory in the context of poverty for democratisation. We know that social capital theory originated in a middle-class setting, to analyse the political role of the social networks and associations to challenge the state.

The findings of the study on the role of the community development project groups in fostering associational life show that the beneficiary project groups disintegrate at the end of the project cycle. The project group members have no political networks, and therefore the study noted an absence of voluntary organisations / associations in the communities. The field research noted that the motivation for association by the poor, even after the project

cycle, was to gain an income. The capabilities that the communities attained were typically for self-help, and not political capabilities. The study concludes that social capital, as the catalyst for voluntary organisations, needs to be analysed within the context of modern societies, not the poor and isolated villages or peasant societies. Therefore, social capital is the source of voluntary organisation and associations to the extent that the society is modern. Moreover, it was identified that the community project groups are often mechanisms for clientelism by the state, rather than limiting it.

Secondly, the empowerment approach does not define the poor, but uses the concept of '*beneficiaries'* of projects. The field research identified that the beneficiaries of the community development projects are typically peasants, and they have specific priorities for poverty targeting through the community development projects. It was clear that peasants prioritise participation in the projects that provide entry into the market for employment, or to improve their position in the market. The peasants see employment as the route to better incomes and access to social services. It was clear from the study findings that the market is a significant and alternative means to accessing social services in the rural areas. This shows that poverty targeting (focusing entirely on access to social services), i.e. the non-market aspects of poverty by the good governance agenda, ignores the question of a peasant citizenry.

8.1.3 NGOs

The case study on NGOs examines their role in fostering local accountability, as discussed in chapter seven. The study examined two approaches through which the NGOs attempt to create linkages with the local communities to challenge their political leaders: a) through regularised questioning of the local government budgets, and b) the activist approach to mobilise communities as need arises, in response to identified government failures.

The chapter discusses the empirical evidence on the research question: *How do the NGOs organise communities to undertake accountability?* The field research examined the organisational role of the NGOs in the local communities through social accountability and

the activist approach. It examined the organisational structures in the communities through the NGOs, and the communities' capability for local accountability through these organisational structures.

The study identified key problems in social accountability, i.e NGOs acting as mediators between the local government and the citizens to question the delivery of social services:

a) *Structural capacity constraints and accountability*

Political accountability is a capacity problem in leadership, in the sense that, the failures in government are capacity issues in leadership, including the skills and resources, or competences and capabilities. These capacity gaps in leadership are identified for capacity-building. The field research identified that NGOs draw on the capacity-building approach, to design performance monitoring tools which inform the capacity-building plans for local governments. However, it was noted that NGOs address the *unresponsiveness* of the political leaders, as a capacity problem caused by the lack of resources, competences, or capabilities by the local governments to undertake their responsibilities. Therefore, by funding the local government capacity-building plans, which targeted trainings for the local government officials (both elected leaders and local government staff), and dialogues (between the local government and the communities), the NGOs maintained partnership with the irresponsible state. This is because the irresponsible local government leaders are not voted out, neither are the irresponsible government staff terminated. Political accountability occurs when the electorate is able to sanction the politician for the irresponsible choices made on their behalf by voting them out. Moreover, the watchdog role by organised groups to expose government failures, would contribute to the electorate sanctioning the leaders by voting. Yet, the NGO do not get involved in politics. This explains why the activist approach differs from the partnership approach of the NGOs.

At the same time it was clear from the study that the structural resource capacity gaps in local government, are not considered failures in leadership that fit within the capacity-building approach. This is because, capacity-building targets resource gaps (at individual, organisational, and systematic levels for political, analytical, and operational skills). Consequently, the structural resource gaps are ignored by the NGOs, as the NGO budgets do not target the structural problems. Yet, it was clear from the study findings that, local governments lack a revenue base due to the peasant context. It is possible that since decentralisation presupposes economic independence and economic prosperity, the design of the decentralisation reforms ignored the question of the structural resource capacity gaps. This questions the relevance of decentralisation without revenue. Moreover, decentralisation by depending on the central government fosters patronage.

b) Political accountability as a democratic values issue

The field research identified that the NGOs did not address the lack of political accountability as a lack of democratic values by the political leaders. As indicated in the theoretical critique above, the the local government representatives are not voted out, and staying in positions of power is a problem that depicts a lack of democratic values and a failure of governance.

The field research identified deep-seated systematic problems of complicity between the local government staff and the elected representative in local government, including corruption, negligence of duties, patronage, and complacency. In many ways, the local governments services were under decay. The NGOs, through the capacity-building approach in social accountability, were not able to address the problem of the lack of democratic values because these are attained through socialisation into a democratic culture. The NGO efforts to address the lack of political accountability in local government merely as a capacity problem, rather than a democratic values issue is problematic.

On the other hand, the activist NGOs still maintained partnerships with the irresponsible local government officials, because the core work of the NGOs focused on social accountability initiatives. It is not surprising that the state enjoys the social accountability role of the NGOs, since the NGOs are prohibited by the government to get involved in political mobilisation.

c) *Organisational structures*

The research findings on the organisation structures in the communities, established by the NGOs, to monitor local governments show that at the end of the funding, the community organisation structures crumbled. Moreover, the dependency on donor funding implies that NGOs hardly sustain their work in local communities. Thus, the NGOs remain 'outsiders' to the communities they intend to serve. Similarly, the activist approach did not maintain durable community organisation structures; the organisation of the communities was spontaneous for the activist tasks that emerged. The NGOs that employed the capacity-building approach, relied on the information given to them by the local governments. Therefore, NGOs remain apolitical, even when they are aware of the malpractices of the local governments. Thus, the question whether the community organisational structures by the NGOs enable and sustain community-led accountability, reveals an absence of politically motivated community groups. The critical NGOs provide hope in challenging the local governments. However, it was clear that the state opposes the mobilisation of communities.

d) *Political learning*

The study findings show an absence of NGO approaches to enhance political learning in the communities, through the self-help projects. NGOs do not embed a pedagogy; they are not critical educators. They do not suggest an education approach, so that political learning through NGO-funded projects is questionable.

8.2 Implications and Future Research

Theoretical perspective

The study critiques of the promotion of democracy in a peasant context. The peasant population is a constraint to liberal democracy. I argue that the low-income countries face deep-seated structural constraints to democratisation, and we cannot continue to assume that the promotion of democracy is responding to the core problems caused by the lack of voluntary organisation / association. The lack of questioning on why the poor are unorganised is a major gap in the literature. An objective analysis is paramount, and it must derive from corroborated theorisation. Such an analysis is absent until now. The empowerment approach can only be conceptualised as a tool for fostering self-help for the poor, and not citizens' organisation. Liberal democracy is capitalist, and the majority of the citizens in the low-income countries are peasants. Without integrating the role of the market/economy, voluntary organisation in a peasant context is questionable.

Policy aspect

The study emphasises the significance of voluntary organisations and associations. The promotion of democracy has supported the idea that by inducing group formation through projects, a network of political interactions can emerge and lead to voluntary associations. The communitarian perspective, has greatly influenced the promotion of democracy. The assumption is that building the networks of mutual acquaintance can encourage individuals to act together. While it is suggested that communities in the low-income countries lack social capital, I argue that such self-help groups have always existed in the low-income countries, drawing on the volunteering spirit in the traditional and peasant societies. In fact, the low-income countries have close social solidarity ties that they draw on to cope. The NGO projects draw on this homogeneity and cooperation in the villages. Thus, the communitarian approach is questionable to foster political associations, in a poverty and peasant context. What the scholars fail to recognise is that social capital was envisaged for

the context of a middle class. The policy debate has not evaluated the political function of social capital in a poverty and peasant context.

In addition, the civic education programmes, often funded by the donors, are not effective mechanisms for promoting voluntary associations. Rather, they target citizens as individuals. There is no suggested corroborated research on the relationship between civic education for the poor and voluntary organisation. On the other hand, civic education in schools is a useful approach to political learning. However, civic education in schools necessitates influencing the school curriculum, and contending with politics.

Future Research

There is a gap in knowledge on how to foster voluntary organisations in a peasant and poverty context. There is need for further research on the political culture that the state-led and sponsored approach to participation creates. How does the state, acting in a top-down manner, impact on citizenship? This provokes urgency for new ideas or theorisation by scholars to resolve this problem. Other areas for further research include the political function of social capital in a poverty and peasant context with a large sample. In addition, there is an absence of theorisation on the relationship between the NGOs and the communities which would foster linkages. NGOs proliferated since the 1980s. What has been the impact of their operations in the communities in the low-income countries? Cooke (2004, p. 52) remarked that: "Participatory change agents should ask themselves how they would appear in histories of the engagement with development written by or for participants; and must realise that whether or not they are being actually written, they are inevitably placed in a historical context by those with whom they work". Such analysis is absent.

APPENDIX — INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Interview Guide - NGO PARTICIPANTS

a) NGO Strategic Framework

- When was this organisation formed?
- What is the agenda of the organisation?
- What is its leadership / organisation structure?
- How is its leadership constituted?
- What is its membership?
- What is the community representation in the organisation structure?
- How is the organisation / activities funded?
- What is the long-term goal of the organisation?

b) Activities and decision-making

- What activities does the organisation promote in the communities?
- Who is included in the activities of the organisation at local level?
- How are these activities / community priorities identified and initiated?
- How are communities involved in decision-making in these activities? What do communities get to decide on?
- What is the community contribution to the funding of activities?

c) Organisation and mobilisation of communities

- What community groups have been initiated by your organisation?
- How do you mobilise the community groups?
- What is the nature of interaction by the organisation with the community groups?
- What networks does the organisation have with others?
- What is the nature of the deliberations with the community has the organisation conducted?
- What has the organisation achieved at local level?
- How do you ensure the involvement of community group members?
- How does the organisation support the community groups for the future?
- What type of networks for the community groups exist? Are they political?
- What are the achievements of the community groups?

d) Information dissemination and outreach mechanisms

- What learning activities for the community does the organisation promote?
- How is the learning delivered?
- How does the organisation engage with the Local Government to support community planning?

- How does the organisation engage with the Local Government to support accountability?
- How do community members in the organisation engage with the Local Government structure on community planning and social accountability?

e) Long-term strategies

- How do you think the organisation can sustain its funding for its activities?
- What is the long-term goal of your organisation?
- What is the long-term goal for the community groups, after your exit from the community?

f) Representation of community interests

- How do you represent the communities in the local government?
- How do you engage the communities in the process of representation?

2. Interview Guide – POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES

a) Roles and responsibilities

- What are your roles of your position?
- What is your role in the implementation of Local Government project activities at local level?
- What is your role in monitoring the community projects and social services?
- Where do you represent the communities?
- Under what circumstances have you not been involved in the implementation of community projects? Why?

b) Mobilisation of communities

- What are some of the key projects that you have participated in as a community leader?
- How are these activities initiated and identified?
- What is the decision-making process for community projects funded by the Local Government?
- How is the local community involved in the Local Government-funded projects?
- What contribution does the community make?
- What challenges have you encountered in mobilising local communities?

c) Information dissemination

- How are the communities informed about the projects?
- How are you informed about the planned projects as a leader?
- What would you say has been the representation of community members in Local Government Projects?
- What local concerns have been raised and addressed through the Local Government space?

d) Representation of community interests

- How do you represent the communities in the local government?
- How do you engage the communities in the process of representation?

f) Interactions local government

- What is the nature of interactions do you have with the local government leaders?
- What learning activities have you achieved in local government?
- What challenges do meet in your interactions with local government?

3. Interview Guide – LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTICIPANTS

a) Community Projects and Social Services

- What activities does the local government promote in the communities?
- Tell me about the nature of the projects that have been implemented over the years?
- Who is included in the activities of the local government at local level?
- How are these activities / community priorities identified and initiated?
- How are communities involved in decision-making in these activities? What do communities get to decide on?
- What is the community contribution to the funding of activities?
- How was the local community involvement in these projects?
- What was the contribution of the community?
- What challenges have you encountered in implementation of Local Government projects
- How would you describe the involvement of communities in Local Government-funded projects?

c) Information dissemination

- How are the communities informed about the projects?
- How are you informed about the planned projects as a leader?
- What learning activities does the local government promote in the communities?
- What learning activities are organised for communities through Local government-funded projects?

d) Community representation

- What is the community representation structure?
- What is your experience of the representation of community members in Local Government Projects?
- What local concerns have been raised and addressed through the Local Government space?

4. Interview Schedule – COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS

a) Community Projects and Social Services

- What activities does the local government /NGOs promote in the communities?
- Who is included in the activities of the local government /NGO at local level?
- How are these activities / community priorities identified and initiated?
- How are communities involved in decision-making in these activities? What do communities get to decide on?
- What is the community contribution to the funding of activities?

b) Community Organisation

- What is the nature of community groups in the area?
- What is the nature of the community projects are you involved in?
- How often are the community meetings organised?
- What you achieved as a group?
- What have you learnt from your involvement in the funded activities?
- What is the involvement of broad community?

c) Information dissemination

- How are the communities informed about the projects?
- How are you informed about the planned projects?

d) Accountability

- What is the involvement of the community in accountability activities?
- How is the community organised to conduct accountability?
- How is the community mobilised for the accountability activities?
- What is the nature of community concerns that the community has raised to the local government?
- What have achieved in the accountability activities?

d) Community representation

- How is the community represented to the local government?
- What local concerns have been raised and addressed by the Local Government?
- How do you express your views about the community projects/ social services?
- What has been your experience in representation?
- What have you learnt from your involvement in the project activities?
- What is the involvement of broad community?

- What have you achieved as community members through your engagement in Local Government projects?

e) Long-term strategies

- What is the long-term goal of your community group?

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