

Depoliticising Poverty Reduction?

*Civil Society Participation in the
Formulation of the Zambian PRSP*

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Abbreviations

ACF	Agriculture Consultative Forum
ACP	Agriculture Commercialisation Programme
ASIP	Agriculture Sector Investment Programme
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CSPR	Civil Society for Poverty Reduction
CSPR-PRSP	'A Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for Zambia: A Civil Society Perspective'
GRZ	Government of the Republic of Zambia
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Country
IDA	International Development Association
IFI	International Financial Institution
IMF	International Monetary Fund
I-PRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
JCTR	Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture (Food and Fisheries/and Cooperatives)
MOF	Ministry of Finance (and National Planning/Economical Development)
NAPSSFZ	National Association for Peasant and Small-Scale Farmers
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NGOCC	NGO Coordinating Committee
NPRAP	National Poverty Reduction Action Plan
PAM	Programme Against Malnutrition
PRGF	Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
UNZA	University of Zambia
WfC	Women for Change
ZNFU	Zambia National Farmers Union

1 Introduction

If participation means that the voiceless gain a voice, we should expect this to bring some conflict. It will challenge power relations, both within any individual project and in wider society. The absence of conflict in many supposedly 'participatory' programmes is something that should raise our suspicions. Change hurts. Beyond this, the bland front presented by many discussions of participation in development should itself suggest questions: What interests does this 'non-politics' serve, and what interests may it be suppressing?

Sarah C. White (2000: 155)

1.1 Introduction and problem statement

Over the past two decades, the development field has witnessed an increase in the body of literature that reflects on the potential dangers of the development discourse. Inspired by insights provided by discourse analytical approaches (Foucauldian perspectives in particular), some of these scholars point to what they see as a *depoliticisation* of development issues and processes (e.g. Ferguson 1990; Abrahamsen 2000; Pearce 2000; White 2000; Harriss 2001; Bøås and McNeill 2004a; Shore and Wright 1997).¹

Some of the studies on depoliticisation have been empirically oriented, looking at these dynamics at project level (e.g. Ferguson 1990), but most have a more general or theoretical focus. This thesis represents an attempt to contribute to the empirical exploration of the dynamics of depoliticisation, through the case study of a participatory process of policy-making in a developing country – the process of formulating the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in Zambia. More specifically, the thesis will explore the effects of what has been called the 'good governance' agenda (see Abrahamsen 2000) on the participation process in the formulation of the PRSP in Zambia, as well as on 'civil society'² in Zambia, as an important actor in this process. The overriding question is: *To what extent was the PRSP formulation process in Zambia depoliticised?*

The point is to consider how approaches taken in planning at the national level are

¹ The concept of depoliticisation will here be understood in terms of two dynamics: on the one hand it is understood as resulting from the use of a technical/economic perspective on issues that are inherently political (see e.g. Ferguson 1990); on the other it is seen as resulting from a tendency to romanticise concepts, actors and spaces (e.g. the grassroots and civil society) in the development sphere (see e.g. Harriss 2001). Both dynamics have the effect of effectively masking structures of power inherent in the fields to which they refer, and this is the effect of depoliticisation. The concept will be expanded and operationalised in chapter 2.3.2. The understanding of 'politics' applied in this thesis is presented in 1.3.1.

² A working definition, and an outline of further use of the concept, is provided in chapter 1.4.

affected by the tendency of current development discourse – the good governance agenda in particular – to look at policy issues from a technical/economic perspective, and to romanticise certain actors (such as civil society) in the field. The good governance agenda, coupled with the new Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS) approach, pays particular attention to the *participation* of societal actors, such as ‘civil society’, in processes of policy making at the national level, in order to ensure *country ownership* to development policies. This calls for country-level analyses of civil society in specific contexts, as well as for scrutinising the potential of such processes to lead to real national ownership. Through an empirical examination of the meaning of ‘civil society’, I will show how, in the Zambian context, the concept has taken on a meaning largely produced by donor development rhetoric and practice. Further, using a discourse analytical approach in looking at the debates under the agricultural section of the PRSP, I will show how, despite a relatively open participation process during the formulation of the PRSP, the influence of civil society on the final PRSP document was limited. I will argue that this is, at least in part, due to the dominance of a technical and economic perspective which drains the policies and processes of policy making of their political content.

The main research question will be dealt with in three steps, looking at the actors (‘civil society’ in particular), the process (of formulating the PRSP), and the relative influence of the actors (on the PRSP document):

a) *The actors*. What are the characteristics of the organisations in what has come to constitute ‘civil society’ in Zambia? By extension, *what is the meaning of ‘civil society’ in Zambia?* What is the relationship of ‘civil society’ to other societal actors (to non-organised interests; interest organisations; grassroots and the rural poor) on the one hand, and to the state and external donors on the other? And how does the Zambian version of ‘civil society’ compare to the ‘good governance’ version of the concept?

b) *The participation process*. Here we look at the openness and depth of the participation process: In what ways did the international financial institutions (IFIs)³ and the

³ IFIs are usually taken to mean the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Multilateral Development Banks, the most

Zambian government shape the process? *What were the conditions for participation by 'civil society'?*

c) *The relative influence of the actors.* The third part of the research question looks at the end result of the process – the PRSP document: What was the relative influence of 'civil society' on the document vis-à-vis the other actors? *Was 'civil society' participation meaningful?* That is to say, did 'civil society' have an impact on the PRSP in matters of importance to them? And did the process have room for dealing with the issues as political, or was the task seen as a matter of finding the 'most efficient' solution to the problem?

1.2 Theoretical points of departure

As indicated above, this thesis is informed by a body of literature that is critical to current development discourse, including its underlying theoretical assumptions and ideological/normative positions – largely liberal or 'neo-liberal' perspectives. Most of these contributions draw on discourse theoretical approaches, and are thus concerned with questions of power and the construction of knowledge and meaning (see e.g. Ferguson 1990; Abrahamsen 2000; Pearce 2000; White 2000; Harriss 2001; Bøås and McNeill 2004a). The main point of this line of research is that it is important to keep a critical eye on the concepts derived from the development discourse – the good governance agenda in particular – such as 'civil society', 'participation', 'social capital' and 'empowerment' which exert an increasing influence on development policy in developing countries. This approach is instrumental in enabling us to move beyond the apparent consensus regarding the benefits of 'civil society' participation, and allows a scrutiny of the very concepts that form the basis of the PRS approach, instead of simply evaluating the participation process as such.

Being polemical towards what is often termed a 'liberal' position in this theory universe, these contributions are often themselves quite normative. On the one hand, this can be problematic insofar as it goes against the ideal that research should be 'objective',

important one being the World Bank (Bull 2002: 1), in addition to the regional development banks. Here, the term IFIs will be taken to mean only the IMF and the World Bank, as these are the two institutions most relevant for this study. The term 'donor' will be taken to mean the IFIs and bilateral donors, unless it is specified otherwise.

and not be conducted from an ideological point of view. On the other hand – and this is also a major point for many of these scholars – it should be recognised that science is not conducted in a vacuum. This is particularly true in the social sciences. The researcher will carry with her/him a certain amount of prejudgements of the world. Drawing on Foucault, we might even say that knowledge does not exist as ‘objective truth’: it is always constructed – reflecting or shaping relations of power in the field to which it pertains (Foucault 1979: 27). The challenge then, is to make explicit one’s prejudgements, both to one self and to others. In discourse analytical approaches, this, rather than objectivity, becomes the ideal – to situate oneself as precisely as possible (Neumann 2001: 178).

What motivates this study is a wish to scrutinise what I see as the skewed relations of power within the international development arena. Some of the critique against the IFIs tends, however, to border on conspiracy theory. This is a pitfall that, in my opinion, does not contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics that create this unjust system.⁴ Instead this thesis is informed by discourse analytical perspectives, and in particular by a Foucauldian concept of power. The basic idea here is that power is not necessarily held *by* someone, or used *against* another party in order to obtain a given objective (ibid.: 168). This approach allows us to look at the power relations of the aid industry as the result of certain dynamics that are not controlled by one particular actor or set of actors (Ferguson 1990: 19). Thus, in this study, while I will assert that the World Bank as an institution is highly influential in the field of development, I will not view the Bank as an actor which is intentionally exercising power over other actors in the field. A more comprehensive account of this, along with the wider theory framework and analytical tools to be applied, is provided in chapter 2.

1.3 The ‘good governance’ agenda

Issues of government accountability and transparency in decision-making entered the development discourse in the early 1990s, as a response to the failure of Structural

⁴ Indeed, the assumption of conspiracy – because it does not separate *intentions* from *outcomes* – presupposes the ‘rationalist mainstream model of development intervention, according to which development interventions proceed smoothly from policy and implementations to outcomes’ (Baaz 2005: 8). The insights provided by among others Ferguson (1990) demonstrate this model’s shortcomings in this field. In the field of policy analysis this model is increasingly questioned (see e.g. Bacchi 1999).

Adjustment Programmes of the preceding decade. Under structural adjustment, the key to development had been sound economic policies. Now, in addition, democratic principles came to be seen as a necessary precondition for development (Abrahamsen 2000: 31–32). This movement toward extending the field of international development cooperation has been termed the ‘good governance’ agenda (e.g. Abrahamsen 2000; Bøås and McNeill 2004a). But because of the non-political mandate of the World Bank these principles have tended to be represented as technical measures for administrative efficiency, accountability and transparency (Abrahamsen 2000: 11). The following section will expand on this.

1.3.1 Technical/economic approach to development issues

The mandate of the World Bank has been explicitly non-political since its inception: ‘Only economic considerations shall be relevant to their [the Bank and its officers] decisions’, as defined in the Articles of Agreement (World Bank 1989b: article IV, section 10, cited in Bøås and McNeill 2003: 44). The basic rationale behind this ‘non-politics’ was the thinking that development is an essentially technical task (Bøås and McNeill 2003: 70). From the project support and technical advice provided until the 1980s, the Bank’s support has become increasingly programme-based and macro-level (cf. the structural adjustment policies) (ibid.: 63), and from the early 1990s, its advice has also become more policy/governance oriented (cf. the good governance agenda) (Abrahamsen 2000: 1).⁵ However, as its mandate remains technical/economic (it is not to interfere in the domestic politics of recipient countries), according to Abrahamsen, it is in the Bank’s (and other donors’) interest to represent ‘development as a neutral enterprise’, and to ‘define governance as both politically and culturally neutral’ (ibid.: 11). In other words, politics masked as technicalities.

What then is ‘political’? ‘Politics’ in the strictest sense can be defined as public decision-making within political institutions (Østerud 1997: 198–199). In the widest sense, it can be said to encompass ‘all social relations that involve power, rule and

⁵ The background of this change will not be explored in this thesis. Bøås and McNeill (2003 and 2004a) provide a thorough account of the evolution of the development discourse. On the question of conditionality, they assert that this has always been part of Bank activity, and as such, it has never provided merely technical assistance (2003: 64). For a critical account of the development of the good governance agenda, see Abrahamsen (2000).

authority’, and as such is also found outside political institutions (ibid.: 199, my translation). Importantly, politics also implies recognising that there will always be different and often conflicting views on public issues (ibid.: 199). In this thesis, depoliticisation is understood essentially as a disregard for the importance of power relations in society. What will inform this thesis is primarily the wider definition of politics as quoted above, as well as the understanding that public issues around which there is potential conflict are inherently *political* issues. Where the term ‘political’ is applied in the narrow sense, this will be made clear.

1.3.2 New and recycled buzzwords: ‘civil society’ and ‘participation’

In the good governance agenda, accountability and transparency in government is seen as essential to making development aid more effective. To achieve this, according to the agenda, the state should be reduced – in terms of its apparatus, and its role in society (Abrahamsen 2000: 53). Correspondingly, the roles of private sector and ‘civil society’ should be strengthened: in the liberal tradition, both are seen as restraints on government in their own right. Thus, they are seen as instrumental in curbing the power of the state. In the wake of this policy shift, a range of new concepts started cropping up, among these, ‘civil society’ and ‘participation’.⁶

‘Civil society’ in good governance is understood, much in the liberal tradition, as intermediary organisations which ‘can create links upward and downward in society and voice local concerns more effectively than grassroots institutions’ (World Bank 1989a: 61, cited in Abrahamsen 2000: 53).⁷ A democratic orientation is implicit. In good governance, civil society has come to serve two functions in particular. The first is to function as a *watchdog* vis-à-vis the state. Thus, the strengthening of civil society becomes vital for securing weak democracies. The second major role of civil society is to function as a *link from the grassroots* to the national policymaking level. Under this second role, civil society has increasingly taken on a role in service delivery. Until recently, it was seen almost as an alternative channel of aid to secure basic services to

⁶ Another such concept is that of ‘social capital’. Though it is closely related to the concept of ‘civil society’ in the development discourse, it will not be taken up further here. For a critical study of this, see Harriss (2001).

⁷ An elaboration of the liberal position is provided in chapter 2.

the population. In the past few years however, the focus has increasingly been on ‘partnership’ between government and civil society and the donors, where donors channel funds through government, which in turn contracts NGOs or private sector for service delivery. It is conceivable that this partnership may conflict with the role of watchdog for civil society, and this will be dealt with in relevant sections of the thesis.

The concept of ‘participation’ has long been present in the development field, at project level, in various forms of participatory development practices (see e.g. Chambers 1994). But in the wake of good governance it has increasingly been linked to policy-making and macro-level planning, as in the PRS agenda (Cornwall 2000: 60–61). Participation is meant to contribute to creating a sense of ownership of projects, programmes or wider policy frameworks, to ensure that the projects or policies are locally rooted, and thereby to achieve sustainability. As some scholars have pointed out, though, participation can also be a means for control of social groups (White 2000: 143) and an instrument for building legitimacy around an already defined agenda.

1.4 Definition and further use of the concept of civil society

Civil society is here understood as a sphere of voluntary organisation and action existing in relative autonomy as regards the state, the market and the household (based on Cohen and Arato 1992: ix, 74; Van Rooy 1998: 30; Habib and Kotzé 2002: 3). I define it spatially, but without passing judgement as to what kinds of values or forms of organisation or expression should be dominant in the sphere.

Leaving ideology aside and delineating it spatially is not that simple, however. As indicated in the definition, there are no clear-cut dividing lines between these spheres. In some cases, they will certainly intertwine. Indeed, some scholars question the very separation between the state and civil society in Africa, pointing to e.g. the patrimonial relations that shape the political logic over much of the continent (see Chabal and Daloz 1999). This question will be discussed in chapter 3.5. The boundaries between the market and civil society can equally be questioned. Consider for example the concept of ‘income-generating activities’ where grassroots organisations enter the market to raise money for their work, or their members. One actor can thus have multiple roles and thereby float between spheres. For my purpose though, actors who are in the business of making money are not part of the civil society sphere, in contrast to actors who are in the

business of advocating the interests of these money-makers. This way, farmers' organisations that exclusively represent commercial farmers, like the former Commercial Farmers Bureau in Zambia, are part of civil society as I define it.

Still, the use of the concept in this thesis is not straightforward, as it serves many different purposes, here and in general. It is at once a theoretical concept, with a wide variety of meanings and connotations; and a policy term, used by donors to signify a certain social space; as well as an empirical concept used to describe a wide variety of social spaces in different national contexts. In order to separate the theoretical/analytical concept from the practical donor version and the empirical phenomenon in Zambia, the latter two will be placed in inverted commas. This seems appropriate, as both signify a specification of the more generally defined theoretical concept. 'Civil society', then signifies the donor version of the concept. When I refer to the empirical phenomenon at hand, this will be termed Zambian 'civil society'.

Finally, a remark regarding the apparent treatment of Zambian 'civil society' as a homogeneous group in parts of the thesis. Dealing with 'civil society' in Zambia, we are looking at a body of organisations that have more or less explicitly joined in a collective idea of 'civil society' as distinct from the state and private business. At the practical level, this finds expression through the formation of networks such as the Oasis Forum and Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR). And yet, the organisations defining themselves as 'civil society' are different in many respects. While some are practically oriented, providing micro-credit or social services, others engage in awareness raising and advocacy towards policy-makers. Their common ground is that their work is based on *solidarity* with others in some sense of the word (Fiedler-Conradi 2003: 9). While some will display solidarity in the sense of providing charity, others will display solidarity through talking about rights.

In the following, while recognising the diversity within the body of organisations termed 'civil society' in Zambia, I will to some extent treat Zambian 'civil society' as one actor. This is because I seek to explore the characteristics of the cluster of organisations that define themselves as 'civil society', by looking at its relations to the rest of society, as well as the donors and the state. For this, a focus on the commonalities

seems necessary. That said, internal differences will also be noted where relevant for the study.

1.5 The PRS approach

The Poverty Reduction Strategies approach was introduced in 1999 as an attempt to integrate the Millennium Development Goals into World Bank and IMF policies, and to link debt relief to poverty reduction (Walan 2002: 5). To access full debt relief under the HIPC (Highly Indebted Poor Countries) initiative,⁸ governments were required to prepare a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) that should be ‘country-owned’. By ‘country ownership’ is meant that strategies should spring from priorities set nationally, not only within government but involving various sections of society. According to the World Bank and IMF, the PRS approach represents a shift away from the structural adjustment policies of the past decades (ibid.: 3), though this claim has been widely questioned.⁹ An important objection is the contradiction inherent in the strong focus on national ownership of the policies, and the fact that the plans have to be ‘endorsed’ by an IMF/IDA (World Bank) joint board before they are recognised as the country’s new strategy for development, as well as the instrument for lending for the multilateral agencies (Cling et al. 2003a; UNCTAD 2002; Eurodad 2001; Musamba 2003 [interview]; Saasa 2003 [informal conversation]). This is reinforced by the IFIs and other donors holding the financial key to implementation of the PRSPs. Further, the realism in the notion of ownership is questioned in light of the conditionality still imposed by the IFIs (UNCTAD 2002: 19). Another factor noted is the likely exertion of ‘self-discipline’ on the part of the governments, that is to say ‘the risk [...] that expectations of what would be acceptable by bilateral donors and IFIs may influence significantly the way PRSPs are prepared’ (ibid.: 12). This danger has been raised by international NGOs as a critique of the approach, something which is even noted in a joint IMF/World Bank review of the PRSPs from 2002 (IMF/World Bank 2002, quoted in UNCTAD 2002: 12)

⁸ The HIPC Initiative was launched in 1996 to lessen the unsustainable debt burden of the poorest and most indebted developing countries. In 1999 it was expanded to include more countries, at the same time making the debt relief more extensive and more easily accessible, but also linked more closely to achieving poverty reduction in the HIPC countries (Walan 2002: 5).

⁹ E.g. Cling et al. (2003b); UNCTAD 2002; Sanchez and Cash (2003); Eurodad (2001); Bøås (2002).

1.5.1 The role of participation in the PRSP processes

The stated purpose of including participation as a principle in the PRS regime is to ensure broad-based ownership, increase transparency in the policymaking process, and hence government accountability (World Bank 2002: 238). According to the PRSP Sourcebook: ‘Participation is the process by which stakeholders influence and share control over priority setting, policy making, resource allocations, and/or program implementation’ (ibid.: 237). The recommendation is that participation is to happen throughout the process, including in the initial phases of priority setting. In terms of which actors should be part of the process, the Sourcebook states that the PRSP preparation process should involve participation from certain key stakeholder groups, such as the government, civil society, the private sector, donors, and the general public – vulnerable groups in particular (ibid.: 250). It explicitly points at the inclusion of the ‘knowledge and experience’ of ‘the poor and vulnerable groups, especially women’ (ibid.: 239). It is further recommended that there should be participation at both the national and the local level.

These recommendations should not be understood as a ‘blueprint for participation’ within the PRS paradigm: according to the PRSP Sourcebook, the criteria for what constitutes an acceptable participation process will vary with differing contexts (ibid.: 237). McGee et al. (2002) note two things in particular that indicate that this kind of open attitude did not guide the PRS regime. The first is the limited amount of time given to individual countries for the preparation of the PRSPs. Time pressure makes it difficult to develop a participation process based on national conditions. The other thing is the very chapter on participation in the PRSP Sourcebook, which is seen as ‘offering a “toolkit” of participatory approaches’ (ibid.: 4). According McGee et al., the World Bank sees participation ‘as something that could be achieved using a standard set of tools and methods, rather than as a lengthy process with its own, sometimes unpredictable, dynamics’ (ibid.: 4). Moreover, the Bank’s outlook on participation remains instrumental: the goal is to secure support for the PRSP and thus ensure effective implementation (ibid.: 4).

1.6 The case

The problem statement at hand is in large part empirically grounded, as its wording is

ted specifically to the case of the PRSP formulation process in Zambia. This case has been chosen for at least two reasons. Firstly, Zambia is a country that has very conscientiously been carrying out the structural adjustment programmes prescribed by the IMF and the World Bank. This suggests that the influence and presence of donors is significant. Secondly, several accounts of the PRSP formulation process in Zambia suggest that participation by 'civil society' has been relatively satisfactory (e.g. Bwalya et al. 2003; Walan 2002). This makes it a case where my problem statement will be put to the test much more than had I chosen a country where the participation process had been deemed a failure. Besides, Zambia is a relatively stable country that has never been at war (including civil war). Thus intervening variables, such as high levels of distrust in society, will not be present in the way they might in a post-conflict context. At the same time, Zambia has a very high incidence of poverty, which makes the PRSP process all the more relevant. Formally, the country has been a pluralist democracy for over ten years, but with regard to the consolidation of democratic practices, Zambia still has a long way to go (Rakner 2003: 13). Distrust of the government is relatively high, and this probably affected the participation process under the PRSP. Finding an HIPC country in which this was not a factor might be difficult, however. Thus in sum, the case of Zambia was deemed suitable.

I have chosen to narrow the focus by looking primarily at the agricultural sector in the PRSP formulation process in Zambia. This sector is of particular interest when it comes to poverty reduction, since agriculture provides the livelihood of the majority of the rural poor and thus has great potential for poverty reduction. Moreover, it involves around 75% of the Zambian population (Central Statistical Office 2003: 53). This focus on one sector makes it possible to go into greater depth than if I were looking at the whole process. The risk is that I may not be able to draw conclusions pertaining to the whole process of PRSP formulation in Zambia. This is mitigated somewhat by using data material (interviews and reports) not entirely restricted to the agricultural sector. Some of this material indicates that findings from the agricultural sector are applicable to other sectors as well. Moreover, despite the agriculture focus, I also deal with more general issues of the process in this thesis. Thus, the conclusions will not all be restricted to the

agricultural sector. Even so, the limitations of the material must be kept in mind.

Below comes a short introduction to the poverty situation in Zambia, as well as to the field of agriculture in the country. This should provide the necessary background for understanding the discussion in chapter 5 in particular.

1.6.1 Poverty in Zambia

At independence in 1964, Zambia was one of the more promising and prosperous new countries in sub-Saharan Africa. This was due in large part to its vast copper reserves, and the corresponding high copper prices in the world market (Saasa 2002b: 24). The Zambian economy being virtually entirely dependent on copper, it was particularly hard hit in the mid-1970s when prices plummeted. Socio-economically, things went downhill from then on. In 1985, the World Bank reclassified Zambia from ‘low-middle income country’ to ‘low-income country’ (ibid.: 24). And from the early 1990s, the UN added Zambia to its list of least developed countries (ibid.: 24). During the 1990s, the combination of liberalisation – causing massive job-loss and very harsh conditions for farmers – and several droughts made the situation even worse. While in 1991 62% of the population were living under the national poverty line¹⁰ (GRZ 2002: 22), by 1998 the corresponding figure had risen to around 73%¹¹ (Central Statistical Office: 1998: 114). Inequality is also high in Zambia, with a Gini coefficient¹² at 52.6 (World Bank 2004c; UNDP 2003b). This indicates a very high expenditure inequality by international standards. While the wealthiest quintile of the population are responsible for 56% of the total consumption, the poorest quintile consume only 3% of the country total (UNDP 2003b). Social indicators have dropped since the late 1980s, as indicated by the Human Development Index¹³ (HDI). While Zambia’s HDI had increased from 1975 to 1985

¹⁰ The calculation of the poverty line is based on an absolute definition of poverty: minimum calorie intake. Thus, the poverty line is set as “the amount of monthly income required to meet the caloric requirements for a family of six” (Saasa 2002b: 16; GRZ 2002: 22). As Saasa points out (and is also recognised in Central Statistical Office 1998: 112) this index does not take into account such basic needs as clothing, shelter etc. Nor are concerns such as human freedoms, security, a sense of control over one’s own life (Narayan 2000: 64) considered. In short, the so-called multi-dimensional character of poverty is lost through this definition. The strength of this poverty line-measure is that it is specifically Zambian, as opposed to the universal poverty line set at 1 US\$ per day.

¹¹ Although it now dates seven years back, this remains the official figure in Zambia, from the survey “Living Conditions in Zambia – 1998” (Central Statistical Office 1998). The World Bank still uses the 1998 figures (cf. 2004b; 2004a: 2).

¹² The Gini-coefficient measures inequality on a scale from 0 to 1, where 0 equals perfect equality (Hellevik 1991: 208).

¹³ The index is produced by the UNDP. It is based on data for life expectancy at birth; adult literacy rate combined with the primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment ratio; and GDP per capita (Purchasing Power Parity in US\$) as a measure of the standard of living (UNDP 2003a). This gives a more sophisticated measure for the poverty situation in a country than the simple

(sustained by an ever increasing foreign debt), in 2001 it was *lower* than in 1975.¹⁴

The decline of the HDI from the mid-1980s is in part due to the sharp reduction of life expectancy rates caused by the HIV/AIDS pandemic that has hit Zambia very hard. However, it also suggests that the structural adjustment policies have had a highly adverse effect on social indicators – as also indicated by qualitative data. In the study *The Poor of Zambia Speak*, people specifically mention the liberalisation of the agricultural sector as a major cause of their worsened poverty situation (Milimo et al. 2002: 14; also World Bank 1999: 28; UNDP 2004, 1 June). In particular, liberalisation is reported to have led to food insecurity and a loss of possible income. Other causes mentioned are also related to structural adjustment: the privatisation of industry, causing rising unemployment; the introduction of school fees in primary education, making parents unable to send their children to school; and the introduction of user fees for health services (Milimo et al. 2002: 14).

In terms of comprehensive national policies aimed at achieving poverty reduction prior to the PRSP, there is one relatively recent attempt worth mentioning: the National Poverty Reduction Action Plan (NPRAP) of 1998. Unlike the PRSP, which was led by the Ministry of Finance, this was coordinated under the Ministry for Community Development and Social Services, and the preparation was funded by the UNDP (GRZ 2000: point 26). The main criticism passed was that it was too broad (Saasa 2002b 45; Musamba 2003 [interview]), and it seems one never got started on implementing it. In early 2000, the Plan was apparently still being refined (GRZ 2000: point 28), but then the World Bank and the IMF made demands on the government to make a PRSP, and thus the NPRAP initiatives were more or less dismissed. The Interim PRSP stated that the PRSP would build on the strengths of the NPRAP (ibid.: point 32), but this was not done to any substantial degree (Walan 2002: 34). One explanation given for this is that the links between the Ministry of Finance (PRSP secretariat) and the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (NPRAP secretariat) were limited (ibid.: 34). The fact that the Ministry of Finance is the driving body of the PRSP is an

GDP per capita (US\$). Of course, neither measurement does justice to the immensely complex phenomenon of poverty.

¹⁴ The HDI was .462 in 1975, .478 in 1985, .461 in 1990, .414 in 1995 and .386 in 2001. (UNDP 2003c)

indication of the focus on economic factors and measures for poverty reduction.

1.6.2 Agricultural development in Zambia

The first National Agriculture Policy for Zambia came in 2004 (GRZ 2003; *Times of Zambia* 2004a). Before that, the direction was guided by the general policy framework of government, but was in practice determined relatively ad hoc through various programmes set up under the sector. During the one-party rule of President Kenneth Kaunda and the United National Independence Party (UNIP) from 1964–1991, the main objective with regard to agriculture was to provide reasonably priced food (maize meal) for the urban population of the Copperbelt Province and in Lusaka (Pletcher 2000:133; Klepper 1980: 130, cited in Wood 1990: 22). Agriculture was not seen as a source of economic growth as such, so investment in agriculture was not meant to strengthen the sector, but was directed at keeping the prices of produce low. Even if a majority of Zambians are involved in agriculture, only 14% of the arable land is currently under cultivation (GRZ 2002: 53).

Zambian agriculture revolved almost exclusively around one crop – maize – even in areas ill-suited for it. The state put together a system of handling the maize all the way from production to marketing. Farmers were organised through the cooperative movement, which was a mass organisation under the party structure, coordinated under the Zambia Cooperative Federation. Parastatal companies like the National Agricultural Marketing Board provided inputs, like fertiliser and improved seeds at subsidised rates, and provided credit. The parastatals, through the cooperative movement, also bought the produce after harvest. Everything was handled within the structures of the party.

When the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) with Frederick Chiluba came to power in 1991, this structure was abandoned completely. The MMD embarked upon an economic liberalisation programme and resumed Zambia's contact with the IMF. Parastatals were privatised, and the cooperative movement with the infrastructure attached to it was dismantled. The withdrawal of the state from the sector had a very negative impact on the ability of small-scale farmers to grow and market their crops (GRZ 2002: 59; Saasa (2002b); Lipalile 2003 [interview]; Haachiinda 2003 [interview]). The private sector was not ready to take over on the scale required, and this affected the production capacity of virtually all small-scale farmers in the country. Farmers no longer

had access to improved planting seeds and fertiliser, and should they be able to produce, they were not likely to be able to sell. Though the approach worked to some extent in areas with a functioning infrastructure, it was very damaging in the rural areas, where there were no private actors who could take over the functions of the state (Lipalile 2003 [interview]). Looking back, most agree that liberalisation was too abrupt. Even the World Bank will say that there should have been some kind of transition period (Mwanakasale 2003 [interview]). However, the government was probably not only acting on IFI diktat. There were also political reasons. The cooperative movement had been a wing of the UNIP since the mid-1980s (Mwape 1994: 96), and was allegedly pervaded by patrimonial relations (Pletcher 2000: 131). And so the movement was brought to an end, with no regard for the resources it possessed, such as a comprehensive physical infrastructure for input distribution, storage and marketing.

Since the shift in presidency in 2002 (after the main part of PRSP formulation was complete), there has been a change in agricultural policies. A strengthening of the agricultural sector was one of current president Levy Mwanawasa's promises before the election (*Times of Zambia* 2001a), which also seems to have been followed up to a certain degree. There is more focus on the conditions for small-scale producers, and there is also recognition of the view that the private sector is (at present) not capable of catering for the needs of all farmers. State involvement in the sector is accepted, at least in a transition period. In 2002, a Fertiliser Support Programme was launched, giving small-scale farmers a 50% subsidy on their fertiliser (Øygaard et al. 2003: 19).¹⁵ This programme, however, is supposed to be phased out within a few years. At the same time it is made clear that the main policy towards small-scale farmers will be the establishment of out-grower schemes¹⁶ (*Times of Zambia* 2001a), which is fully in line with the privatisation line of the 1990s. In the medium to long term, the goal is still to develop a competitive and efficient agricultural sector through liberalisation and commercialisation (GRZ 2003:iv).

¹⁵ The farmer must be able to pay the remaining half to get the subsidy, thus it is not a social services support measure. Instead it is directed at so-called 'vulnerable, but viable' farmers (Haantuba 2003 [interview]).

¹⁶An out-grower scheme is an arrangement whereby small-scale producers are linked up to a large-scale producer or another commercial agricultural actor who supplies them with inputs and buys their produce, in exchange for the use of his/her labour and

The general backdrop of the PRSP was liberalisation. The PRSP expands on the Agriculture Sector Investment Programme (ASIP) from 1996, as well as the Agricultural Commercialisation Programme (ACP), which was published in November 2001 and was supposed to function as an instrument for the implementation of the PRSP. Additionally, a National Agriculture Policy was developed parallel to the PRSP and was officially passed in 2004. All these are to a greater or lesser degree oriented towards commercialisation of the agricultural sector. Thus, when looking at the debates in the Working Group for agriculture in chapter 5, we should bear in mind the clear tendency towards commercial agriculture – in the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as in important interest organisations in the sector.

1.7 Methods

1.7.1 The case-study method: single embedded case study

This thesis is the study of a process: the formulation of the Zambian PRSP. The case-study method seems the most appropriate for this kind of study, as it provides the opportunity to study the process while also including relevant aspects of the context in the analysis. According to Robert Yin, this is the strong point of the case-study method: it enables the handling of a very high number of variables (1994: 13). In order to achieve some degree of methodological control in this situation, one needs to use data from many different sources, so-called data triangulation (*ibid.*: 92). The sources and process of data collection for this study are outlined in section 1.7.2 below.

The case under study is a single case, the process of formulating the PRSP in Zambia. Further, it must be characterised as an embedded case study (*ibid.*: 41–44), as it will have to be broken down into different units of analysis, which, when combined, can provide answers to the overriding question at hand. As indicated in section 1.1, the research question is divided into three sub-sections, which address separate aspects. These also constitute the units of analysis: the actors (‘civil society’ in Zambia); the process (of formulating the PRSP); and the contents (primarily the agricultural chapter of the PRSP). Each is dealt with in a separate chapter (3–5). As they are very different in nature, they will require different analytical approaches. These are outlined in chapter 2.

The study can be characterised as partly descriptive, and partly exploratory (Yin 1994: 15). The first and second parts of the research question are about describing ‘civil society’ and the participation process, and as such constitute the descriptive part of the study. Some theoretical positions and analytical tools will be presented in chapter 2. These will guide the analysis. The third part of the research question can be characterised as exploratory. The aim is not to explain an outcome, but rather to explore a process and its result. The notion of ‘depoliticisation’ will guide the exploration. Following from the theoretical underpinnings of the study (introduced above, and outlined further in chapter 2), my hypothesis is that the good governance discourse has led to a depoliticisation of the PRSP process in Zambia. The question is whether the PRSP had room for political discussions and choices, or whether economic reasoning was considered the most legitimate approach. In order to decide on this matter, simple pattern matching will be applied (c.f. Yin 1994: 109). The process and its result will be interpreted in terms of two extremes on either end of a scale, ‘political’ or ‘depoliticised’, although we are unlikely to find a plain, unambiguous pattern. The ambition is to identify features of each and point to tendencies in either direction. In order to do this, a discourse analytical approach will be applied: the concept of ‘framing’ will be particularly important for this section of the study. This is outlined in chapter 2.3.1.

1.7.2 Data material

The data material for this study was primarily collected during the course of 2003. All my primary sources were accumulated during a field trip to Zambia from mid-October to mid-December 2003: I conducted 43 informant interviews, including 3 more informal topical conversations; I had access, albeit limited, to certain process documents and minutes; I went through newspaper archives from the period of formulation; I obtained relevant official documents; statistical reports from the Central Statistical Office.

Secondary data included published and unpublished papers and statements by CSPR and other NGOs; reports by Northern NGOs present in Zambia; reports and papers by Zambian researchers, reports from Northern activist networks and research institutions (see reference list).

Semi-structured, topical interviews

In selecting my informants, I sought to talk to persons who had been involved in the

process of preparing the PRSP – whether through the CSPR network, or in the government-led process; as representatives of organisations at national and local levels; government ministries, or local government.¹⁷ I also conducted several interviews with scholars at the University of Zambia, and at independent research institutes, as well as one organisation that had not participated in the process.¹⁸ The interviews were focused (Yin 1994: 84–85) or semi-structured interviews (Mikkelsen 1995), which means that I used a prepared interview guide to direct the conversation. This guide was generated from the three components of the research question. The interviews were predominantly what Rubin and Rubin characterise as topical¹⁹ (1995: 196). Although there were specific questions I wished to cover with most informants, the interviews also had elements of a more open-ended nature. In trying to obtain information on the various organisations for example, I found that very open questions often yielded more relevant information on, for example, the culture of an organisation than had I asked for the specific facts, even if it also provided a lot of extraneous information. Additionally, I would of course follow up if informants gave new leads relevant to the subject, and at times these led me to revise the interview guide.

One constraint encountered during the interviews resulted from my choice of focusing on a process that had taken place two years earlier. It seems I had underestimated the problems involved in relying on people’s memories in planning my data collection. Informants would sometimes have difficulty remembering the progress of the process, as well as details regarding the topics discussed. I tried as much as possible to help them by referring to ‘landmark events’ of the PRSP process, around which the conversation would be focused, as recommended by Bernard (1995: 235). I also sought to mitigate the problem by asking the same questions to all relevant informants, and attempting to verify

¹⁷ Lists of participants for both the CSPR process and the government-led process were found in a Bread for the World Institute report on the Zambian PRSP process (2001). These turned out to be fairly accurate and were used as guides for finding my informants. However, they had to be supplemented. But as the written documentation obtained from the Ministry of Finance was also somewhat inaccurate, I had to rely on information from my informants (which would also differ somewhat). The CSPR was unable to provide lists of participants for its thematic sub-groups under the PRSP. Regarding the participants at the province level, the Ministry of Finance’s PRSP coordination unit provided a fairly accurate list. For the CSPR provincial consultations, I had to rely completely on interviews with key informants for information on participants, as no list of participants existed. Combined, the available information nonetheless provided a relatively accurate picture.

¹⁸ See list of interviews and informal conversations in reference list.

¹⁹ As opposed to cultural interviews, which deal with peoples’ life worlds and understandings (Rubin and Rubin 1995: 195).

previously obtained information in subsequent interviews.²⁰ With regard to the Working Group sessions and actors' contributions, it is likely that the informants best remembered the most important or most controversial issues, and that was a good starting point for my analysis.

The problem of written documentation

With regard to obtaining written material, there were some constraints. Firstly, there was a general lack of written documentation on the formulation process, both with government and with the CSPR. This was a particularly big problem at the province level. For the most part this seemed to be the result of the general absence of a culture of keeping written records. Secondly, there was a code of confidentiality that guided the work of some of the actors. Where material was inadequate, I have indicated this in the text, and restricted my conclusions accordingly.

Visit to the provinces

During my field visit, I stayed in Lusaka, the capital, for the most part, as this was where most of my informants were based. However, in order to be able to cover the province-level consultations, a trip to one of the provinces was mandatory. So, I went on a two-week trip to Luapula Province in the far north. Ideally, I would have visited more than one province in order to get broader-based material, but time and resources did not allow this. I visited three different districts within Luapula Province, one of which was the provincial capital. The intention was to interview persons who had participated in the province-level consultations of the PRSP preparations, not to get the views of, e.g., the local farmer. Nonetheless, the trip to Luapula was very educational with regard to the conditions of these farmers.

1.7.3 The quality of the design: questions of reliability and validity

The *reliability* of a study relates to the replicability of the analysis: can it be conducted again by another researcher (or again by the same researcher) with the same result (Yin 1994: 36)? This is ensured by consistent and standardised methods of data collection and analysis. Data collection for this study was accounted for above. Further, the data material has been systematised and archived; interview transcripts and notes have been

²⁰ Keeping the source of my information anonymous as a main rule.

coded according to specified categories derived from the topics of interest, and compiled in an archive, along with the original tapes; written sources such as statistical reports, minutes and working documents have also been filed.

This accuracy in handling the data material also helps ensure the *construct validity* of the study, in that it facilitates the establishment of a chain of evidence (Yin 1994: 98): it renders visible to the reader the data material upon which the inferences are made. As much as possible, this thesis tries to use direct citations from interviews and written primary sources to achieve this. Besides, the use of citations is also an ideal within discourse analysis: to let the reader judge for her-/himself whether the interpretation drawn from the material is plausible (Neumann 2001: 11). A key aspect of validity is whether the operationalisations are relevant for the research questions at hand. Thus, it is central to make the research questions as operational as possible. This is dealt with towards the end of chapter 2. Finally, it is essential that the data material be solid enough to enable inferences to be made from it. The use of many different sources of evidence helps improve this: where the interview material is backed up or revised by written sources (or visa versa), more reliable conclusions can be drawn (Yin 1994: 91–92). This thesis uses a variety of primary sources (as accounted for in 1.7.2), which often address the same things. On some points they converge, and triangulation is achieved; on some they differ, and secondary data must be brought in.

As this study does not seek to establish causal relationships, the aspect of *internal validity* is not so pertinent. However, it is relevant on the point of making inferences as well (ibid.: 35). In this regard, the most important points are operationalisation, and making the distinctions between alternative outcomes as explicit as possible (ibid.: 110). This is addressed in 1.7.1 and will be developed in chapter 2.

The study draws heavily on Ferguson's theoretical points on depoliticisation, derived from his empirical study of a single development project in Lesotho. Herein lays an ambition to generalise the findings. Generalising from single case studies (*external validity*) is very different from generalising on the basis of statistically representative material. Contrary to statistical generalisation, this *analytical* generalisation refers to theoretical ideas or models, rather than a population or universe (ibid.: 10). Analytical

generalisation presupposes that the case has been carefully selected (as accounted for in 1.6), and not chosen randomly, which is the procedure with statistical methods. Naturally, evidence from the Zambian case can tell us little about the PRSP processes in other countries. It may however, contribute to expanding knowledge on the workings of the development discourse, inasmuch as the case relates to the theoretical contributions of Ferguson's study, and the case from which these are derived. In this sense, the study is also 'theory developing', as it aims to widen the validity scope of existing theory (Andersen 1997: 128).

1.8 Scope and outline of the thesis

In terms of limitations in time-span, I have chosen to do a study of the *formulation* process of the PRSP in Zambia. This means that the implementation and monitoring (which is also supposed to be a participatory process) will not be the subject of this thesis. The thesis will not involve an evaluation of the ability of the PRSP to reduce poverty in Zambia, nor will it evaluate the rate of implementation of the strategy.

Due also to the scope of the thesis, I will limit the focus to one sector. This way I will not be able to draw conclusions regarding the whole PRSP process in Zambia – but what is lost in breadth should be gained in depth. The agricultural sector is of particular interest when it comes to poverty reduction, since agricultural activity is the livelihood of the majority of the rural poor.

As regards the actors of the process, I have chosen to focus primarily on 'civil society'. Political institutions such as parliament will not be taken into the analysis, though this might have contributed interesting perspectives. The issue of the role of parliament in national PRSP processes has been tackled in for example Bwalya et al. (2003) and Piron with Evans (2004). I focus on 'civil society' for two main reasons. One is theoretically motivated (even if it entails empirical exploration): I find that, given the position of 'civil society' in the good governance discourse and as a stakeholder in PRSP processes, it is important to examine actually existing 'civil society', to see whether it has the qualities presupposed in the discourse. This is the topic of chapter 3. The second reason is more empirically motivated. For the sake of the argument it accepts the assumption of the PRS agenda that 'civil society' is a representative of the poor and marginalised segments of the population (World Bank 2002: 254). It thus builds on the

first motivation, and takes the normative stance that if that is the case, then ‘civil society’ should have a reasonable degree of influence on the strategy. The second task following from that is thus to see whether ‘civil society’ did influence the plan, as assumed in the PRS agenda. This is dealt with in chapters 4 and 5.

The structure of the thesis is as follows: The theoretical and analytical framework is presented in chapter 2, which works through the relevant literature, and serves to indicate my point of departure in terms of theory. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 analyse ‘civil society’ in Zambia, the participation process of the PRSP formulation, and the debates and negotiations leading to the final document, respectively. A conclusion is provided in chapter 6, which ties together the ends from the three analytical chapters, with a view to providing an answer to the main research question.

2 Theoretical considerations²¹

The research question outlined in the first chapter includes three specific components that address very different fields. These call for relatively different theoretical approaches. There is a need for theoretical pointers on what to look for in analysing ‘civil society’ in Zambia, the participation process, actor influence, as well as the overriding question of depoliticisation of the PRSP process.

This chapter starts with a discussion of the understandings of *civil society* in Africa, including the relations between civil society and donors, as well as the state. It proceeds to outline a framework for analysing the participation process of the PRSP; then presents the most important discourse-analytical concepts to be used; and discusses the notion of the depoliticisation of development. Finally, the analytical approach of the thesis is sketched out in a summary of the chapter.

2.1 Civil society and development

Civil society has come to occupy a central place in development thinking over the past fifteen years. While the 1980s had been the NGO-decade in development thinking and practice, the 1990s became the ‘civil society’-decade. This was rooted in two movements in particular. Firstly, the rationale for using international NGOs as a channel for development aid lay in their supposed comparative advantages vis-à-vis state apparatuses – such as strong links to the grassroots, flexibility, and less bureaucratic nature. During the 1990s this view was increasingly questioned (see e.g. Tvedt 1995; 1998).²² Thus came a shift (at least in rhetoric) towards nationally rooted organisations in ‘civil society’. Of course, the NGOs themselves were also using (and shaping) the language of ‘civil society’, and would generally push for a strengthening of this sphere in national contexts (Howell and Pearce 2001: 16). Secondly, the shift coincided with the democratisation processes of Eastern Europe, and the subsequent theoretical debate on the role of civil society in democratisation processes. Thus, ‘civil society’ entered both

²¹ This chapter is based on an essay submitted to the Department of Political Science at the University of Oslo, for course STV4345 ‘Critical Perspectives on the New Local Politics of Democratisation’, December 2004.

²² The phenomenon of international NGOs in development is taken up through an entire body of literature. Though this thesis touches upon some of the problem areas of this literature, due to its limited scope, it cannot deal with that field in any comprehensive way. For a more detailed account of the field, see Tvedt (1998).

the development arena and the democratisation arena. When ‘good governance’ became the order of the day in the early 1990s, civil society was seen as instrumental for ensuring the openness and accountability of government. Thus, many donors gave high priority to strengthening ‘civil society’ – although in practical terms this often meant a continuation of support to NGOs. Nonetheless, the shift resulted in a formidable increase in the number of organisations in many recipient countries, especially development NGOs and service deliverers engaged in development activities funded by external donors.

The two tendencies – civil society as prerequisite for democracy in Africa, and civil society as partner in development – have received much critique. In the following, I present the main arguments of this critique, to provide pointers for our analysis of ‘civil society’ in Zambia. I also include a short presentation of the arguments of important ‘pro-civil society’ scholars. Let us begin, however, by briefly tracing the origins of the concept of civil society, as it has deep roots in Western political thought.

2.1.1 Brief historical outline of the concept

The concept of civil society was developed in Western political philosophy, and is linked to the modern Westphalian state, and the explicit separation of the spheres of the state and society. Civil society typically refers to a space between the state and the citizen, although there is considerable debate as to its exact delimitations and characteristics. Within the civil society literature, a dividing line can be drawn between the liberal thinkers, represented by de Tocqueville and others, and the Marxist/historicist inspired line of thought, Gramsci being one influential contributor. Dating back to the Scottish enlightenment, liberal theorists have generally seen civil society as a liberating sphere that is pitted against a repressive state. Since then, they have tended to define it as ‘against the state, or in partial independence from it’ (Taylor 1990: 95, cited in Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 9). Consequently, they generally accentuate the relationship between state and civil society as the most important one to study (Van Rooy 1998: 25). Literature critical to this line of thought, often referred to as neo-Marxism, will claim that this tendency of the liberals to focus on the relationship between state and civil society to some extent makes them blind to power struggles that occur outside that relationship in particular (Van Rooy 1998: 25; Gibbon and Bangura 1992: 20; Sjøgren

1998: 13). These neo-Marxists build to a lesser or greater extent on Gramsci, who saw civil society as an instrument for the hegemony of the ruling classes (Van Rooy 1998:10). In their view, the state–civil society relationship is not the most important: one should study the power relations within (civil) society itself. Even if they do not necessarily follow Gramsci in his hegemony theory, most neo-Marxists will agree that civil society is in itself a site of struggle (e.g. Hearn 2001). Civil society against the state is seen as just one of many lines of conflict.

I will not go further into the general debate on the nature of civil society.²³ For my purpose, it seems more useful to move on to the debate on civil society in Africa in particular. Here the nature of the state and the nature of its relationship with society are different from the historical European context. This will bring up other problems pertaining to the concept of civil society, and we might as well jump into them straight away.

2.1.2 The civil society debate in Africa

The debate on civil society in Africa started towards the late 1980s, when democratisation theorists, inspired by events in Eastern Europe, launched ‘civil society’ as the essential and hitherto missing component of African democratisation processes. The basic idea is that civil society, being supposedly by its very nature anti-authoritarian and pluralistic, will function as a check on state power, thus holding governments accountable and fostering a democratic culture (e.g. Harbeson 1994; Chazan 1994). This translation of Western historical processes into theories on democratisation, or ‘history by analogy’ (Mamdani 1995b: 608), has been widely criticised. It is seen to be ethnocentric, normative, ideologically grounded, simply naïve and/or without empirical backing. However, it has also had a tremendous impact on donor thinking regarding development and democratisation. This entry of ‘civil society’ into the field of development and democratisation in Africa has in turn provoked a host of critical contributions. In the following, some points of dispute will be presented. In line with the purpose of the thesis, I will not go much into the debate on civil society and democrati-

²³ For a comprehensive account of the concept and various debates surrounding it, see Cohen and Arato 1992.

sation (though I include points on the relationship between state and civil society), and rather concentrate on the development-focused segment of the arguments, recognising nonetheless that the two are highly intertwined.

The civil society approach

The anthology *Civil Society and the State in Africa* (Harbeson et al. 1994) hosts several influential contributions (including authors such as Rothchild, Bratton, Young and Azarya) to the civil society debate, all of them more or less ‘pro-civil society’. Indeed, in the introduction, Harbeson states that ‘the hypothesis of this book is that civil society is a hitherto missing key to sustained political reform [...]’ (Harbeson 1994: 1). He defines civil society as the agreement on the ‘working rules of the political game and the structure of the state’ (ibid.: 2). The actors of civil society are thus engaged in defining and redefining these rules; civil society cannot be equated merely with associational life, but is restricted to associations that partake in this kind of activities (ibid.: 4). This is akin to the notion of ‘civility’, described by Edward Shils as being a necessary virtue of a *civil* society (1997: 70–71). Some degree of concern for the common good (and implicitly, an acknowledgement of the system) seems to be required for contributing to the kind of ‘rule-setting activities’ Harbeson talks about. Civil society is thus limited to certain types of organisations that exhibit specific kinds of values. Naomi Chazan (1994) takes a similar approach. She sees civil society as being situated between the state and (‘parochial’) society, functioning as a kind of mediator. Civil society then consists of (formal) ‘middle-level’ organisations, based neither on ascription, nor on political ambition (Chazan 1994: 256).

As noted, this approach has been very influential in shaping donor policy; within the good governance agenda the strengthening of ‘civil society’ has a high priority (Abrahamsen 2000: 52). However, not only has ‘civil society’ come to be seen as a prerequisite for democracy and good governance, it is increasingly being redefined into a ‘partner in development’ for both donors and state (Hearn 2001: 50). As will be elaborated below, however, ‘civil society’ for donors often tends to end up meaning NGOs.

Criticism of the civil society approach can be grouped in two main bodies according to the primary focus: On the one hand there are scholars who deem civil society to be

irrelevant for the African context (and thus ethnocentric), on the other, there are those who say it may be relevant, but who stress the need to keep a critical eye on the aid industry that creates it, on the discourse that (re)produces it, and on the structures of empirical civil society itself. These are not two schools of critique, but the distinction provides a useful way to structure this survey of critical literature.

The Eurocentrism of civil society

The basic point of scholars such as Chabal and Daloz (1999), Kasfir (1998a), and Mamdani (1995a; 1996) is that ‘civil society’ is a normative concept, and not only that: it is a concept derived from specific historical conditions in Europe. Africa’s historical conditions are fundamentally different, so the concept cannot be used to add to our understanding of socio-political processes on the continent. It simply lacks analytical value in the African context.²⁴

Chabal and Daloz, in their modern-day classic *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (1999) set out to give an analysis of the African political scene without applying what they see as normative or ideal-type categories. Their main objection to the civil society approach is the underlying state–civil society dichotomy. The state and civil society spheres are not separate in Africa, say Chabal and Daloz: rather, they ‘constantly interpenetrate’ in an often mutually beneficial relationship (ibid.: 17). There are at least two aspects to this: one is the structure of the state; the other, the logic of the political system. Firstly, the state is not institutionalised, and can serve as an instrument for the patrimonial practices of the political elites (also Médard 1996). And secondly, this practice is beneficial not only to the elites themselves, but also to those involved in their distributive network. Thus, political legitimacy rests on this redistribution along (often personalised) vertical lines (Chabal and Daloz 1999: 15; Médard 1996: 88). Civil society as envisioned by the liberal school is therefore unlikely within the frame of the African state, say Chabal and Daloz (1999: 21). The NGO explosion experienced in many African countries in recent years tends to be interpreted by liberal scholars as the realisation of an untapped potential for voluntary organisation on the continent. This,

²⁴ This is probably one of the main differences between civil society proponents and their critics. The former seem to see civil society as an independent variable, something that can be held constant (for example, to explain democratisation, or the lack of it).

Chabal and Daloz hold, is simply an expression of elites responding to the changed funding patterns of donors, and does not mean that a civil society independent from the state has developed (ibid.: 23).

Nelson Kasfir (1998a: 17) makes the point that we have to look outside the realm of formal organisation if we want to understand political processes in the African context (see also Chabal and Daloz 1999: 20; Mamdani 1995a: 5–6). We also have to consider groups and organisations that would fall under the traditional realm according to the civil society orientation, such as ethnic and religious groupings (Kasfir 1998a: 17). Our definitions should be ‘anchored in our understanding of concrete social processes on the continent, and not *vice versa*’ (Mamdani 1995a: 8; also Chabal and Daloz 1999: 30).

Civil society as a donor creation

Other critics of the civil society approach do not dismiss the concept per se. To some extent this is rooted in the realisation that ‘civil society’ has at least *become* a relevant concept after having been incorporated into mainstream development discourse (e.g. Eriksen 2001: 303). Nonetheless, Eriksen argues that civil society as a concept is too elusive to be seen as an analytical category (ibid.: 303). Others hold that it has value, but for it to be meaningfully applied, it needs to be demystified and reinvented so as to capture the plurality of actors and interests in the sphere (Howell and Pearce 2001: 2–3; Abrahamsen 2000: 55).

The romanticisation of civil society

The main body of criticism is directed at the anti-politics of the development discourse: the way it tends to ‘romanticise and essentialise’ the sphere of civil society (Mohan and Stokke 2000: 249; Abrahamsen 2000: 54–55; Howell and Pearce 2001: 113). Civil society is often portrayed as a homogeneous space.²⁵ Power relations and inequality within the sphere are generally not considered, or if they are, they are not given due attention (Van Rooy 1998: 200–201; Mohan and Stokke 2000: 261; Abrahamsen 2000: 54; Howell and Pearce 2001: 113). Moreover, as critics point out, the approach often

Critics will say the concept is not suited for that kind of exercise. (Eriksen 2001: 303).

²⁵ Some will argue that this tendency of the liberal tradition to view civil society as homogeneous is due to their inclination to see the state as oppressive, and civil society as a uniformly liberating sphere (Van Rooy 1998: 25).

stresses consensus rather than conflict, and talks of 'influence' rather than 'power'. As a result, the structural factors that inhibit social change are largely overlooked (Howell and Pearce 2001: 33). We need to recognise the diversity of interests that exist in civil society in Africa as elsewhere (Abrahamsen 2000: 55). And we cannot assume a priori that social change is in the best interest of all these actors (ibid.: 64).

The focus on formal organisations can be equally damaging. Kasfir points out that formal organisations are typically established by the educated, largely urban middle class, because this requires access to resources not likely to be possessed by the poor (1998a: 5; also Webster and Engberg-Pedersen 2002: 6). In terms of poverty reduction, this poses a potential problem, as it will not necessarily be in the interest of these organisations to challenge the social structures that reproduce inequality (or poverty) in the first place (Webster and Engberg-Pedersen 2002). Thus, contrary to the intended effect of 'empowerment' of hitherto excluded groups, promoting the strengthening of such kind of organisations could effectively contribute to the maintenance of existing socio-economic structures in society (Kasfir 1998b: 138).

Another aspect of the romanticisation of the civil society is the tendency to treat the sphere as inherently democratic. Several scholars have challenged this assumption (e.g. Gibbon and Bangura 1992; Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Abrahamsen 2000; Hearn 2001). Bartlett (2000) does this on an empirical basis, in an evaluation of the democratic transition in Zambia 1991. Many scholars (e.g. Bratton 1994) have held forth this transition as a foremost example of broad civil society participation in processes of democratisation. Bartlett finds, however, that the seemingly broad civil society coalition at play in Zambia was marked by power struggle and negotiations among a relatively small elite, and that broad sections of civil society were excluded from the process. His main point is that a transition towards more democratic forms of governance does not necessarily mean that the anti-democratic practice associated with authoritarian regimes disappears (2000: 445). A seemingly broad coalition of organisations can serve to legitimise an agenda set by a small elite.

‘Civil society’ equals NGOs²⁶

As already indicated, there is a tendency in development practice to equate ‘civil society’ with NGOs. When translated into practical terms, the nuances of the academic concepts tend to fade (Kasfir 1998b: 127). Where civil society was conducive to democratisation, it becomes a necessary condition for democracy. Of course, this often has to do with the fact that, whereas academics can deal with the concepts largely on the theoretical level, donors have to delineate them empirically. In the process, concepts invariably lose some of their complexity. Donors setting out to strengthen civil society thus often end up supporting NGOs (Howell and Pearce 2001: 112).

Several explanations have been suggested for this. Firstly, formal organisations like large NGOs are probably easier to work with, as they are often quite bureaucratic, much like the organisational structure of the donors themselves (Van Rooy 1998: 206). Another explanation is that, given the stiff competition within ‘civil society’ for donor funding, those richest in organisational resources – like the large NGOs – are more likely to be able to establish contact with potential donors. This practice has had a critical effect on civil society in recipient countries (Hearn 2001; Kasfir 1998b; Howell and Pearce 2001: 177–228). Hearn suggests that this makes civil society mere agents for the development agenda of the donors (2001: 43). Facing the competition for funds, organisations are likely to shape their programme of action in ways intended to increase their chances of receiving donor money. In this way, civil society is moulded to the extent that donors have the power to form or influence the agenda of organisations (at least indirectly), in fact deciding which organisations will live and which will not (*ibid.*: 47). Moreover, this channelling of funds directly to ‘civil society’ (instead of giving budgetary support) has facilitated an enormous expansion of the ‘NGO sector’ in recipient countries. Eriksen (2001: 293) notes, however, that not all these organisations are truly non-governmental: some may in fact be government-organised (also Chabal and Daloz 1999: 22–23) and some, donor-organised ‘NGOs’.

²⁶ I will use the term NGO to signify organisations that, unlike interest organisations or unions, have no specified membership-base or membership-based constituency. This is to say that organisations that themselves define their beneficiary group (e.g. ‘the rural poor’) will be termed NGOs. This is no precise term, but it serves to differentiate between membership-based organisations and non-membership-based ones – an important distinction in the Zambian context. For a thorough discussion on the definition of

2.2 Participation in policymaking processes

The concept of ‘participation’ entered the development agenda in the 1970s through projects. Participation by the ‘beneficiaries’ was thought to make development projects more efficient and sustainable, at the same time allowing the beneficiaries a part in the project (Cornwall 2000: 23; Cooke and Kothary 2001: 5). The relative weight of these underpinnings – participation as a means, or participation as a goal in itself – seems to have shifted in recent decades, giving priority to an argument of the intrinsic value of participation (Cornwall 2000: 32). One reason for this is the preoccupation of the past decade with democratisation as a path to development. Parallel to this shift there has been a scaling up of participation talk – from projects-based participation, to participation in policymaking (ibid.: 60). ‘Participation’ and ‘civil society’ have come to occupy centre stage in development discourse through the ‘good governance’ agenda.

This unconditional applause of participation has caused a backlash, however. Several scholars warn against the lack of scrutiny of the concept (Cooke and Kothari 2001; White 2001; Cornwall 2000). As White (2001: 143) points out, ‘participation’ can easily be abused if the precise meaning is not clarified. Participation being something ‘indisputably’ desirable (how can one be against it?), further explanation can often be deemed unnecessary. The concept can be used to legitimise a range of different practices and ideas, as it is often defined very broadly – if at all (Cornwall 2000: 36). Cornwall shows that ‘participation’, even within one single institution, can be taken to mean activities ranging from stakeholders merely receiving information, up to decision-making by the stakeholders (ibid.: 36). Moreover, participation can sometimes be damaging to its supposed beneficiaries. White (2001: 143) notes that participation (or inclusion) can at times serve as a better means for controlling various social groups than exclusion. That means it can serve to neutralise demands for reform. Non-participation therefore is also a choice, and is not necessarily an expression of disempowerment. We must ask: What kind of participation are we talking about? What is the depth of the participation? Who participate? As she points out in the quotation that introduced this thesis, real participation from hitherto excluded groups will typically challenge the

existing power structures and consequently lead to conflict. Any participatory process that lacks this kind of conflict therefore ought to make us suspicious (*ibid.*: 155).

A major shortcoming of much of the participation literature – including the critical literature – is that it tends to pay little attention to the contextual factors that will affect the nature and effectiveness of participatory processes. In the African context one such factor is the patrimonial logic. As described above, this is an important characteristic of political practices on the continent, and its impact on processes of participation should not be underestimated. For example, participants may conceive of their participation in instrumental terms, and participate in order to get something in return. Or, the patrimonial logic may influence the selection of participants for the process. Thus, forms of legitimacy unrelated to the process or project at hand may have substantial impact on how things proceed. Here we will simply state this fact, as a proper investigation into such practices in the case at hand would be a study in itself, and as such is beyond scope of the current work.

2.2.1 The Basic Ladder of Participation

Since the term ‘participation’ is used to signify so many different forms of involvement on the part of stakeholders, we need to be able to place what we are dealing with on some kind of scale. The basic ‘ladder of participation’ presented by McGee and Norton (2000: 14) is one such tool, used by among others the World Bank. It was developed for looking at participation at project level, but McGee and Norton (*ibid.*: 14) make a good case for applying it to the PRS processes. In applying the framework to policymaking processes, the denotation of the different steps must be changed accordingly. There are some problems relating to this, which will be discussed in due course. The ladder is a skeleton framework, and I will draw upon other theoretical contributions to this field. However, on this particular topic – broad-based participation in national-level policy-making – not much has been done. The ladder consists of four steps:

- Information sharing
- Consultation
- Joint decision-making
- Initiation and control by stakeholders

According to McGee and Norton, these steps can be looked at as ‘levels or intensities

of participation' (ibid.: 14). However, the inclusion of all these steps under the one term, 'participation', can clearly be questioned. For my purpose the steps serve to identify *components* in the participatory process, as it seems the two first steps could not denote meaningful participation on their own. Accordingly, I base my analysis on an understanding of 'participation' that entails some form of influence on the process in question or the object of negotiation in that process.

Let us start at the bottom, with information sharing. McGee and Norton (ibid.: 14) say that the sharing of information should take place throughout the process. As such, information sharing is seen as a prerequisite for any participatory process, much in line with the understanding sketched out above. McGee and Norton indicate the media in particular as having a key role in the dissemination of information. However, there are probably two important aspects of this step. The information that reaches the population, from the state to the general public; and the information flow between those directly involved in the participation process – between state and non-state actors in particular. In the context at hand, we are looking at quite a limited and centralised type of media coverage. Announcements in the printed media can thus not be taken as an indicator as to whether information is actually reaching the population. The other aspect concerns the sharing of information between actors in the process. This is quite a relevant point in considering non-state actors' conditions of participation, as it is primarily a question of willingness to share information on the part of the governing actor – the state. Information sharing is an important indicator of the openness of the participation process.

Consultation and joint decision-making are not necessarily easily separable in practice. The main difference, according to McGee and Norton (ibid.: 15), is that consultation does not imply any obligation to include proposals put forth by the participants. The idea is that joint decision-making is more binding for the facilitator, as participants are not only supposed to be heard, but should be treated as equal parties in the policymaking process. In practice, trade-offs are probably made in both variants.

Participation in the form of 'joint decision-making' clearly demands resources on the part of the participants. This is likely to give the large, bureaucratic organisations an

advantage over the smaller ones (ibid.: 15). Smaller actors can possibly exert influence by threatening to withdraw, thus potentially compromising the legitimacy of the process.

McGee and Norton choose to skip the highest step, ‘Initiation and control by stakeholders’, as they consider the category more suited for studies at the project level than at the level of policy-making, which they see as ultimately controlled and initiated by the state (ibid.: 15). I consider it fruitful to keep this category, to remind us what the ‘top of the list’ really is. The category refers to the possibility of stakeholders to shape and define the process, as well as to exert influence or control the process to their end. It seems useful to distinguish between *initiation* and *control*, as it is conceivable that while initiatives from below can influence processes of policy-making to a substantial degree, the stakeholders’ *control* of these initiatives is likely to diminish at policymaking level. The first can occur without the second.²⁷ Even if such initiatives taken outside an already defined policymaking process do not conform to the category ‘initiation and control’ in the strictest sense, such scenarios are better captured in this last category, than by for instance ‘consultation’, because they involve independent activity by these actors much akin to ‘initiation and control’. Moreover, when borrowing frameworks originally intended for other research areas, it is necessary to adjust and shape them for our purpose.

2.3 Policy, discourse, and the depoliticisation of development

The notion of ‘depoliticisation of development’ is what has inspired the overriding problem statement of this thesis. The theory contributions sketched out in this section will be instrumental in our later consideration of that problem statement, towards the end of chapter 5.

In addition, some of the points below inform my analysis of the third part of the research question, namely that regarding the contents of the PRSP. In dealing with the third part of the research question, I will draw upon insights from discourse analysis, as well as some points from policy analysis.²⁸ This section will be devoted to clarifying my

²⁷ This will probably be true at project level as well. It seems fair to assume that projects that are initiated from below, in time become controlled from above – indirectly or directly – as money and/or expertise comes in.

²⁸ While I draw on some discourse analysis-inspired work in the field of policy studies, such as Carol Lee Bacchi’s *Women, policy and politics* (1999), policy analysis as such is not used in the thesis, because the insights from traditional policy analysis seem ill-

points of departure on the issues of discourse and power, and to presenting the elements of discourse analysis and policy analysis that will guide the analysis of the Working Group discussions on contents. Lastly, I explain my use of the concept of ‘depoliticisation’. But first – what is discourse?

2.3.1 Discourse, knowledge, power

‘Discourse’ is a highly contested concept. As space does not allow a lengthy account of the debate, only points relevant for my analysis, and for my understanding of the development discourse, will be presented in the following. For the purpose of this thesis, discourse can be characterised as ‘a relatively stable system for the generation of statements and practices within given social relations, which constitutes reality for its bearers by inscribing itself into institutions and otherwise appearing normal’ (Neumann 2001: 18, my translation). Foucault’s point (Foucault 1991: 54; Jørgensen and Phillips 1999: 22) that discourse works to contain the range of possible valid statements, particularly informs my analysis in chapter 5. A given discourse can nonetheless have several *representations* of reality (Shapiro 1988, referred in Neumann 2001: 23),²⁹ which can be specified more or less precisely, and which can dominate the discourse to varying degrees (Neumann 2001: 62). Thus, ‘discourses are multiple *and* internally contradictory’ (Bacchi 1999: 44, emphasis in original). Though discourse is (re)constituted through the practice it generates, it is not a static structure merely reflecting the power relationships inherent in its (re)production. Rather, it is the site and the object of struggle between different representations, constantly renegotiated: ‘[...] discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle’ (Foucault 1981: 52–53, cited in Mills 1997: 43). There is also an element of absorption involved in encounters with challenging perspectives. In the words of Deborah Cameron (1990: 22, cited in Bacchi 1999: 44), ‘every discourse incorporates elements of what it opposes and aims to replace’. This tendency for discourse to absorb its critique *and* be internally conflicting is important for

suiting in an African context. Moreover, relevant post-positivist work draws extensively on discourse analysis, so I will use it predominantly as a supplement to the framework from discourse analysis, where appropriate.

²⁹ *Representations* are socially (re)produced facts/reality. In discourse analysis, representations are more specifically the most important clusters of truths/understandings of reality that constitute a discourse (Neumann 2001: 33).

understanding the development discourse, as will be shown in 2.3.2.

The discourse perspective, as opposed to a perspective focused on, for example, ‘ideology’, allows a view of power that does not compel us to think in terms of coercive exercise of power. On this point, this thesis is informed by Foucault’s understanding of the relationship between power and knowledge – *power/knowledge* – seeing knowledge as a *discursive formation* contingent upon existing power structures, and not a naturally given entity (Foucault 1979: 27; Abrahamsen 2000:14). Thus, knowledge is not neutral, and power is not necessarily understood in the traditional coercive sense. The idea is that power can be exercised without a defined coercive actor, A, and a victim, B. Rather, As and Bs exist within a system of *normality*³⁰ that affects both. This understanding of power makes it possible to talk about power relations, without attributing intentionality. In line with this, Nustad (2003: 24) uses the concept of ‘power effects’ to describe a situation where there is no intention to exercise power, but where the effect is nonetheless that of power. This understanding of power is central in Foucault’s concept of *governmentality*, which will inform this thesis regarding the relationship between the IFIs and the government of Zambia, and between donors and Zambian ‘civil society’.³¹ Governmentality can be understood as a form of power whereby actors (the ‘governed’) govern themselves in accordance with logics and norms that regulate the various fields and institutions in society (Foucault 1991: 100–103).

The idea of power/knowledge also implies that normality is constituted through the (temporary) consolidation of certain types of knowledge as normal/rational, and that systems of domination are inherent in this process. The point here, is that what constitutes normality within a given field rests upon (as well as forms) relations of power pertaining to that field. In relation to the development field, I will contend that an important part of the systems of domination is the skewed distribution of resources – in that certain actors control resources on which other actors depend. These material

³⁰ Foucault uses Bentham’s Panopticon (1843) as an illustration of the more general concept of ‘normality/normalisation’. This describes the self-restraint of individuals effectuated by the ‘surveillance’ in modern society and distinctions such as that between the normal and the abnormal (Foucault 1979: 184); the *norms* defined within the disciplines of the social sciences, which are closely related to the concept of power/knowledge (ibid.: 305).

³¹ Attempts at using this concept in international relations have been scarce, but recent examples include Merlingen (2003) and Hindess (2004). Gould (2003) and Lie (2004) make good cases for the value of the concept in analyses of the field of development

conditions should however also be understood as part of the discourse, in that they are provided with meaning through the systems of knowledge inherent in the discourse (Baaz 2005: 13).

This account of the workings of discourse and power can seem rather devoid of actors and institutions' agency. I will however, be following Sara Mills in her contention that this perspective of power is instructive for the analysis of the workings of 'larger scale discursive frameworks' (e.g. 'development') (1997: 122), but that it should be supplemented in order to allow us to incorporate creative agency within and towards the discourse (ibid.: 42; see also Nustad 2003). In analysing more micro-level negotiations for example, it may prove fruitful to bear the role of interests in mind. While these can essentially be viewed as expressions of power and relations of dominance, and as such form part of a larger discourse, it is also conceivable that actors use central concepts of the discourse as a vehicle to front their interests. Thus, in the analysis in chapter 5, while I analyse the negotiations under the PRSP as clashes between different representations within the agricultural discourse, this should not be understood as a disregard for actors' interests as such.

The framing of fields

The concept of *framing* (Neumann 2001: 172) is central to my analysis in chapter 5 of the Working Group discussions under the Zambian PRSP. It is used to denote a process where a social or conceptual field (e.g. poverty reduction) is captured by a particular discourse or a representation within it, which thereby gains the 'power to define' within that field (Shore and Wright 1997: 18).³² As the word suggests, the 'framing' of a particular field has consequences in terms of how the field is understood, but also, by extension, what actions are taken with regard to that field. This is also an important point in Carol Lee Bacchi's largely discourse-analytical approach to policy analysis (1999). The question is how a policy problem is *represented* (ibid.: 37), not *defined*, as

cooperation. For the use of Foucault's insights on power and knowledge in the development field, see Escobar (1984).

³² This concept should not be understood as drawing upon the work of policy analysts Rein and Schön (1993) on processes of framing as our way of experiencing the world, as they use it as an epistemological concept. Nor on another policy analyst, Carol Lee Bacchi, who uses 'frame' as a synonym for 'discourse' (1999: 40). Some of their insights will be used despite this conceptual confusion.

suggested by the traditional understanding within policy analysis³³ (or indeed whether it is presented as a problem or not).

Framing is not a straightforward exercise. It is a continuous process, where the right to define is negotiated, and renegotiated in struggles between competing discourses or representations (Neumann 2001: 172). But one discourse (or one representation within a particular discourse) may gain a foothold, and can be very influential in shaping relevant policies pertaining to a given field, as described by Bøås and McNeill (2004b). The concept of framing, as well as battles over framing, is closely related to power. The framing of a particular field by a particular discourse will often entail power effects (see e.g. Abrahamsen 2000:14):³⁴ As one representation is made to stand out as normal, rational or morally superior, alternative approaches are made to stand out as irrational, irrelevant, or illegitimate.

2.3.2 The dynamics of depoliticisation

I find it useful to divide ‘depoliticisation’ into two aspects: the technical approach, and the harmony model. Firstly, depoliticisation can be characterised as the process whereby political questions are represented as problems of a technical or functional character by way of rhetoric (Ferguson 1990: 270). Secondly, depoliticisation can be used to signify the tendency to essentialise or ‘romanticise’ (Mohan and Stokke 2000: 249; Harriss 2001: 11; Howell and Pearce 2001: 113) for instance the grassroots level as well as the concepts of ‘civil society’ and ‘participation’. The effect of both aspects remains the same – they end up removing politics from development issues and masking relations of power in the field (Ferguson 1990: 256; Harriss 2001: 11).

Technical approach to political issues

The primacy of a technical-economic rationality in much of current development language is summed up thus by James Ferguson: ‘By uncompromisingly reducing poverty to a technical problem, and by promising technical solutions to the sufferings of powerless and oppressed people, the hegemonic problematic of ‘development’ is the principal means through which the problem of poverty is depoliticised in the world

³³ According to Bacchi, the traditional/rationalist/positivist approach in policy studies is that policy-making is a matter of *defining* problems ‘properly’, and developing the most efficient strategies on the basis of these (1999: 19).

³⁴ Not all such battles over framing are related to the exercise of power. See Neumann (2001: 174–175) for a discussion on this.

today' (1990: 256, cited in Harriss 2001: 124). That is to say, development is seen as inherently non-political, and as such, requires mere technical intervention – the most effective way to reach the goal (Ferguson 1990; Abrahamsen 2000; Harriss 2001; Pearce 2000: 34; White 2000; Shore and Wright 1997; Howell and Pearce 2001). This is how, for example, issues of democratisation become questions of governance and reform of the civil service (Abrahamsen 2000:12). As shown in chapter 1.3.1, this economist approach is typical of the workings of the World Bank. The Bank being such a central institution and a focal point for debate in the field of development, the approach has also become dominant within the development discourse. Bøås and McNeill (2004b: 2; 2004c: 222) describe how the World Bank and other influential actors in the development field tend to swallow new and challenging concepts (often emanating from the international NGO community), incorporating and reinventing them in accordance with the practice and understanding of the technical/economic development discourse – thereby rendering the concepts harmless, while at the same time displaying the institution's own readiness for renewal.³⁵

Harmony model of development

Also typical of the current development discourse is the inclination to represent 'development' or 'poverty reduction' as being achievable without any change in the social and economic structures of society (Harriss 2001; Howell and Pearce 2001; Mohan and Stokke 2000; Abrahamsen 2000). This is the other aspect of the depoliticisation of development. 'Romanticisation' contributes to depoliticisation by way of blurring power relations. It facilitates the system whereby development planning and strategies are to be made on the basis of existing socio-political structures, not a change in these structures (Harriss 2001: 11). This brings us back to Bacchi's point on how problems are represented (1999: 37). Representing the problem at hand as 'poverty', as opposed to representing it as 'inequality', appears to have consequences for the tackling of that problem. 'Inequality' would seem to have connotations that render the problem far more

³⁵ In theory, such incorporation of new/challenging concepts may also lead to a change in the approach of a given institution as well as in the discourse as such. And indeed some will argue that the Bank has changed over the last few years. As noted above, however, Abrahamsen (2000) and Bøås and McNeill (2003) argue that given the Bank's mandate, the inclusion of 'soft' issues tends not to change its overriding approach.

potent in terms of demands for structural change. Poverty, on the other hand, seems more a-political, since it does not necessarily involve any reference to societal structures – and thus it can more easily be adjusted into a win–win kind of set-up. This is strengthened by the tendency noted above to represent poverty as a problem that simply requires the appropriate technical intervention. It then becomes a question of finding the most effective measures to tackle the problem, and not a matter of making political choices with regard to the situation at hand (Ferguson 1990: 256).

We find this harmony model also in the use of the concepts of ‘participation’ and ‘civil society’ in mainstream literature. The ‘participation’ of hitherto excluded groups through ‘civil society’ association and organisation is presented as being within the framework of a harmony model of social relations (White 2000: 143). The proclaimed ‘participation’ of ‘civil society’ groups often adds legitimacy to development projects and programmes merely by the statement. However, as seen in chapter 2.2, ‘participation’ can be used as a label for various degrees of involvement, and can even serve as a means for controlling certain groups (ibid.: 143). Similarly, ‘civil society’ is a label ascribed to a range of groups, actors and activities, not all of them necessarily connected to the ‘grassroots’ and the ‘poor’. Maintaining this ‘romanticised’ version accordingly tends to mask the inequality, power relations and struggles over interests invariably present in social systems at all levels.

2.4 Summary: making theoretical positions operational

In sum, this thesis will make use of a variety of theoretical contributions from different fields of literature, in an at times eclectic manner. Drawing on these, various questions arise for the three-partite analysis of the case at hand – how will these theoretical insights guide the analysis of the *Zambian* context?

The first part of the analysis – chapter 3 – centres on the meaning and character of ‘civil society’ as it is understood in the context. What kind of organisations and activities are included in the predominant understanding of ‘civil society’ in *Zambia*? And how does this relate to the liberal version of civil society/the understanding dominant in the PRSP paradigm: that of intermediary organisations of ‘civil society’ acting as representatives of the grassroots and the poor? In order to answer these questions, I examine the relationship of ‘civil society’ to other societal spheres – the grassroots and wider society

on the one hand, and the state and donors on the other. For example, the liberal assertion that ‘civil society’ is a representative or a mediator of the interests of the rural poor³⁶ could be explored by looking at the extent of the organisations’ operations in rural areas: their coverage in remote areas versus urban/town areas; the connection between the main office (mostly Lusaka-based) and the field workers in the organisation. With regard to the relationship of ‘civil society’ to the donors and the state, points of interest include sources of funding; the origin of the organisation; extent of integration into the development discourse – e.g., the adoption of major concepts, goals, methods and focus of intervention; ‘partnership’ arrangements with the state; extent/nature of criticism directed towards state or donors; the movement of elites between the various spheres.

The participation process, dealt with in chapter 4, will be analysed through the *ladder of participation* as outlined above. This provides relatively specific pointers. For example, under ‘information sharing’: media coverage; media strategy (if any) of the government; information flow from government to the coordinating organisation of ‘civil society’ as well as other participating actors; under consultations: the conduct of province level hearings termed ‘consultations’; under ‘joint decision-making’: the extent to which discussions in the Working Groups were open and comprehensive; the extent of professionalism; the extent to which some actors would dominate Working Groups; under ‘initiation and control by stakeholders’: local extra-governmental or governmental initiatives vis-à-vis the PRSP.

Under the third part of the research question regarding contents – the topic of chapter 5 – relevant topics of analysis include: exploring the major points of dispute in the Working Group for agriculture; mapping out the different *representations* of the discourse on agricultural development in the group; and the discussions explored as struggles for *framing* of the field of agricultural development – thereby demonstrating the space for participation by ‘civil society’ in the discussions, and hence the conditions for meaningful participation by ‘civil society’.

³⁶ Because this is most relevant in this thesis, not because these are the only ones ‘civil society’ is meant to represent according to the agenda.

3 ‘Civil Society’ in Zambia

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to answer the first part of the research question, by looking at the characteristics of ‘civil society’ in Zambia: its composition and relations to other actors and societal spaces.³⁷ The term ‘civil society’ has in Zambia come to signify a relatively specific type of organisation, referring mostly to NGOs (but also including churches and other religious organisations as well as trade unions) involved in development practice and/or democracy and human rights advocacy, often on behalf of marginalised groups. These organisations identify themselves as ‘civil society’, and are identified as ‘civil society’ by other actors. In this chapter I argue that the prevalence of this understanding is in part due to the currently dominant development discourse – the good governance agenda – which exerts considerable influence on the development scene in Zambia.

The chapter has four sections. The first is empirical, whereas the three subsequent parts provide an analysis of Zambian ‘civil society’. The first section offers a background to the organisations central to this study. The second looks at the representative quality of ‘civil society’ and considers this cluster of organisations in relation to wider society. Then thirdly, the relationship of ‘civil society’ to the external donors is examined. The final section analyses ‘civil society’ in relation to the state.

3.2 Background to civil society in Zambia

Under the one-party state, corporative arrangements were predominant in terms of relations between the state and the ‘non-state’ organisations. Youth and Women’s Leagues were typical mass organisations under the party structure (Nordlund 1996: 67). Farmers were organised through the cooperative movement. Certain organisations, however, managed to maintain a more independent position. Notably the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) became more and more independent of the UNIP from the mid-1970s onwards, waxing increasingly political in its critique of government policies (Grotpeter 1998: 472; Nordlund 1996: 72). The Catholic Church was typically

³⁷ My focus lies with the agricultural sector, but much of the following is probably applicable to ‘civil society’ in Zambia in general because most of the country’s agriculture-oriented organisations also deal with rural development in general. Moreover, I draw on the material of other scholars (especially Fiedler-Conradi 2003) whose perspective has been cross-sectoral, and whose observations concur with my own on important points.

autonomous of the state. This can be attributed to its financial and human resources, but also to its standing as protected by religious norms (Nordlund 1996: 106). Its nationwide institutional structure and its moral status made it one of the most potent opposition fractions. Today this is still the case. The churches are of the few organisations or institutions that have countrywide spread, and the Church remains among the most active voices in the public debate through institutions such as the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR). Both the ZCTU and the Christian churches were important players in the transition to multi-party democracy in 1991. These, as well as a number of academics and businessmen, and certain former UNIP members, made up the core of the MMD (Bartlett 2000: 434–435).

During the Kaunda era, the corporatist arrangements effectively limited organisational life outside the state apparatus. With the introduction of multi-party democracy in 1991, new spaces were opened for societal organisation, and there was a steady increase in the number of organisations in Zambia from then onwards. A few organisations started up in the late 1980s, among them some of the strongest organisations today.³⁸ From around the mid-1990s, the ‘NGO sector’ exploded. This was largely the result of donor priorities to strengthen the sector, but the political liberalisation of the early 1990s created the environment that made it possible. Today what we see in Zambia is a very young ‘civil society’ heavily reliant on donor funding, and seen primarily as an agent for development work. It is composed mainly of NGOs engaged in advocacy and/or service delivery. Reflecting the myriad of various organisations engaged in these activities, there has been an increase in the number of coordinating organisations, although this may reflect the concerns of donors more than the Zambian organisations (Fiedler-Conradi 2003: 35–37).

A prominent feature of ‘civil society’ in Zambia is its networking activity, such as the MMD alliance, the Oasis Forum and the Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR). The MMD alliance pushed for the introduction of multi-party democracy in the early 1990s, while the Oasis Forum was a group of organisations fronting the campaign to

³⁸ These include the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) (1988), the Non-Governmental Organisations’ Coordinating Committee (NGOCC) (1985), the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) (1993), Women for Change (WFC) (1991)

stop Chiluba running for a third term as president in 2001. Both stand as proof of the vigour of Zambian civil society. However, as we have seen under chapter 2.1.2, the MMD was not such a broadly based alliance after all. And the Oasis Forum was not a purely Zambian initiative. Apparently external donors were instrumental in ensuring that the campaign was followed through and was successful. A representative of the Forum stated: ‘without donor pressure towards civil society collaboration on the third term issue, things would hardly have gone that far, with a risk that today Zambia would still be ailing under a Chiluba government’ (Fiedler-Conradi 2003: 17–18). Nevertheless, among the organisations involved, the positive result of the campaign left a confidence and a ‘sense of maturity and unity’ (ibid.: 18), with probable spin-off effects on the CSPR campaign as well. The two were almost parallel processes, and many organisations participated in both. Thus a joint movement of donor encouragement of ‘civil society’ unification, and a realisation by the organisations of their potency in terms of making a difference, have helped to shape Zambian ‘civil society’ as a collective body.

3.2.1 Important farmers’ organisations and rural development NGOs

At the national level today there is one major interest group for farmers, the Zambia National Farmers Union (ZNFU), although a number of other organisations have an interest in the agricultural sector. Here I present only those that are particularly relevant for this study, as they participated in the PRSP formulation in one way or another. These are also among the most important national-level organisations dealing with agriculture and rural development.

The ZNFU is the largest and most influential farmers’ organisation in Zambia. It represents both large- and small-scale farmers, though its representation of small-scale farmers is of relatively recent date. Up to 1992, when it changed its name from the Commercial Farmers Bureau to the more all-inclusive Zambia National Farmers Union, it represented primarily the (largely white) large-scale commercial farmers of the country. However, critics will say that not much has changed in terms of the organisation’s profile. And indeed, the organisation does focus on representing commercial farmers, which they define as farmers who produce for a market and not for their own

consumption (Zyambo 2003 [interview]).³⁹ Thus, in the main, their small-scale members will also be commercial farmers. It has further been indicated that the inclusion of small-scale farmers has been politically motivated. One small-scale farmer member put it like this: ‘[if they were to] operate as whites alone, government is not going to recognise them. So as a result, they incorporated the small-scale farmers, and they called it Zambia National Farmers Union, just to attract the recognition by government’ (anonymous informant 2003 [interview]). On the other hand, the organisation has a relatively strong local-level presence and is represented in all nine provinces. Moreover, to the extent that the small-scale farmers feel that their interests are taken care of by the ZNFU, they benefit from its strong lobbying capacity. Farmers associations in around 40 districts⁴⁰ (of 73) are affiliated with the ZNFU.

Another farmers’ organisation is the National Association for Peasant and Small-Scale Farmers of Zambia (NAPSSFZ). This was founded in 1989 in explicit opposition to the ZNFU (then the Commercial Farmers’ Bureau) and its large-scale focus (Haachinda 2003 [interview]). It has been trying to establish itself as an interest organisation for the poor peasant and small-scale farmers, but its actual coverage has remained fairly limited. This is probably due to the problems that poor farmers have in raising money for membership fees, as well as the limited capacity of the organisation (Haachinda 2003 [interview]). This has led the NAPSSFZ to assume the hybrid form of a half interest organisation, half NGO: it speaks on behalf of all small-scale and peasant farmers, even though a few of them hold membership. Despite its size, however, it does seem to have some political clout.

The Programme Against Malnutrition (PAM) is another large actor involved in the

³⁹ The distinctions between different categories of farmers can be made by using for example the number of hectares cultivated, or looking at how the farmers relate to a market. The first strategy is common, but serves little purpose here, as it is the actors’ understanding of the terms which is relevant. Around the second strategy (as also around the first), there is considerable discussion in academic literature, as well as among practitioners. We cannot, however, take up that discussion here. What is important to note from these discussions is that the distinction between subsistence farmers and commercial farmers where the first group is assumed not to relate to the market, and the other thought only to relate to the market – is too simplistic: it is the *manner* in which they relate to it which differs. Subsistence farmers do not produce solely for their own consumption. It seems, in the Zambian case, the different actors have varying understandings of what a ‘small-scale farmer’ is, and also what needs and concerns these farmers have. So while they use the same term, they may mean a variety of different things. Few have a precise and explicit definition. In the following, while I refer these actors’ concepts and arguments, I will not make judgements as to whether their understanding is ‘correct’ or not. Nor will I attempt to delineate the concepts as used by the actors except when this is done by the actors themselves.

⁴⁰ ZNFU (2003, October 10).

agriculture sector. Its main concern is the promotion of food security for the rural poor. Created by government in response to the drought in 1992, it has been working in collaboration with the government and external donors since then. At present PAM distributes the food security pack to rural peasant farmers. However, PAM has also been a critic of government policy, and is legally an NGO.

Yet another NGO working in agricultural development is Women for Change (WfC). Though its primary objective is the 'empowerment of women', it is more generally involved in rural development. Its critique of government as well as World Bank and IMF policies has made the WfC one of the more outspoken NGOs in Zambia in this field.

The Agriculture Consultative Forum (ACF) was created in 1998 as a forum where private sector and government could meet and coordinate their activities in the sector. The initiative was intended to strengthen private sector involvement. It now has associates from the private sector, the public sector, agricultural NGOs and external donors, and serves as an advisory body for the government. It also functions, as the name indicates, as a forum for consultation among its members. Additionally, the ACF conducts analytical work and consultancy, drawing on the Forum's own expertise.

3.2.2 Civil Society for Poverty Reduction

The network Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) was formed in October 2000, for the purpose of ensuring meaningful participation by civil society in the PRSP process (Musamba 2003 [interview]). The lead organisation of the network was Jubilee Zambia through the JCTR, along with WfC, Afronet,⁴¹ and the NGOCC,⁴² some of the strongest organisations in Zambia. Since early in 2000, the organisations of the new network had been collaborating and communicating on the issue of the PRSP, but in October this co-working was formalised with a secretariat and a name, the CSPR. By that time, the network had expanded to around perhaps a dozen organisations (Musamba 2003 [interview]). During the PRSP formulation, it functioned as a junction for 'civil society' organisations participating in the government Working Groups under the PRSP, as well

⁴¹ Inter-African human rights organisation.

⁴² Non-Governmental Organisations' Coordinating Committee: one of the largest networks for women's organisations in Zambia.

as interested organisations who did not participate formally in these.

3.3 Representative ‘civil society’?

This section will look at the organisations of ‘civil society’ in relation to other groups and forces in society at large. If these organisations have an almost intrinsic moral right to participate in the formulation of the PRSP, this must be because they are representatives of important stakeholders in planning for poverty reduction – especially the poor themselves. Firstly, ‘civil society’ will be considered in relation to the wider scope of organised interests in Zambia; secondly, I look at the dimension of formal organisation versus unorganised interests; then thirdly, at the conflict line rural–urban, before turning to socio-economic positions. The question of traditional versus modern organisation will not be dealt with. Though tribal identity and traditional organisation is an important aspect of Zambian society, it is beyond the scope of this study.

3.3.1 NGOs versus interest organisations

Fiedler-Conradi differentiates between organisations that are about solidarity *amongst* people (interest organisations) and organisations that involve solidarity *with* people (NGOs: charity organisations and ‘solidarity organisations’) (2003: 20). This distinction is quite useful for understanding central aspects of organisational life in Zambia, although we must bear in mind that the distinction is an analytical one, and that there exist hybrid forms and deviations.⁴³ Again, it is worth noting the strong tendency in Zambia to equate NGOs with ‘civil society’.

In Zambia, the two types of organisations (NGOs and interest organisations, in particular the ZNFU) are somehow in conflict with each other,⁴⁴ at least in the sphere of agriculture and rural development. In the PRSP process, this was expressed as a dispute over who was the more legitimate stakeholder: the interest organisation representing a clearly defined, and limited, membership base of farmers, *or* the organisations of ‘civil society’ that say they represent the rural poor in general. Both have been questioning each other’s legitimacy. The NGOs will claim that the interest organisation is an illegitimate stakeholder as it protects the interests of its members only, a relatively small

⁴³ The trade unions can be an example of this, as many of them have an agenda that is wider than just fronting the interests of their members, though they clearly have a defined membership and a mandate derived from that.

group (Samatawele 2003 [interview]). Interest organisations, perhaps especially those seen as looking out for the interest of the (profit-seeking) private sector, are thus excluded from the definition of ‘civil society’. The main reason for this seems to be a perceived lack of solidarity with fellow Zambians (Samatawele 2003 [interview]; Ng’ona 2003 [interview]). The ZNFU, on their part, say that the NGOs are not legitimate stakeholders. Their argument is that the mandates of these organisations are defined not by their beneficiaries, but by the organisations themselves. Thus, in the view of the ZNFU, the NGOs have no legitimate right to speak on behalf of the people whom they claim to be representing (Mwila, A. 2003 [interview]). As the organisation prides itself on having a membership-derived mandate, it disassociates itself from ‘civil society’, preferring instead to be termed a private sector actor (Zyambo 2003 [interview]). Moreover, ‘civil society’ is perceived as being engaged in ‘political’ issues and is often referred to as composed of political actors: ‘We have very little interaction with the civil society, which in Zambia is considered as those who [...] have a political angle to some of their work which they do, and they are NGOs [...]’ (Zyambo 2003 [interview]).

3.3.2 Formal organisation versus unorganised interests

As reflected in the PRSP Sourcebook, there is an ambition within the PRS framework to include non-organised interests, vulnerable and poor groups. However, this has been difficult in practice, and in Zambia there has been close to no such inclusion. The representation of various social groups has gone through formal organisations. With regard to the agricultural sector, this has had implications for the representation of subsistence or peasant farmers and women. The dominant farmers’ organisation is the ZNFU – which is, as mentioned, a union for commercial farmers.

The first problem this poses is the lack of representation of the peasant farmers. The ZNFU at the national level explicitly states that it is not an organisation for peasants. Though the farmers’ associations at local level draw mostly small-scale farmers as members, these are people who can pay the membership fee. Zambia’s poor peasant farmers are thus unlikely to be represented, even though they constitute the largest group

⁴⁴ The conflict is not unique to the Zambian case. Molenaers and Renard (2002) describe a similar tendency in Bolivia.

of the population of rural areas. Their concerns do not find representation through the formal organisations. True, there is one organisation for small-scale and peasant farmers, as noted above, the NAPSSFZ. However, this organisation does not yet have a very wide coverage, and has only limited resources for lobbying at the national level. Recently, the government has started encouraging the formation of cooperatives. While these are not interest organisations as such, they may contribute to voicing the concerns of small farmers. In general, however, the poor peasant farmer is not well placed in terms of representation in policymaking fora.

The second problem is that the ZNFU (like the NAPSSFZ) has a predominantly male outlook on agricultural activity.⁴⁵ The national-level leadership is composed almost exclusively of men. Farmers' associations at the district level also draw mostly male members. In general, women are not part of the farmers' associations, even though their workload represents a large part of all agricultural activity.⁴⁶ Thus, an approach that goes through the farmers associations may well overlook the concerns of women (Chama 2003 [interview]). This bias towards male farmers is also reflected in language. Even if a significant share of the total number of farmers in Zambia are female,⁴⁷ when talking about 'a farmer', people will typically be referring to a male. At the local level, the most important organisations representing women are the Women's Associations, found in most districts. However, these rarely participate in policy-making at the national level, and were not invited to the province-level consultations of the PRSP.

Poor people tend not to be organised through any formal channels: poor people's organisations are rare (Webster and Engberg-Pedersen 2002: 6). That is definitely the case in Zambia. Thus, an exclusive focus on formal organisations may fail to capture the priorities of the poor. Of course, there may be NGOs speaking on their behalf. But there is always the risk that these NGOs misinterpret the people's concerns, or that they have

⁴⁵ This is a general trend: farmers are perceived as male, among other things because of the gender-biased land tenure system (CSPR 2001a: 74).

⁴⁶ Women's share of the total workload in agriculture has been estimated at 75%, according to a SIDA report (GRZ/SIDA 1981: 29, cited in Geisler 1992: 126).

⁴⁷ I have not been able to find exact figures for this. Statistics on agricultural households and gender in Zambia are based on the main occupation of the household head. Because the man is automatically taken as the household head in married households, there is no figure on female farmers. Statistics list only the share of *female-headed* households out of the total agricultural households. In 2000, this was 19% (Central Statistical Office 2003:8) – a significant share. Around 260,000 female heads of

other agendas to front or other interests to pursue (ibid. 2002: 6). Nor do NGOs always reach the poorest segments of the population. Moreover, by their nature, they are not obligated to any defined membership base or constituency, which means that their beneficiaries cannot make demands on them.

3.3.3 Rural – urban links

The rural–urban division in Zambia is important when it comes to the distribution of poverty in the country. Since poverty in the rural areas is far more pervasive than in the urban areas, adequate representation of these areas in the PRSP is vital. In the PRSP process, the rural areas were heard in province-level consultations, but, as we shall see in chapters 4 and 5, the scope of influence at this stage was fairly limited. Representation of the rural poor is also seen to be taken care of at the national level: ‘[...] national-level civic engagement also allow government to reach a wider range of stakeholders and initiate a dialogue with smaller civil society organisations’ (World Bank 2002: 245). With many of the Zambian NGOs there is an understanding that their most important contribution to the PRSP process would be their practical knowledge, and bringing forth the concerns of the (rural) poor themselves (Ngoni 2003 [interview]; Matyola 2003 [interview]; Samatawele 2003 [interview]). In general, however, it seems that the rural connection of Zambian ‘civil society’ is rather weak (Fiedler-Conradi 2003: 22–23). Organisations are located mainly in the urban areas, especially in and around Lusaka, the capital city. Though many developmental NGOs have branches in the provinces, very few have countrywide coverage. Only the Church (ibid.: 22) and the ZNFU are present in all provinces. There are many NGOs with a rural focus. These will have (semi)-permanent projects or programmes in several provinces, and possibly in multiple districts. On the whole, Lusaka-based organisations with a rural focus will have two or three projects in one of the provinces (often near Lusaka), or they will be present in several provinces, but then only in the province capital.

Thus, it seems clear that far from all Lusaka-based developmental NGOs can be assumed to speak on behalf of the rural population. There is, however, an awareness of this problem in some organisations. One of the religious-based advocacy organisations,

the JCTR, has underlined the need to go beyond the group of organisations in Lusaka, and listen to the people in the villages (Possing 2003: 57). And some organisations are doing a good job of lifting at least some grassroot concerns up to the national level. The point here is that NGO representation of the rural communities is by no means systematic. Districts with no Lusaka-based advocacy organisation do not have representation through this organisational channel. Thus, caution should be shown when that channel is assumed to be the prime democratic link between the state and the people. An additional problem is that some provinces are less popular among NGOs. Especially the provinces around Lusaka and along the ‘line of rail’⁴⁸, receive a disproportionately high share of NGO development efforts – Southern Province, for example, is immensely popular with the developmental NGOs.

Fiedler-Conradi seems to have found evidence to indicate that the national (or international) NGOs are not sufficiently sensitive to local concerns (Fiedler-Conradi 2003: 40), to such an extent that it is difficult for them even to perceive what the local needs really are. In the same vein, Roxin (2000: 23) notes that the NGOs tend to talk about problems in a very theoretical manner, thereby distancing themselves from the actual situation on the ground. Thus, the relationship between these NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) is not always as beneficial as one might expect according to liberal theories of civil society. Fiedler-Conradi reports that certain CBOs complain that organisations do not take their concerns into account but instead assume to ‘know better’ than the locals. She also reports that local people complain that national or international NGOs show a disregard for local structures and processes, such that these are either undermined or sometimes subsumed into the structure of the NGO (Fiedler-Conradi 2003: 40).

My own observations suggest that this rural–urban gap can apply also within organisations. In the CSPR, for example, I found indications that members from the groups at

⁴⁸ The ‘line of rail’ is an expression that is used in Zambia to denote the central areas which are more densely populated and where infrastructure is better than in the rest of the country (Grotperet et al. 1998: 207). In the colonial days, the railroad was laid across the country’s middle: from settler farmers in the South towards the mining towns on the Copperbelt in the North. The country’s four largest cities lie along this belt.

province level felt under-prioritised by the centralised steering committee.⁴⁹ More specifically, their complaints concerned a lack of information and also a lack of resources to carry out their tasks. Such complaints are widespread, according to Roxin (2000: 24). The lack of functioning information and communication channels between the national and local level is a common problem within organisations in Zambia.

3.3.4 Middle-class charity?

In addition to urban–rural relations, we should also consider the class relations, or differences in standard of living. Lusaka-based organisations will most typically be staffed by persons who are members of the middle-class segment of the population. Now, are these able to represent the interests of the poor in Zambia? The point here is not to question the dedication and integrity of these NGO workers. Nor is it to say that their status disqualifies them from speaking on behalf of the poor. It is simply to indicate that there seems to be a distance between these NGO staff and the poor, and perhaps especially the poor of the rural areas. This distance seems to express itself both in terms of sheer physical and geographical distance, as well as in terms of life worlds. The realities these two groups live in are very different. Here we should note the tendency to speak of poor people as ‘them’ – ‘the poor and vulnerable’ by the NGO staff (several anonymous informants 2003 [interview]); also Fiedler-Conradi 2003: 43). Thus, while I met many very informed and dedicated NGO workers in Zambia, there is nonetheless much that indicates that many NGO workers have an estranged relation to the poor. Though this does not render them unable to represent the poor or act as their advocates in the PRSP process, they are not the ‘direct channel to the poor’ they are made out to be.

As seen in chapter 2, Kasfir (1998b) and Webster and Engberg-Pedersen (2002) held that NGOs being staffed by members of the middle class is problematic, as these will lack incentive to fight for actual structural change. Though this was found in the Zambian context to a certain degree, it cannot be said to be a general trait with Zambian

⁴⁹ Two qualifications should be noted: The CSPR is a network organisation, and draws members from a range of organisations. Thus the disconnection between centre and periphery here is not within one single organisation. The CSPR is a relatively new network, and is bound to experience some problems before the organisational structure is properly institutionalised. Also, there was an awareness in the organisation of these structural problems (Chikwanka 2003 [interview]).

NGOs. It seems that the most active group of NGOs in the PRSP process did bare the question of inequality and structural change in mind. And as shall be seen in chapter 5, even if inequality is not a major theme in CSPRs official contribution to the PRSP, it addresses the question in its diagnostic of the poverty situation in Zambia, as well as in terms of tangible objectives for the PRSP.

3.4 The donor–‘civil society’ relationship⁵⁰

In the course of the 1990s, the strengthening of civil society emerged as an important priority for bilateral donors, as well as for the World Bank, and an increasing share of development aid was channelled through civil society. In Zambia, civil society funding seems to have taken off from around 1996 (Fiedler-Conradi 2003: 17). This was followed by a colossal increase in the number of organisations, most of which are more or less dependent on donor funding for their survival.

This section will look at how such donor dependence affects organisations of civil society, both in terms of the overall organisational arena in Zambia and in terms of the goals and agendas of individual organisations. We begin by examining specific structural effects for organisations terms of operation, as well as the effect on their strategic choices, before turning to how organisations understand their own role and identity as ‘civil society’.

3.4.1 Donor funding of ‘civil society’ – structural and strategic effects

The first and perhaps most visible effect of donor funding being channelled through ‘civil society’ was the colossal increase in the number of NGOs during the latter half of the 1990s. Though there are no exact figures, Fiedler-Conradi (2003: 21) has, from various sources, found indications that the total number of organisations in Zambia soared from 150–390 in 1993, to around 1000 in 1996, and 23,000 by 2001.⁵¹ Most will link this increase to the system of distribution of financial resources by donors (ibid.: 17; Chabal and Daloz 1999: 23). Put simply: the increase in donor money to this sector has

⁵⁰ This section draws heavily on Fiedler-Conradi (2003).

⁵¹ Non-profit-organisations in Zambia are to register with the Registrar of Societies. However due to a lack of resources it appears that the Registrar is unable to follow up on the directory to make sure it is accurate. Fiedler-Conradi therefore notes that its figures will probably include non-operational organisations as well. The figures also include local branches of national organisations, such as parishes of registered churches. On the other hand, registration involves a fee of around the equivalent of 50 US dollars, which is probably beyond the means of smaller organisations.

opened up the market, so to speak, for an expansion of the NGO sector. Liberal scholars will say that there was a potential for voluntary activity that has now been given the resources to be realised, and hence this growth of civil society (see e.g. Chazan 1994). Others will say that the growth is in part a result of the instrumental considerations of actors in search of a livelihood. Of course, looking at the timing, the increase is also related to the political climate. With the introduction of multi-party democracy, space has been opened up for organisational activity. But political openness cannot alone account for the growth. The major upsurge has taken place at a time when donor financing patterns have been oriented towards civil society.

Thus it is an increase determined largely by the sudden availability of funds. And it seems that large, professional organisations are the ones to benefit most from this. Though there is more money being directed toward 'civil society', the massive increase in the total number of organisations has created a climate of competition for funds. In this harsh competition, organisations able to present consistent and well-formulated proposals are more likely to win through. The process of applying for funds has thus created a whole new profession of preparing project proposals and applications for funding – and here the professional and resourceful organisations clearly enjoy a head start.

A further effect of this financing pattern is probably a reinforcement of the centralism of the organisational landscape in Zambia, adding on to the centralist tendencies of the country's political and administrative system. Organisations tend to stay in the Lusaka area so as to be near important donors, in order to be able to lay hands on funding. Indeed, this geographical proximity is often necessary in order to access donors in a country with such a poor infrastructure and communication network as Zambia.

Inasmuch as the donors hold the (financial) key to the organisations' survival, this financing arrangement gives donors considerable influence on the organisational scene in Zambia. Organisations that come into existence because there is money available become highly dependent on the donors, who continue to be their sole source of funding. This has probably done at least two things to the organisational landscape. Firstly, on the whole, the organisational landscape is likely to reflect the main priorities of the donor

community. In Zambia, the issue of gender has been a top priority of important donors (such as the Norwegian government). And indeed, some of the strongest organisations in Zambia today are those dealing with gender issues, such as NGOCC and WfC. Secondly, given the funding arrangements – funding is often provided on a project or programmes basis – organisations seem to tailor their activities to make them attractive to donors, or to keep up with the latest trends in development. For example, in Zambia today it seems that hardly any major organisation can be without some kind of HIV/AIDS component. Organisations may even be advised by their ‘development partners’ (i.e. donors) to come out more strongly on HIV/AIDS (anonymous informant 2003 [interview]). This is not to say that dissemination of information on HIV/AIDS does not spring from a real, felt need in Zambia. However, it is clear that this is also one of the major donor priorities for Zambia, and hence more likely to bring in funding than areas currently less in vogue with the development industry. Thus there seems to be some kind of accommodation of the organisations’ priorities. This can fruitfully be interpreted as a case of governmentality, as outlined in chapter 2. Actors know what is likely to be considered fundable by donors, and many organisations thus exert considerable self-discipline in terms of what kinds of projects they initiate. This means that donors in a sense govern the organisations, though in a non-explicit manner. The result could be that their activities to a lesser extent spring from felt needs on the ground, and are to a greater extent determined by what is perceived as likely to attract donor funding.⁵² This holds true not only in terms of the substance of an organisation’s activities, but also the form, how the work is carried out. For example ‘the workshop’ has become immensely popular among organisations in Zambia. Workshops are easy to deal with because they are standardised, so donors know what they are funding. Consequently organisations in need of funds might be tempted to hold a workshop simply because it is likely to receive funding.

Moreover, the NGO sector has become a career path, or a means of self-employment, for young educated people in the face of soaring unemployment rates (Njobvu

⁵² Of course, it may well be that organisations say only what donors want to hear, in order to attract funds, and then do what they perceive as most pertinent on the ground anyway – and as such their actions are directed by that. But then there is the question of reporting and accounting for how the money is spent: in order not to lose the donor’s confidence the organisation must show at least some results in terms of the initial agreement. In most cases, the dual pressure of claims from the ground and from the donors

2003[interview]; Fiedler-Conradi 2003: 23). Setting up an NGO seems to be their best chance of earning a living. Needless to say, not all such initiatives are determined by the most pressing needs of the intended beneficiaries, but rather by what is considered likely to attract funding from donors. This heavy dependency on donor funds on the part of ‘civil society’ in Zambia gives donors substantial power to influence both the organisational landscape, as well as the profile of development work in the country. This corresponds to the situation in many other African countries, as described by Julie Hearn (2001).

3.4.2 Donor funding of civil society – effects on ideas and identity

At the same time as these organisations adjust to this competition for funding, they are also adjusting into a global development discourse. There are certain concepts and principles – a specialised vocabulary – that an organisation needs to adopt in order to be taken seriously as a development actor. These include such international development ‘buzz words’ as ‘the empowerment of local communities’, ‘gender mainstreaming’, and ‘civil society participation’. Many organisations heavily involved in the struggle for funds have adopted this language, and talk about how ‘gender and environment must be mainstreamed’ into the PRSP, how they work for the ‘empowerment’ of the rural poor, how they apply ‘participatory approaches’, and they will term their donors ‘development partners’ (several anonymous informants 2003 [interview]). To the extent that one accepts that language plays an important role in shaping identities and social practice, this is potentially very effective as a case of governmentality. The international development discourse transmitted by important donors then shapes development agents ‘in their own image’, which in turn helps to build support around the ideas of the development rationale in the countries in question.

The donor discourse on ‘civil society’ seems to have contributed to shaping the common understanding of the meaning of empirical ‘civil society’ in Zambia. As shown in chapter 2, the donor version of ‘civil society’ is in practice most often an equation of ‘civil society’ with NGOs involved in development work, either on an advocacy basis, or on a service delivery basis. In Zambia, this version of ‘civil society’ seems to have

gained a foothold as the delineation of what ‘civil society’ means. It appears that the use of the concept in the development industry has helped to build an identity of development NGOs in Zambia as ‘civil society’. So development NGOs, often with a strong advocacy component, constitute the heart of what is now referred to as ‘civil society’. This understanding of civil society dominates within most circles: with the government, certain interest-based organisations, and in ‘civil society’ itself, in addition to the donor community. With regard to the government’s understanding of ‘civil society’, Fiedler-Conradi refers to a draft NGO policy document that consistently equates NGOs with ‘civil society’ (2003: 33). This corresponds to the donor version of the concept. Similarly, some interest organisations will refer to NGOs as ‘civil society’ in much the same vein as does the government. Both tend to emphasise what they see as the political edge of ‘civil society’ (Zyambo 2003 [interview]; Haantuba 2003 [interview]).

A report written on civil society in Zambia, by a ‘civil society’ representative, provides a good illustration of what civil society is taken to mean in ‘civil society’ circles: ‘the key role of civil society is to ensure that government (including foreign governments) and business are accountable to the citizens. Civil society in its diversity also work to improve the lives of people’ (Mphuka 2003: 7). Civil society then is a body of organisations that work to improve people’s lives. Also visible is the watchdog function vis-à-vis government (also foreign governments – meaning donors) often ascribed to ‘civil society’ in the literature. However, it is worth noting the extension of this role to encompass watching over business as well. This reflects the opposition of certain major advocacy organisations towards what has been perceived as private companies’ taking advantage of the privatisation process for the sake of their own enrichment. More interesting for this purpose though, is the illustration the above quote provides of the notion of a collective body of organisations identified as ‘civil society’ that is dominant in many organisations in Zambia. Apparently, this is not a strictly Zambian phenomenon. Hearn (2001: 44) describes this tendency in her comparative article on civil society in Ghana, Uganda and South Africa, writing that it: ‘[...] tends to

identify itself self-consciously via the new language of “civil society”⁵³. This self-conscious identification as ‘civil society’ is a feature that stands out strongly with organisations in Zambia as well. Phrases like ‘we, as civil society [...]’, ‘we felt, as civil society that [...]’, ‘civil society say [...]’, illustrate this (e.g. Mutwale 2003 [interview]; Musamba 2003 [interview]; Ng’ona 2003 [interview]; Matyola 2003 [interview]; Haachinda 2003 [interview]; Samatawele 2003 [interview]). It seems highly likely that this usage of ‘civil society’ is at least partly a result of the donor ‘civil society’-discourse.

3.4.3 Does donor dependence equal standardisation?

We have seen that ‘civil society’ in Zambia is heavily dependent on donors financially. And we have seen that these organisations are influenced by the development discourse of donors, both in terms of the strategies they pursue and in terms of the ideas they relate to. The donors control the inflow of resources, and as a result, organisations must direct their work towards the donors’ priorities so as to attract funding. Is this seemingly straightforward causal relation in fact so simple? This seems to be the general pattern, but there are of course qualifications to the picture. There are two, primarily: Firstly, though all donors to a greater or lesser extent relate to an international development discourse that provides a frame for their work, they still have various different priorities and ways of working. This applies in terms of their prioritisation of different sectors, attitudes towards funding arrangements (basket funding, budget support, etc.), and in terms of promoting their own interests. Donors are governments that depend on support from their electorates. Recently, however, there has been movement towards greater donor coordination in the countries of operation, at least among the European ones. This means that we can expect more unification, not less. A further factor is that donors are themselves formed by the prevailing development discourse. They are also evaluated in terms of the rationality and legitimacy of their activities. And, since they are looking for recognition internationally, as well as at home, they must to some extent relate to the current trends.

⁵³ Hearn specifies that she is talking about a section of civil society as she defines it, notably organisations ‘actively engaged with the national development project’ (2001: 44). To a large extent, this corresponds with the common understanding of civil society

A second factor that may reduce the dependence is that many international NGOs are also donors. Some of these NGOs support the initiatives of local organisations, and sometimes support local organisations that do things independently of the latest international development trends. However, most international NGOs tend also to be caught up in the development discourse.⁵⁴ For one thing, many are dependent on funding from their own governments in the North, and therefore have to relate to shifts in the trends of development thinking. Indeed, keeping up with these trends is part of what lends legitimacy to the actors involved in the field. In a business where real results can be seen only in the long run, it becomes important to prove legitimacy in the meantime by adhering to the accepted strategies and methods. There are many examples where local organisations supported by international NGOs have ended up doing standardised projects and reorienting themselves according to the concepts in vogue in the international development discourse (Roxin 2000: 18).⁵⁵ Thus, since for most local organisations external funding appears to be the sole option, they often end up having to relate to current international development trends in order to be eligible for funding from external donors, be they governmental or non-governmental. Dependence remains a reality with many organisations at different levels, and with it comes a certain amount of standardisation. This can probably be viewed as governmentality, where most actors seem to exert a certain self-discipline towards the development discourse.

3.4.4 Donor criticism in spite of dependence?

Before we close this section on donor–‘civil society’ relations, one question remains: does the financial dependence on donors render ‘civil society’ incapable of criticising the policies of these very donors? Is ‘civil society’ merely a tool to front donor policies, as indicated by Hearn (2001: 44)? Given the diversity of both donors and organisations of ‘civil society’, there can be no straightforward answer to this. Many Zambian

in Zambia.

⁵⁴ This might be a result of the tendency of the mainstream discourse (or e.g. the World Bank) to adopt the language of international NGOs, as noted in 2.3.2. However, as also shown above, the meanings tend to become twisted – meanings which in turn the NGOs have to relate to as their own ideas.

⁵⁵ This is described by DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 148, referred in Tvedt 1998), and is termed ‘institutional isomorphism’. It refers to the phenomenon that organisations that are dependent on another organisation for funding over time will become more similar to that organisation, such that ‘the greater the centralisation of an organisation A’s resource supply, the greater the extent to which organisation A will change isomorphically to resemble the organisation on which it depends on for resources’ (Tvedt 1998: 214). According to Tvedt, this phenomenon can also describe the relationship of Northern NGOs to their funding governments.

organisations have long been criticising the adjustment policies and the privatisation of state companies embarked upon in the 1990s. Some have also criticised donors who have withheld support, citing economic mismanagement on the part of the government. There has also been general criticism directed at the donors' reluctance towards debt cancellation.

These examples indicate that the organisations are not mere puppets in the hands of donors, and that they feel relatively free to speak their minds without fearing for their funding. The existence of various donors, and various sources of funding, probably contributes to this. International NGOs critical of, for instance, the IFI's policies are perhaps likely to fund organisations with the same views in the country of operation. Or they may help to build capacity for that kind of critique. However, bilateral donors are also funding organisations critical of IFI policies: for example, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) is funding the Zambian NGO – and outspoken IFI critic – WfC. Judging from that, the organisations need not fear that funding will be cut should they critically address policies towards which the donor in question is officially in favour. However, we can note a general tendency that is apparent when looking at statements, written or oral, by Zambian organisations, regarding donor policies: much of this critique is directed largely against the IFIs, rather than the bilateral donors. So, even if most bilateral donors consent to the economic reform programmes of the IMF, they are not as such targets of criticism. This could indicate that most organisations will not come out in explicit opposition to their donors.

3.5 The state–‘civil society’ relationship in Zambia

From the relationship between ‘civil society’ and donors, let us turn to the relationship of ‘civil society’ to the state. It is far from evident, however, that it is even meaningful to talk about a ‘relationship between state and ‘civil society’ in Zambia. As we have seen, Chabal and Daloz (1999: 35) reject the (largely liberal) notion of a simple state–civil society opposition in Africa. According to them, the two spheres will be intertwined because of the lack of an institutionalised state, and because of the relations created by the political logic of redistribution. So, in their view, it is not fruitful to talk about *civil society* in an African setting, nor to consider the organisations that have come into existence as a result of the NGO explosion in Africa as being independent of the state.

Consequently, looking at their relation to the state is dismissed as irrelevant.

In the following, some relevant aspects of Chabal and Daloz' perspective will be discussed, as I think they do contribute useful points. However, I will also argue that Chabal and Daloz underestimate donor influence on the organisational scene in Zambia: the financial independence of the state on the part of many organisations, resulting from donor funding, could mean that it is meaningful to speak of a state–'civil society' relationship.

3.5.1 Patrimonialism and elite accommodation?

African politics is often described as characterised by patrimonial relations (see e.g. Médard 1996). Zambia is no exception (Chabal and Daloz 1999: 38, Economist Intelligence Unit 2002: 6). Chabal and Daloz maintain that patron–client relations are fundamental for understanding the political logic in Zambia (1999:38). Daloz' study of political culture in Zambia indicates that the political system makes sense to people insofar as they can expect something in return for their political support (Daloz 1997: 44; Chabal and Daloz 1999: 38–39). Thus, for example, candidates will go to the villages distributing maize meal in order to secure votes. According to Chabal and Daloz, this kind of logic is widespread throughout the system. The votes of opposition MPs are routinely bought (Economist Intelligence Unit 2002: 8), or they receive financial compensation for joining the ruling party. Nepotism is also an important part of political practice. It is quite widely held that under Chiluba, the Bemba people profited from having one of their own in office (Mugnier 2002: 49). One highly visible expression of this is the dominance of the Bemba in the state apparatus (ibid.: 519).⁵⁶ If the political system is pervaded with patrimonial practices, what about relations between state and 'civil society'? Do these relations also follow the logic of informal redistribution?

Chabal and Daloz assert that the lack of an institutionalised state makes for a society that is infested with patrimonial relations, and thus no *civil society*. A good example of this kind of set-up is supposedly the relationship between the state and the cooperative

⁵⁶ The first President of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, who sat for 27 years, is also a Bemba.

movement during the Kaunda era (see Pletcher 2000: 131). But also during the 1990s and up to today, some organisations have enjoyed a close relationship with government, which seems to have earned them influence on policy-making. For example, one informant working in a Lusaka-based organisation told me that he would be called in to write speeches for the President, when the topic was agriculture (anonymous informant 2003 [interview]). Some organisations clearly have greater access to the decisionmaking arenas than others.

What about the NGO explosion in the mid-1990s, as described early in this chapter? Are these new NGOs also intertwined with government in ways that render it meaningless to talk about a relationship between two separate bodies? Chabal and Daloz' answer would be yes, the two are very much intertwined. With the change in funding patterns, actors in the state apparatus (or outside academics and consultants) simply found other channels for accessing resources. The inadequate funds available for upholding the patrimonial practices of the state apparatus made it necessary for some actors to move out into the growing consultancy business or the NGO sector (Chabal and Daloz 1999: 23). And indeed, consultancy businesses are flourishing in Zambia, and there are also a fair number of university academics who are being called to work as consultants for government and various NGOs. It is not surprising that this activity follows the access to resources. In general, however, there seems to have been an invasion of the NGO sphere by other spheres – also the political sphere. The links between opposition parties and certain advocacy NGOs have been many over the last years.⁵⁷

The government has also engaged in the NGO sphere. During the 1990s several new organisations sprung out of government initiatives. One example is the food security oriented NGO PAM, which emanated from the action taken towards relief for those affected by the 1991/92 drought (Luhila 2003 [interview]). ACF was established in order to ensure coordination of government and private sector action in the agriculture sector, and came out of a mid-term ASIP review (Mwanaumo 2003 [interview]). PAM is now

⁵⁷ Of course, this phenomenon is widespread in Western countries as well. However, in Zambia, this is seen by many as an inappropriate mixing of roles on the part of NGOs. There have also been allegations that members of the political opposition have been forming networks registered as NGOs in order to access funding: recently with regard to Coalition 2005, composed of opposition parties and NGOs, which lobbies for a change in the Constitution (*Times of Zambia* 2004b).

legally an NGO and the ACF is at present a legal entity functioning much like a consultancy business. Both are today working in close collaboration with government, as well as with donors. This is not to suggest that these organisations were established purely with a view to accessing funds. However, they probably illustrate the consequences of the changed conditions, as access to funding is imperative in order to run these activities. In sum, it would appear that Chabal and Daloz give a relatively accurate account of the new situation.

Another tendency however, is a body of organisations that seem fairly independent of the government structures. These are large, donor-funded and mostly Lusaka-based organisations engaged in development work and advocacy. Even if many of these came into being because of the changes in the channels of funding, that does not mean that they cannot be separate from the government. On the contrary, there are tendencies, already described above, that indicate that these can operate independently of the government's informal structures. Dependence on donor funding leads organisations to orient themselves more towards the donors than towards the state. This makes for more power to the donors, and less to the state. And is there any reason why actors should bother to maintain their good relations to the state apparatus, when financial opportunities lie elsewhere? It could be in order to nurture certain clientelistic bonds. However, these bonds could just as well be maintained from outside the state apparatus. When elites enter into the organisational sphere, it does not necessarily mean that they stay attached to the state apparatus. 'Elite' does not equal state. Moreover, the relation between the organisations and the state towards donors is at times characterised by competition for funds (Fiedler-Conradi 2003: 33), and this makes for a more detached position for the organisations. However, maintaining a close relation to the state apparatus could be instrumental for being able to influence policy-making. Interest organisations could be more likely to gain from keeping a close relationship with the state. These are not designed to operate outside the realm of the state power, as service-delivery NGOs may be: rather, their activity is based on lobbying the state on behalf of their members. Some NGOs are designed to serve solely as pressure groups, but most are practically oriented, seeking to change things on their own, while also lobbying

government. Such NGOs are dependent on a good relationship with the donors, more than with the state. Thus, in my opinion, it seems Chabal and Daloz may be dismissing the power of the donors a bit too easily. As was argued under 3.4, donors seem to be relatively influential with regard to shaping the organisational landscape and the nature of activity in that realm.

Another thing that speaks for a segment of organisations that are relatively separate from the state is the hostile relationship and mutual distrust prevalent between the state and some of these organisations during the 1990s. ‘Civil society’ has been attacked on several counts; the seemingly close relationship of some organisations with certain opposition parties has been used to delegitimise ‘civil society’ (*Times of Zambia* 2004b); the representativeness of ‘civil society’ has been questioned (*Times of Zambia* 2004c); and ‘civil society’ has been accused of furthering the agendas of the donors (van Donge 1998: 85; Hansongule 2000; Simwansa 2003 [interview]).

Not all NGO leaders have a background in the state apparatus – this is true of many newly educated youth who find in the NGO sector a prime career route. These may stand in relative independence of the government. Secondly, some organisations have come about as the result of external initiatives, whether from international NGOs or from bilateral donors. These do not necessarily have the links to government that Chabal and Daloz presuppose. So, even if donors may in some cases be played in the quest for resources on the part of recycled elites, they do influence other parts of the NGO scene, or ‘civil society’ in Zambia. Paradoxically, the agenda of ‘partnership’ may change this. If the source of funding shifts from donors back to the state apparatus, this may mean that maintaining close ties with the state is vital for the organisations to be able to continue their activities. This is dealt with in the next section.

3.5.2 Neutralisation through ‘partnership’?

Hearn’s study (2001) of the relationship between civil society, the state, the donors and the current development agenda describes a new tendency in the management of development assistance (see also Howell and Pearce 2001: 104–105). This new model involves a return to state-centred aid. After a decade of reforming them, donors seem to have regained confidence in African states, she says (Hearn 2001: 50). The funds are now increasingly directed at the state through sector budgets. In this picture, ‘civil

society' is expected to be a partner to government, implementing or monitoring projects and programmes.

From this new set-up there follow some implications relevant for this study. Firstly, organisations that serve as implementing agencies for the state cannot be expected to maintain an independent advocacy role in the long run. Agitation against the state could cause them to lose their role as implementers. Secondly, according to Hearn, organisations that monitor government development efforts will often end up in 'a legitimating role, rather than a critical role' (ibid.: 50). This insight can be applied to the PRSP process in Zambia, where NGOs are expected to monitor the government's implementation efforts. One obvious example would be the CSPR. These have up to now been quite clear in their critique of the government's failure to implement the PRSP – which would indicate a highly independent position towards the government. However, by virtue of their monitoring task they may easily, as pointed out by Hearn, end up legitimising a process and a set of policies that they were originally opposed to. For example: though the CSPR say they are happy with the PRSP and are now awaiting its implementation, they are at the same time critical towards the very macro-economic framework on which the PRSP is premised.⁵⁸ Thus they are in danger of (indirectly) legitimising the whole package (the PRSP), including the neo-liberal policies they so harshly condemn.

3.6 Summary: the character of 'civil society' in Zambia

The aim of this chapter has been to highlight certain features of what is commonly referred to as 'civil society' in Zambia. The point has been to show how, through the massive donor dependence, 'civil society' in Zambia can be seen much as a product of the international development discourse promoting 'civil society' as an actor in development. The crucial link here is the financial dependence of the organisations on donors, and the donors' consequent power to shape 'civil society' – in terms of which organisations are established and stay active, as well as the type of activities they pursue; but also in terms of how these organisations identify themselves as 'civil society'. Furthermore, the development discourse itself is a powerful dynamic that shapes both 'civil society' and the general development scene in Zambia, as well as the donors as

actors in the international aid system. This has been interpreted as governmentality, as developed by Foucault and outlined in chapter 2.

We have seen how this ‘civil society’ relates to the state, as well as to society at large. In Zambia, state–‘civil society’ relations and points of contact have been numerous, and varied. Some organisations are almost integrated into the state structure, whereas others have more loose connections. It seems that interest organisations have more to gain from maintaining a close relationship with the state, than donor-funded NGOs. Then again, some NGOs are also closely affiliated to the state. However, while they too may seek to influence state policy, for the most part their existence does not depend on it. As noted above though, the new agenda of partnership may change this.

In this chapter, we have also looked at the relationship of ‘civil society’ to other organised or unorganised interests. The relationship of ‘civil society’ to interest organisations, at least in the sphere of agriculture, was found to be rather antagonistic. While ‘civil society’ saw the interest organisation in question as lacking solidarity with fellow Zambians, ‘civil society’ was discredited by the interest organisation, which saw it as ‘political’, and lacking legitimacy because it lacked a defined membership base. Moreover, this tendency to question the legitimacy of ‘civil society’ in Zambia on the part of various actors, government in particular, was also found more generally, not just in connection within the sphere of agricultural/rural development.

It is worth noting that organisations of Zambian ‘civil society’ see themselves as having the characteristics prescribed by the ‘good governance’ agenda: both as representatives of the poor and vulnerable, and as a watchdog vis-à-vis the state. In practice, however, much of ‘civil society’ emerges as relatively centralised, urban-based, professionalised, and somewhat distanced from the (rural) poor. Thus, ‘civil society’ on the whole is not necessarily the representative of the poor it is made out to be. It seems to perform better with regard to the watchdog function. As many Lusaka-based organisations employ highly qualified academic staff, their advocacy skills are perhaps their best asset. Nonetheless, the link between these two functions will not necessarily be

⁵⁸ This contradiction will be taken up further in chapter 5.

present.

Paradoxically, this imbalance seems first and foremost to be a result of the structure of the aid industry: the funding system makes it imperative for organisations to have a strong Lusaka base; and the formalised language of the development discourse, which they are forced to adopt, tends to distance them from the poor. Thus, while bilateral donors and IFIs promote values expressed through the good governance discourse, the practice generated by the aid system goes against those values, and makes for a ‘civil society’ whose function is more closely linked to external funding channels than to the actual beneficiaries of their work.

4 Participation in the PRSP process

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the participation process of the formulation of the Zambian PRSP – the second part of our research question. We will look at the form of the process and the debates. The substance of the debates will be dealt with in the next chapter, but there will be some inevitable overlap between the two. The first part of the present chapter is largely empirical, and provides a review of the PRSP formulation process in Zambia. The second part gives an analysis of the participation process through the use of the ladder of participation presented in chapter 2.2.1.

4.2 The PRSP formulation process in Zambia

Zambia reached the HIPC Initiative Decision Point at the end of 2000, and was thus eligible for debt relief under the initiative. Arrangements to prepare a PRSP were well under way by that time. In July 2000, an Interim-PRSP was submitted to the boards of the IMF and the IDA. This was produced by the Ministry of Finance without participation from other actors, apparently due to time pressure (GRZ 2000: point 34). The I-PRSP was meant to give an outline for the preparation of a full PRSP, especially with regard to stakeholder participation. And it did outline quite a comprehensive participation schedule. The plan included initial orientation seminars for government and members of parliament, as well as stakeholder participation through subgroups (termed *Working Groups*) of the technical committee responsible for formulating and compiling the PRSP.⁵⁹ Further, it planned for province level consultations and finally, a concluding national summit to review the first draft of the PRSP. For the most part, this plan for participation was followed through in the actual preparation phase.

The Ministry of Finance was represented in all Working Groups, as acting secretariat. This may give an indication of the standing of this process as compared to, for example, the National Poverty Reduction Action Plan (NPRAP) (GRZ 1998), which was coordinated by the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, a ministry with lower rank. As already mentioned, this may also be said to indicate the direction of

⁵⁹ The discussions in the Working Group for agriculture will be analysed in chapter 5, where they provide the main focus of the chapter, along with comments on the inputs from CSPR and the provincial consultations.

the PRSP, with its strong focus on economic growth rather than a primarily social orientation. The following sections outline the process of preparing the PRSP in Zambia, at national and province level, in government fora, as well as in the CSPR fora.

4.2.1 National-level participation

Participation at the national level was mainly in the form of sectoral Working Groups and national meetings. Due to the government's decision to define the process as non-political (in the sense of party politics), the parliament was largely absent from the process.⁶⁰ The Working Groups were established to formulate the chapters of the PRSP, and constituted the core of the participation process. As noted above, they were defined and led by the Ministry of Finance, according to growth-generating sectors and social sectors.⁶¹ The CSPR proposed several additions and alterations to this arrangement, some of which were taken into account. Notably gender, HIV/AIDS and the environment were taken up as cross-cutting issues.⁶² The Working Groups met regularly – every week, or every other week – during the formulation period from around September 2000 to around February 2001.

The Ministry of Finance selected participants for the groups on the basis of submissions from the relevant line ministries and certain organisations. Apparently, there were no clear criteria as to selecting the participants in the group. According to a representative from the Ministry of Agriculture, who was the chairman of the Agriculture Working Group, the starting point for selection was the topics to be addressed: thus, because the Agriculture Working Group would address issues of land, the Ministry of Lands would be invited etc. (Haantuba 2003 [interview]). With regard to the private sector, interest organisations, and NGOs, the relevant ministry invited what it would term 'key stakeholders' (Haantuba 2003 [interview]), which seem for the most part to have been relatively large organisations that had interacted with the ministry on previous occasions. However, it also worked together with a lead organisation in the CSPR, the JCTR, in

⁶⁰ This aspect of the process will not be dealt with here, due to the scope of this study. For an account of this, see Bwalya et al. (2003).

⁶¹ There were eight Working Groups in total: macroeconomics, agriculture, tourism, industry, mining, health, education, and governance.

⁶² For the cross-cutting issues, expert papers were written, to be incorporated into the PRSP. By virtue of being cross-cutting, these themes were also meant to be taken into account in all the other Working Groups. However, this did not happen in many groups (Musamba 2003 [interview]).

identifying ‘civil society’ candidates (Musamba 2003 [interview]). The chairmanship of the Agriculture Working Group, the Ministry of Agriculture, had clear preferences as to the type of NGOs it wanted included in the group: The preferred type was one that was engaged in typical development activities, ‘like seed multiplication, seed distribution, food relief’, and that ‘doesn’t look at those civil, political – what do you call it – issues’ (Haantuba 2003 [interview]). Nonetheless, the NGO WfC participated in the Working Group. This organisation is involved not only in traditional development activity, but also in advocacy concerning many ‘political’ issues.

Typically the Working Groups would be made up of relevant government Ministries, donors, IFIs, and UN agencies, interest organisations, NGOs and private sector actors. The government’s stated intention was to make non-governmental actors the majority in the groups (Haantuba 2003 [interview]). This intention was not met in the Working Group for agriculture, however.⁶³

The groups worked relatively independently of each other, until around February 2001, when zero drafts were presented from most Working Groups. After that, a workshop was held in March 2001 for all Working Group members to evaluate the zero drafts of all the other groups. A national summit to discuss the First Draft of the PRSP was held in October 2001, drawing participants from Lusaka as well as from the provinces. Here, alterations could supposedly be made on points of dissatisfaction, if a good case were made (Bwalya, E. 2003 [interview]). Subsequently, a technical committee of government bureaucrats and academics did the final write-up of the paper, in order to make it coherent. Much to the discontent of the CSPR, ‘civil society’ organisations were not granted any participation in this part of the process. The PRSP was then submitted and approved by the IMF/IDA joint committee in May 2002.⁶⁴

4.2.2 The CSPR process⁶⁵

Early in 2000, some of the largest organisations in Lusaka initiated a process of

⁶³ See list of participants of the Agriculture Working Group in the Appendix.

⁶⁴ Thus, the process seemingly stretched over almost two years. However, this does not correspond to the real time and energy spent on the paper: the process was held up by the tripartite elections in December 2001. It seems that in October 2001, after a National Summit was held to review the first draft, the process came to a complete halt, until it was taken up again in February 2002, when experts completed the Second Draft and presented it to the Cabinet.

⁶⁵ This section builds mostly on interviews with CSPR secretariat staff and participating organisations. The problems of obtaining information from the relevant actors have been mentioned in the section on methods in chapter 1.

preparing for their participation in the PRSP process. Jubilee Zambia had been alerted by organisations in Europe and the USA that the World Bank was now initiating PRSP processes in many countries, and that civil society organisations should be given a voice in the process (Musamba 2003 [interview]).⁶⁶ Accordingly, a few of the largest organisations⁶⁷ in the country started to meet to make a strategy and to establish a common platform before the PRSP process started. Initial discussions were apparently very heated, but this problem was resolved as the group managed to decide on common points relevant to the PRSP process, and lay other issues to rest (Musamba 2003 [interview]). Then a set of common viewpoints was what united the organisations of the network. It is likely that this also helped build or strengthen a sense of fellowship in ‘civil society’, at least regarding the PRSP process and possibly beyond that. In relation to the PRSP, the existence of a common ‘enemy’ (the government and the IFIs, plus to some extent private sector) may have reinforced this.

One of the most difficult issues was whether to engage in the process or not. Some organisations argued that on principle one should not engage with the IFIs, the process being initiated by them (Chikwanka 2003 [interview]), although the majority of the group seems to have been more pragmatic. Still, it was not self-evident that one should participate. The dilemma was that if the organisations participated in a process that turned out not to be open and inclusive, they risked lending legitimacy to that process. On the other hand, if they did not take part, they risked losing out on an opportunity to influence government policy. The fear was that government would always manage to get some organisations to join in, and thus get the PRSP approved by the IMF and World Bank as based on a participatory process (Matyola 2003 [interview]). So eventually, the group decided that it would participate, on the condition that if the government tried to use them to rubberstamp the process, they would pull out (Musamba 2003 [interview]).

Then the next step was to make the coalition as broad as possible: ‘we realised that if

⁶⁶ According to McGee et al., the PRSP process brought about ‘an increased tendency for NGOs to draw on their international NGO partners’ experiences and skills’ (2002: 18–19). This was seen with regard to the creation of the CSPR. A Finnish volunteer organisation, KEPa, provided financial, ideational and logistical support to the JCTR/Jubilee Zambia which initiated the CSPR (Ivonen 2003 [interview]).

⁶⁷ Among others the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR), Jubilee Zambia, Women for Change (WfC), Afronet, NGO Coordinating Committee (NGOCC).

our participation would be meaningful, sustainable and even consistent, we needed to sell this idea wider' (Musamba 2003 [interview]). So the network grew, and also made contact with individuals that could be of assistance, like professors at the University of Zambia. In August 2000, the network was constituted as the CSPR, and it became a centre for the exchange of information for the participating organisations during the PRSP process. The CSPR steering committee⁶⁸ met every week during the formulation period (Chikwanka 2003 [interview]). Here, organisations that had a seat in the Working Groups of the government process shared information with the other members. Likewise, the CSPR members gave input to the organisations to take into the government Working Groups (Samatawele 2003 [interview]). Equally important was the exchange of process documents – otherwise unavailable to organisations not participating in the government process – which these regular meetings facilitated.

Thus, the CSPR influenced the process through its member organisations in the government Working Groups. However, the organisations did not trust government to include the CSPR's contributions, and as we shall see, some did not feel that they had been taken seriously in the Working Groups of the government process. Thus, at the close of the process of the chapter formulation by the government Working Groups, the CSPR embarked upon its own process, in order to make a written submission to the process.⁶⁹ The result was the document, *A PRSP for Zambia – A Civil Society Perspective* (CSPR 2001a) (hereafter termed CSPR-PRSP), ceremonially handed over to the government in July 2001 at one of Lusaka's hotels (CSPR 2001b: 6). As the preparations had started in February 2001, this document was prepared in the course of a few months. There were nine thematic⁷⁰ groups set up for this purpose, with consultants from the University of Zambia working in collaboration with the organisations of the

⁶⁸ This consisted of all active members of the network, some 19 organisations of various kinds: human rights organisations, trade unions, religious organisations, women's organisations, research organisations, as well as organisations dealing with HIV/AIDS, food security, sustainable agricultural livelihoods and land (Musamba 2003 [interview]).

⁶⁹ Such initiatives were also made in the Bolivian and Tanzanian processes (McGee et al. 2002: 6).

⁷⁰ The CSPR made a point out of calling them thematic groups, because they disagreed with government's Working Group arrangement. Their concern was that a sector focus would lead the groups to overlook the links to other sectors and themes. They also wanted issues of HIV/AIDS, gender and the environment to be treated in their own Working Groups, arguing that themes which were defined as 'cross-cutting' would be neglected (Mutwale 2003 [interview]). Even if they may say that in some cases it proved to be a matter of semantics, they still maintain that the CSPR did a better job of linking the different themes, as well as taking care of the 'cross-cutting' issues (Musamba 2003 [interview]).

thematic groups to prepare chapters on the themes assigned to them. This was not necessarily a representative process, as members of the groups were taken mostly from the organisations of the network. Participation in the thematic groups was, however, not restricted to specific organisations or to a specific number (Haachinda 2003 [interview]). Further, there seems to have been a good deal of variance as to how often these groups met, whether they met regularly, as well as the regularity of the participating members being present (Chikwanka 2003 [interview]). Here we should not forget that the C SPR was itself a loose and irregular network, simply set up for the purpose of contributing to the PRSP. Structure was not a primary concern at the time. The lead organisations in the agriculture and food security group were the PAM, WfC (both of these organisations took part also in the government Working Group for Agriculture), and NAPSSFZ. In general, the organisations that participated in the government Working Groups would also be active in the process of making the C SPR-PRSP.

The document served at least two purposes. It gave a written input from those organisations of the C SPR that did not participate in the government process, thus in a sense, a more formal contribution. It also served to document the views of the C SPR vis-à-vis the government document, so that it was possible to compare the two for purposes of evaluating the organisations' influence. The C SPR also conducted parallel province level hearings in the four poorest provinces, held just before the government consultations. These will be dealt with in the next section.

4.2.3 Province Level Consultations⁷¹

In recognition of the problems of representation on the part of national-level actors based in Lusaka, provincial consultations were also held. These were intended to supplement the effort of the Working Groups at the national level, and were held after the Working Groups had completed the zero drafts of the individual chapters of the PRSP.

⁷¹ My observations on the provincial consultations build on interview data and reports from the consultations in Luapula Province. The findings are therefore not necessarily representative of all the provinces. However, as regards the consultations organised by government, I also build on interview data that refer to consultations in other provinces or to the provincial consultations in general. Thus the points on the government consultations, if not on the C SPR consultations, are likely to be applicable to other provinces as well.

The Government-organised province level consultations

In May 2001, government consultations were held in the provinces, organised as two-day workshops in the capital town of each province. Teams of facilitators, made up mainly of participants from the various Working Groups, would go from Lusaka to the nine provinces. The consultation workshops drew participants from all districts in the province: government ministries, local administration, churches, chiefs and local organisations (the latter almost exclusively farmers' organisations). The Province Administration was responsible for inviting participants.

A general criticism against these province level seminars, from academics and NGOs alike, has been the overrepresentation of government (Saasa 2003 [informal conversation]; Machina 2003 [interview]; Luhila 2003 [interview]; Kabaso 2003 [interview]). In Luapula Province, each district had two 'civil society' representatives at most, one church and one farmers' representative (Office of the Permanent Secretary, Luapula Province 2001: 26-29). In contrast, the district officials (from line ministries or the District Council) would be five or six in number. Some districts were represented solely through these district officials (ibid.: 26-29). Here it should also be noted that district officials such as District Agriculture Coordinators work in the communities and are often well informed about the problems of farmers in their area. However, they were meant both to represent their district, *and* to speak on behalf of government in that district (Mulumbi 2003 [interview]) – the concerns of which may at times differ.

Government was also in majority among the delegates from Lusaka. Several delegates I interviewed, from Lusaka as well as from the province level, indicated that government dominated the meeting (Luhila 2003 [interview]; Machina 2003 [interview]; Chama 2003 [interview]). One NGO delegate from Lusaka hinted that, at least in the plenary sessions, participants might have held back their contributions because they were intimidated by the resources that government had brought to the meeting (Luhila 2003 [interview]). Government was obviously stronger both in number and in formal academic qualifications.

Another critique raised against the provincial consultations was that delegates came

mostly from urban areas (Ng'ona 2003 [interview]). That is to say, district representatives were not drawn from the villages, but from the district administrative centres.⁷² This was the case at least in the province of Luapula (Office of the Permanent Secretary, Luapula Province 2001: 26–29).

The consultations started out with presentations of papers on the themes of the PRSP, and the preparation process so far. The presentations were made by delegates from the Working Groups in Lusaka. Obviously, the delegates from the province needed information on what the PRSP was all about, and what was expected of them in their contribution. However, one NGO representative from the Lusaka delegation indicated that the presentations might have influenced the input later provided by the provincial delegates (Luhila 2003 [interview]). Moreover, the lengthy presentations might have been what caused some of the participants to question the government's commitment to listening to the views from the provinces (Kalasa 2003 [interview]). One participant, a church representative, got the impression that government had come with a clear idea of what it wanted to hear, and came close to using the provincial delegates to rubberstamp the plan (anonymous informant 2003 [interview]).

The CSPR-organised province level consultations⁷³

As the CSPR generally distrusted the government during the course of the process, it also suspected that the government's initiative to include the provinces in the process was not sincere. This is why they carried out their own consultations in the four poorest provinces.⁷⁴ The intention with these consultations was to sensitise people on the PRSP and prepare them for the government consultations, but also to complement the government consultations by hearing people's views and presenting them to government through the CSPR-PRSP (CSPR 2001c: 2). However, like the government's provincial consultations, the CSPR provincial hearings were held after the individual chapters of

⁷² Districts are geographically relatively large administrative units, so needs and concerns may vary greatly between the centres and the remote areas.

⁷³ This section builds on the report compiled by the facilitators of the hearings, Sally Mwila and Sydney Ngwira (2001): 'Civil Society for Poverty Reduction. Provincial Poverty Hearings. Luapula Province 8–10 May 2001', as well as interviews with a few of the participants. Other written records, such as a list of participants, were not available, if indeed they existed. With the organisers of the province, all written documentation on the meeting was lost. This made the process of even identifying the participants very difficult.

⁷⁴ Western Province, North-Western Province, Luapula Province and Eastern Province.

the CSPR-PRSP had been finalised.⁷⁵ Priorities from the provinces were appended in a separate chapter to the CSPR-PRSP.

In terms of representation, the CSPR consultations had more delegates from the local organisations than did the government ones. Apparently, also non-English speakers and people from the villages participated (Kawambwa 2003 [interview]). But there were also government representatives who took part. In Luapula province, district officials were even involved in facilitating the meeting, which was organised jointly by the District Agriculture Coordinator of Mansa District, and a Sister from the Catholic Church in Mansa. Like the government meeting, this meeting was held in Mansa, the provincial capital.

Some weaknesses should be mentioned. Firstly, preparations for the consultation workshop seem to have been made haphazardly and hastily. In the case of Luapula province, the organisers at province level were contacted only four days before the workshop, and given the guidelines for selecting participants (Mwila and Ngwira 2001: 12). Participants seem to have been invited during the weekend, with the workshop starting on Wednesday the following week (ibid.: 12). Still, the workshop had around fifty participants. Secondly – and probably due to the short notice – participants were drawn mostly from the provincial capital, where the consultations were held.

However, there were also strengths. Most importantly, it seems clear that organisations for and by women were far better represented in the CSPR consultations than in the government ones. These included all kinds of organisations dealing with the problems of rural women, for example related to the consequences of HIV/AIDS – such as orphans, illness, the death of the breadwinner – that affect the lives and livelihoods of women in particular. As we have seen, in the government province level consultations there was no representation of women's organisations.

4.3 The PRSP Process up the Ladder of Participation

Here we will analyse the participation process through the use of the ladder of participation presented in chapter 2.2.1, which breaks participation into four 'levels of

⁷⁵ However, 'civil society' provincial consultations on the PRSP had already been conducted before: in 2000, just after hearing about the new PRS regime, the JCTR made a tour of the provinces in order to sensitise people and to hear their views (Musamba

intensity' (McGee and Norton 2000: 14). This ladder provides a scale on which we can evaluate participation in terms of components or dimensions. As indicated in chapter 2.2.1, the four steps of the ladder will be used to highlight features of the process in Zambia, and not to determine at which step the process lands.

4.3.1 Information sharing

There are three aspects in particular to consider when looking at the adequacy of information sharing in the process: information dissemination to the general public through the media, the flow of information from government to the CSPR in the course of the process, and information sharing within the Working Groups.

The first aspect – information to the general public – was clearly insufficient. Media coverage is low in Zambia, which may well account for much of the insufficiency. Government did use the printed media to post announcements calling for submissions for the PRSP from the general public. Knowing, however, that newspapers have limited coverage outside the urban areas, government cannot have expected to reach many more than the urban, newspaper-reading sector of the population. Moreover, there was no deliberate governmental strategy to use media like radio for disseminating information on the PRSP and the process of its preparation (Bwalya et al. 2003: 24). The population in general seems not to have heard about the PRSP, as confirmed by NGOs working with poor people both in rural and urban areas (Simwansa 2003 [interview]). Obviously, left without knowledge about their government's commitments towards poverty reduction, people are not in a position to make demands.

The government has at times been very reluctant to share information with the CSPR. Several accounts report this, both during the preparation process (Koyi 2002: 5) and during implementation and monitoring (Mpepo and Mutwale 2003 [interview]). This is a continuation of the practice of secrecy that has long been the order of the day for the government in Zambia (Seshamani 2002: 17). In relation to the PRSP, the government would define certain documents as confidential and thus not available to the general public, or they would distribute documents very late – apparently, the CSPR was given only one day to review the final draft of the PRSP (McGee et al 2002: 74). The

government would also fail to notify the CSPR of workshops or other events, and sometimes even claim afterwards that CSPR representatives had been present (Mpepo and Mutwale 2003 [interview]). This unwillingness to share information on the part of government made the CSPR's work with the PRSP much more difficult. Bilateral donors, international NGOs and the World Bank in Zambia played important roles in mitigating this: for example, the World Bank would provide documents that the government was reluctant to share with the CSPR (McGee et al. 2002: 37; Musamba 2003 [interview]).

Even within Working Groups, governmental reluctance to release documents was reported to be a problem (Njobvu 2003 [interview]; Koyi 2002: 5). For example, the Ministry of Agriculture was hesitant to share the draft National Agriculture Policy with the consultant of the group, who was supposed to review existing policies and give recommendations for future action in the sector (Njobvu 2003 [interview]). Thus, even if most documents were in fact eventually disbursed both to the CSPR and to the Working Group consultant and its members, the sharing of information on the part of the Zambian government must be said to have been below standard.

4.3.2 Consultation

Consultation entails a process whereby inputs go from intended beneficiaries, or defined stakeholders, to the government, in order to account for their views on the matter at hand. According to McGee and Norton (2000: 15), consultation does not, however, involve any obligation to include the input obtained. This is what distinguishes it from 'joint decision-making'. This makes it possible to hear the views of a larger number of people, and include a synthesis of the contributions according to what goes with the existing framework. Thus, consultation under the PRSP can entail hearing the views of the 'general public' as stated in the PRSP Sourcebook (World Bank 2002: 250).

The PRSP workshops out in the provinces in Zambia were termed 'consultations'. The views from the provinces were included, however incomplete (Boma 2003 [interview]), as an appendix to the PRSP. It is highly unlikely that these consultations had any impact on the general approach of the plan. They were conducted only after the participation process at national level had been more or less completed, and first drafts of the chapters of the PRSP had been presented. Hence, there was little potential for

turning things around. Moreover, as noted in 4.2.3, at the consultations the presentation of papers by Lusaka delegates took up considerable time and attention, such that the consultations can be said to border on ‘information sharing’.

4.3.3 Joint Decision-Making

McGee and Norton define ‘joint decision-making’ as the ‘right to negotiate the content of the strategy’ (2000: 15). The activity in the Working Groups of the PRSP process can perhaps be seen as a form of joint decision-making on the part of state and non-state actors. These opened a forum for discussion among government, donors, private sector, and ‘civil society’ on priorities for the various sectors, as far as poverty reduction was concerned. Most accounts of the discussions in the group on agriculture report that they were very open (Samatawele 2003 [interview]; Zyambo 2003 [interview]; Mwanaumo 2003 [interview]). Further, it is said that everyone’s arguments were heard and weighed, included or rejected according to the judgement of the majority of the group (Mwanaumo 2003 [interview]). Naturally, not everyone’s views were included in the final document, but the participants can be said to have had the right to negotiate the content of the strategy.

However, as we turn to issues of discourse and ‘framing’, this assertion must be qualified. The Working Groups were places of struggle between opposing representations – opposing systems of meaning. Though this struggle will normally be an on-going process, one representation often ends up effectively framing the field in question – here the sphere of agricultural development – at least temporarily. This has very real consequences for the participants, as it will restrict discussions to a substantial degree. It is the dominant representation that will determine what questions can be posed and what proposals can be put forth, that appear rational and relevant. Thus, it is not simply a matter of presenting the most convincing argumentation, but of putting forth argumentation that is seen as the most convincing within the frame of that particular representation. This will be elaborated in chapter 5, when we examine the discussions of the Agriculture Working Group.

The process of framing can be a power game in which rhetoric and strategies of domination are employed, and in which one of the parties will often lose out. Professionalism, for example, was promoted by many participants. One participant held that ‘if

you are pushing for a point, you must have the facts; you must have researched your work; you must have developed a position with proper figures and facts' (Zyambo 2003 [interview]). This is part of an effort to frame a field, presenting one's own approach as rational and scientific, and inasmuch as it is successful it illustrates quite vividly the dual concept of power/knowledge as a dynamic inherent in the (re)production of systems of domination. Encountering this representation, fronting issues like the rights of female farmers may have been difficult. Other members of the group would term NGOs fronting these issues 'troublemakers', 'generalist', 'political', saying that their inputs generally caused delays in the process, and adding that they would not have understood some of the more technical issues discussed (Mwila, A. 2003 [interview]; Zyambo 2003 [interview]).

Indeed, one of the NGOs participating in the Agriculture Working Group said that discussions were often too technical for them to follow properly (Ng'ona 2003 [interview]). Thus, it seems their ability to participate was constrained to some extent by this professionalism, as well as the frame of the discussions. The same NGO also deemed the discussions too theoretical: seemingly operating on the basis of economic theory, and not on practical experience. Consequently, this NGO felt unable to contribute what it would have liked to the process: its own background of working with the poor in the communities (Ng'ona 2003 [interview]). This can be seen as an appeal to sections of the development discourse concerned with the representation of the poor – i.e. to put one's own representation forth as morally superior to an opposing representation. As will become apparent in chapter 5 though, this was not as influential as the argumentation on efficiency.

4.3.4 Initiation and control by stakeholders

This fourth and last step of the ladder is a more or less bottom-up arrangement whereby the intended beneficiaries, or stakeholders, both initiate the process and control it. McGee and Norton (2000) do not consider this level of participation as far as the PRSP processes are concerned. PRSP processes, by design, are initiated from outside, by the IFIs, and further by the governments in each country. However, the dimension is still interesting in the PRSP context if we want to examine how the organisations relate to the process. Are they passive, responding only to initiatives from the state or donors? Or are

they proactive, capturing the process and pushing their own agenda into it?

In Zambia, the process initiative did indeed come from outside. The IFIs made participation in the PRSP processes a condition for debt relief under HIPC, and the state prepared for the process under the guidelines given to them. The role of ‘civil society’ in this was marginal. However, as we have seen, a group of organisations were active in seeking to influence the process, and did not wait for the initiative to come from the government or from donors. This does not mean that they were free to define their own role independently of the government, as the latter had already prepared most of the process design in advance. However, these organisations used spaces outside of government arenas, and made their own arrangement visible to the extent that it nearly became part of the official process. It thus seems fair to say that the activities of the CSPR had some characteristics of *initiation and control* by the stakeholders. The difference between ‘initiation’ and ‘control’ is significant. Talking about *initiation* by stakeholders can be meaningful as far as the CSPR’s input to the government-led process is concerned. However, it seems less fruitful to talk about *control* on the part of the CSPR in the government-led process. Parallel arrangements can be initiated and fed into the official one, but the outsiders will probably not retain control once this happens.

What is also interesting to note is that the question of ‘stakeholder initiation and control’, and further of ownership, was debated upfront in academic circles and within the CSPR network, and was generally taken to be one of the core problems of the PRS approach (Lipalile 2003[interview]; Musamba 2003 [interview]).

There is also a dimension to the question of ‘initiation and control’ at the level of government. Ultimately it is a question of ownership of the process. To what extent can the Zambian PRSP be said to be a result of specifically Zambian initiatives, as contrasted with donor/IFI initiatives? Some PRSP country processes have built explicitly on existing efforts at poverty reduction in the country in question. Notably, Uganda’s PRSP formulation process coincided with the country’s review of the already existing Poverty Eradication Action Plan. In this way, the framework may have remained more of a Ugandan creation (Gariyo 2002: 38). In Zambia a plan for poverty reduction (NPRAP) was still being reviewed as the formulation of the I-PRSP started. As noted above, the I-

PRSP states that the PRSP is to build on this effort (GRZ 2000: point 31), something which was not followed through as the approach taken in the PRSP was quite different from that of the NPRAP (Walan 2002: 43).⁷⁶ This suggests an accommodation on the part of the Zambian government to the expectations of the IFIs regarding the PRSP.

4.4 Summary

Applying the ladder of participation, we find certain deficiencies at all steps. There were substantial problems as regards information sharing. The government withheld necessary information from the CSPR as well as from Working Group members. This affects the openness of the participation process. On paper, consultations were quite extensive, but the critical point is the quality of them, and the effect on the final document. Province level consultations came late in the process, and had an urban as well as a government bias that made them not quite the reports from the grassroots they were supposed to be. The Working Group arrangement at national level was described as an example of joint decision-making in the PRSP. In practice, however, it could function that way only to the extent that the participants would speak the same language and agree on a certain set of basics. Organisations in fundamental disagreement with the dominant representation in the group were not likely to be part of any 'joint decision-making'. This matter is explored further in chapter 5.

At the highest level of the ladder we see that, though the PRSP is by design without an element of 'stakeholder initiation and control', including that step can still add to our understanding. The lack of initiation and control by the stakeholders in the PRSP context was very much debated upfront. Ultimately it is linked to the question of national ownership, which is the alleged backbone of the PRS approach. We found that, despite the total initiation from above, certain civil society organisations managed to create their own spaces in the process and could thus contribute from that viewpoint. In this way, they expanded the participation process, and their own role in that process. Most organisations, however, would not hear any talk of ownership of the PRSP. Moreover, we found deficiencies on the part of the government's ability to control the process vis-

⁷⁶ Whereas the NPRAP was relatively more concerned with the social aspects of poverty reduction, the PRSP has concentrated on creating economic growth as a means towards poverty reduction.

à-vis the IFIs.

Despite the abovementioned weaknesses, the participation process can probably be characterised as fairly comprehensive by Zambian standards. Critical NGOs were allowed to participate in the government Working Groups, and the CSPR-PRSP was taken into account by the government. However, the final test of the participation process lies in the effect it had on the actual content. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

A potentially beneficial effect of the participation process relates to the relationship between Zambian ‘civil society’ and the government of Zambia. The process may have altered this relationship, increasing the openness of policy-making at government level, and helping to build trust between the two parties. According to Walan, this has indeed been the case, with the CSPR reporting that the process ‘opened new and positive forms of dialogue with the decision-makers’ (Walan 2002: 35; also McGee et al 2002: 75). Similarly, Bwalya et al. found that the process created a partnership between the civil service and ‘civil society’, resulting both from the efforts of the CSPR and because the Ministry of Finance recognised ‘civil society’ as a valuable partner (Bwalya et al. 2003: 28). In 2003, the government set up Sector Advisory Groups as a continuation of the Working Groups established for the PRSP formulation. These are intended to advise government in the budget process. They may provide an arena for government–‘civil society’ exchange in the years to come, although – as noted above in connection with the partnership model – the arrangement also represents a challenge to ‘civil society’ in terms of its potentially conflicting roles as both partner and watchdog.

5 The relative influence of the actors

5.1 Introduction

In line with the third of the questions posed under the main research question, the aim of this chapter is to assess the relative influence of ‘civil society’ on the PRSP document, looking at the discussions on agriculture. To start with, I go through the major points of dispute of the most important actors in the Agriculture Working Group⁷⁷ – including their understandings of poverty and their proposed fields of intervention – to demonstrate the conditions for participation by ‘civil society’ in the group, as this affects its ability to influence the process. Because the Working Groups were the main arenas for actors to make contributions to the PRSP, these will be my primary focus, although perspectives contributed by the CSPR and consultations at province level will also be taken into the analysis. The next task is to see whether ‘civil society’ participation has been meaningful – and, by extension, whether the process entailed political consideration, or if it was depoliticised.

In this chapter, I apply the insights provided in chapter 2 on discourse, framing, and the struggles of discourses/representations over the framing of specific fields. Thus, I draw on a discourse analytical framework, but without conducting a full discourse analysis of the material. The Working Group debates will be understood as struggles between competing representations of the agricultural discourse to frame the domain of agricultural development in Zambia.⁷⁸ Although focusing mainly on the agriculture chapter, I will be drawing (at least implicitly) on other relevant parts of the document.

5.2 Central points of debate: struggles to frame agriculture

Within the debates in the Agriculture Working Group there were roughly two perspectives around which the actors would position themselves: some centred primarily on *growth*, and others centred primarily on improving the *livelihoods* of the poor. Following the framework outlined in chapter 2, these positions can fruitfully be analysed as two representations of an agricultural discourse. As space does not allow a full account of all

⁷⁷ Bilateral donors participated in the Working Groups, but my information suggests that they stayed relatively passive in the sessions. Consequently, no reference will be made in terms of their positions. For a list of participants of the Agriculture Working Group, see Appendix.

⁷⁸ My use of the concept of framing as a tool of analysis is inspired by insights provided in Neumann (2001).

the debates in the group, I focus on what I perceive to be the most important points of divergence. In the following therefore, I will go through the major disputes in the group – i.e. the clashes between the representations – in order to illustrate the space available for fruitful contributions from ‘civil society’. Reference to the views expressed in the CSPR-PRSP will also be made here, as this document was the formal contribution of ‘civil society’ to the PRSP. Relevant points on the input from the province level consultations will also be taken up in the following.

5.2.1 Representations of the problem⁷⁹

As pointed out by Bacchi (1999), the representations of what is the main problem to be solved will largely determine what are seen as relevant strategies to solve the problem – or rather, ‘interpretations are not merely representations – they are acts or interventions’ (Fraser 1989: 166, cited in Bacchi 1999: 38). Thus, to represent is to intervene, and as such it is of major consequence to the further process.

Problem representation starts the minute government and the IFIs negotiate a new framework. In the PRS context, government inevitably took on – along with the conceptual outline – some of the general policy recommendations of the IFIs. This can be viewed as ‘self-imposed’ conditionality – or *governmentality* in the words of Foucault – in the sense that government knows what the donors want to see in the PRSP, and acts in a pre-emptive way (consciously or unconsciously), so as to ensure that the donors will continue their support. This was a sentiment also expressed by certain organisations in ‘civil society’ (Matyola 2003 [interview]; Chikwanka 2003 [interview]), and may also have shaped the expectations of the organisations in the CSPR. Government was also formally bound by its previous agreements with the IFIs. Thus, according to a ‘Bread for the World’ paper on the PRSP process in Zambia, the I-PRSP was based largely on the existing Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility⁸⁰ for Zambia (Bread for the World Institute 2001: 2). Much of the problem-representation was therefore already

⁷⁹ To avoid conceptual confusion, it should be noted that the concept of ‘representation’ is used in two related but different ways in this chapter, both of which were presented in 2.3.1. Firstly, I draw on Bacchi’s ‘problem *representation*’-approach, which is a polemic against the ‘problem definition’-approach in policy analysis. Secondly, I use ‘representation’ as a specifically discourse analytical concept.

⁸⁰ IMF’s facility for poor countries, preceded by the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (McGee and Norton 2000: 8).

in place before the participation process started; early on, there was a distinct growth focus that has set its mark on the document, and which is likely to be at least in part a result of the working dynamic between government and the IFIs. It was probably accentuated by the fact that the Ministry of Finance was the government institution responsible for driving the process.

Representations of poverty in the Working Group

The approach taken by the NGOs in the group, as well as by the group's consultant, emphasised the farmers' ability to secure their own livelihood through production. This representation pays attention to the food security aspect of poverty, as well as the powerlessness that poverty can entail, as it underlines the aspect of self-reliance. In that perspective, poverty is not only about not having food or money. It is also about not having the means to control one's own life. In that vein, the CSPR-PRSP states: 'Poverty interventions must not be centred only at the income dimension of poverty' (CSPR 2001a: 25).

By contrast, the other members of the group seem to have had a predominantly material, income-based definition in mind, and this is reflected in many of the proposals. For instance, poverty being presented as an economic problem, the general approach was towards creating economic growth through the sector. The lack of growth in the country was seen as the main obstacle to poverty reduction, and as such came to be represented as the problem at hand. There was also the suggestion that small farmers and peasants should become employed by the larger farmers and be workers on plantations, or be contracted to produce for these large farmers in out-grower schemes. This also suggests a largely income-based understanding of poverty.⁸¹

'Poverty' in the PRSP document

The PRSP document has a whole chapter devoted to a discussion of poverty. It recognises poverty as a multi-dimensional concept, and talks about deficiencies of the income-based poverty line commonly used in Zambia. Further, the chapter points to other dimensions of the concept, such as the lack of security, and vulnerability to

⁸¹ Naturally, the factors of poverty are interlinked. A decent income not only makes a person capable of meeting basic needs, but may also put that person in control of his or her own life. Thus, some kind of income focus is necessary.

external shocks, as well as the deprivation of basic human rights and the inability to participate in political processes and community life (GRZ 2002: 21). Thus, it seems to appreciate the complexity of the condition of poverty. However, it is clearly a separate expert-written chapter, and seems somewhat out of touch with the rest of the document. Moreover, the chapter ends with a disclaimer: in the case of Zambia, the lack of economic growth has been singled out as the most important cause of poverty in the country (ibid.: 32). Consequently, the promotion of growth receives top priority in the PRSP. While the growth focus of the Zambian PRSP is justified with reference to specifically Zambian needs, this focus is far from unique to Zambia. According to a report by four Swedish NGOs (Sanchez and Cash 2003: 25), growth takes primacy over the livelihoods focus in many national PRSPs. The report links this to the policy recommendations of the IMF, which prescribe rapid growth in order to achieve poverty reduction.

In the chapter for agriculture, the growth focus is pursued consistently. Here, poverty is mostly understood in monetary terms, as a lack of income. The lack of food security is, however, also included as a dimension of poverty in relation to agriculture. This seems to have been the result of the effort of one of the NGOs in the Working Group in particular, PAM, as there were reportedly many other participants in the group who would have preferred to see food security as part of the social services field (Bwalya, P. 2003 [interview]). Still, income is by far the most dominant aspect of poverty for the agriculture chapter. One critical review of the Zambian PRSP notes that references to dimensions of poverty other than the income-based are scarce throughout the document (Saasa 2002a: 6). In light of this, the comprehensive chapter on poverty seems more like a compulsory exercise than a genuine attempt to integrate the complex causes of poverty into the strategy for reducing it.

Poverty versus inequality in the Working Group

As indicated, many participants kept their primary focus on achieving growth in the agriculture sector, with scant attention to the aspect that growth can create (or maintain) lasting economic and social inequality in a society. Participants whose starting point was livelihoods improvement – notably the women’s rights NGO and the group’s consultant – were more sensitive to the possible adverse effects of growth. Their point was that

growth in the economy at large does not necessarily benefit those who are poor (Ng'ona 2003 [interview]): Without a functioning redistribution mechanism, growth may act to create lasting imbalances that can be as destructive as widespread poverty. The CSPR-PRSP states as an objective that inequality (represented by the GINI-index) should be halved by 2010 (CSPR 2001a: 200).

'Inequality' in the PRSP document

The main focus of the document is on poverty, and not on structures of inequality. However, it is taken up in the poverty chapter as one barrier to moving out of poverty (GRZ 2002: 27), where two main conclusions of the research on inequality are noted. The first is that high inequality in a society can be an obstacle to economic growth. The other is that inequality is likely to reproduce itself unless government policies intervene to change that situation.⁸² Alongside these points, reference is made to the inequality figures for Zambia, which are among the highest in the world. This has important implications for the strategies of the PRSP. It seems to say that the skewed economic distribution in Zambia should be mitigated by political means. Growth should not allow a minority to get rich, while the majority stays poor. Thus, it is stated that growth should be broad-based (ibid.: 32). The strategic choices following from this in relation to agriculture would be issues of redistribution and interventions to ensure that poor people can produce for themselves. However, in the remainder of the document, these concerns are overshadowed by the concerns of growth stimulation, which could indicate that the dangers of inequality are not taken seriously. The fact that, as we shall see, a variation of the trickle-down line of thought is quite dominant in many sections of the paper reinforces this impression. Moreover, as noted above, the background chapter on the multi-dimensional character of poverty in the PRSP seems relatively detached from the rest of the paper.

5.2.2 The actors' areas of focus/proposed interventions in agriculture

All participants recognised that the liberalisation of Zambia's agricultural sector during the 1990s has had a very damaging effect on the ability of small-scale farmers to

⁸² It does not, however, explicitly state that growth may also *create* inequality.

produce and market their crops. However, while some attribute this failure to create growth to liberalisation itself, others hold that there is nothing wrong with liberalisation per se; it is the hasty manner in which liberalisation was implemented that is to blame. Consequently, there is significant disagreement on what needs to be done, and what should be the overall direction in Zambian agriculture. In the following, we shall look at the actors' positions on the most controversial issues in the Agriculture Working Group.

'Growth versus livelihoods improvement' in the Working Group

As indicated, the Agriculture Working Group discussions centred on a classic conflict – that of growth versus livelihoods improvement (Bangwe 2003 [interview]). Each side had a different representation of the problem as such – the lack of growth, or the lack of secure livelihoods for the poor. One side leaned towards the theory of the 'trickle-down' effect, where overall growth was expected to make living conditions better for everyone in the long run through employment creation. The other side emphasised the need to take the poor people and the improvement of their livelihoods base as the point of departure.

The growth representation was held by a majority of the participants in the Working Group for agriculture. Growth was also a major theme in existing policy documents in the sector, such as the Agriculture Commercialisation Programme (ACP), and the Working Group built on these documents. As one participant put it: 'You see there was also an indication that there was a general government policy driving the PRSP which was to make agriculture export-led as a source of foreign exchange, and employment generation. And that as a starting point, I think to us it was very clear in our minds, that we are looking at business issues: making agriculture competitive, and also trying to generate more production' (Zyambo 2003 [interview]). Many participants seem to have interpreted the structure of the PRSP in such a way that the productive sectors should deal with growth, whereas the poverty-reduction aspect should be left to the social sectors.⁸³ In that understanding, agriculture under the PRSP should be about growth generation, and not about lifting peasant farmers out of poverty. In that vein, the ZNFU would say, '600,000 [...] are involved in subsistence farming. They grow for food, not

⁸³ The chapters of the PRSP deal with each of the productive sectors and each of the social sectors in turn, without too much integration. This was much more so during formulation, as the document was sewn together by a technical committee after the

for the market. [...] And those must be taken up by social services' (Zyambo 2003 [interview]). With poor peasant and subsistence farmers to a certain extent defined out of the sphere of productive farming, and into the field of social safety nets, it was possible to try to concentrate the effort of the Working Group on commercial farmers. Thus, it was a question of how to define a 'farmer'. The participant from the ACF formulated this quite clearly: 'Our vision is that agriculture is not a way of life, it is a business' (Mwanaumo 2003 [interview]). In other words, only those who are commercial farmers are true farmers.

The main argument was that agriculture is a sector with the potential to raise the country's GDP. This would mean increased revenue for the government, which is in the interest of the government as well as its creditors and its donors. It was also seen as a way of promoting the interests of the producers – the farmers. Another argument raised was that overall growth in the sector could be expected to lead to an increase in overall national food security. Yet another was employment creation. The growth representation was dominant among actors such as the World Bank, ZNFU, the ACF, the representative from the University of Zambia, the Ministry of Finance, and to a certain extent the Ministry of Agriculture. While these actors would emphasise different things, and they would emphasise growth differently relative to other concerns, nevertheless, they had roughly the same starting point: that of economic growth.

The opposite representation started with the objective of *livelihoods improvement* – how to improve livelihoods and reduce poverty among the farmers as well as the rural population more generally. Their main objection to the growth orientation was that overall growth in the sector would not necessarily improve the livelihoods of the poor, nor would it improve their food security. One of the participating NGOs, WfC, put it as follows: '[...] if you look at the GDP it shows that in terms of agriculture we've produced a lot, but if you look at the impact [on] the people, you'll find that they do not correlate' (Ng'ona 2003 [interview]). According to the livelihoods proponents, there is no guaranty that the growth that is generated will in fact be reinvested in such a way that

the poor will benefit: ‘there are assumptions that, “let’s let commercial farmers grow commercialised produce for export, then what we gain from the exports will trickle down to the rural poor”. But what [...] we have seen actually, has been more of externalisation of profits and not trickle down’ (Simwansa 2003 [interview]). They fear that the money that is accumulated will in fact leave the country, as many large farms are owned by foreign companies. Another point made is that increased production of food on a nationwide basis will not necessarily contribute to overall national food security (CSPR-PRSP 2001a: 75). This is because the main problem is the distribution of the food rather than the quantity of it, due both to infrastructure constraints and the inability of poor people to purchase the food (also Machina 2003 [interview]).

Instead, therefore, the CSPR would underline the importance of ensuring that the poor farmers should be able to make their own livelihoods, thus making them food secure and self-reliant. As hinted at in 5.2.1, this view is probably grounded in their understanding of poverty as more than a lack of income. A representative from WfC stressed the loss of dignity resulting from receiving food relief (Ng’ona 2003 [interview]). In the view of this organisation, it is better to let the poor small-scale producers remain in production, than force them into the fields of relief or social services. Also, when able to produce and market crops, these contribute substantially to the total agricultural production in Zambia, and importantly, to the national food security situation (Ng’ona 2003 [interview]).

PAM, which deals with food security issues, pointed at the unsustainable situation that the liberalisation created: at the end of the day, government had to spend as much money on food relief as they did in the first place on subsidies and marketing arrangements supporting the country’s small-scale farmers: ‘when they are hungry you have to bring in imports to feed the same people who would have been given fertilisers’ (Luhila 2003 [interview]). The thinking was that, in order to achieve poverty reduction, one should start by addressing the problems of those who are poor. Their recommendation was to enable small farmers to produce, so they advocated government interventions directed at preventing, rather than repairing, food shortages in rural areas. The livelihoods approach was largely taken by the main NGOs in the group, WfC and PAM,

as well as the group's consultant, and in part, by the Ministry of Agriculture.

There were also middle-ground positions on this issue: some participants said that, while growth is taken to be a primary objective of the PRSP, this growth should be broad-based. That is to say, the sector should contribute to increasing the GDP, but using a larger share of the population in order to achieve this. Thus, the CSPR-PRSP emphasises the potential of the agriculture sector to generate economic growth, while also arguing that small-scale farmers, if provided with the right support mechanisms, represent a large potential resource for achieving this (CSPR 2001a: 76). Apparently, some government representatives also pushed for that kind of arrangement, primarily through out-grower schemes (Bangwe 2003 [interview]), thus satisfying both the IFIs on the one hand and the NGOs on the other.

'Growth and livelihoods improvement' in the PRSP document

The objective of economic growth has emerged as very strong in the Zambian PRSP. The chapter 'PRSP National Goals and Objectives', outlining the overall structure of the PRSP, divides the PRSP into two main sections or themes: the 'economic theme' and the 'social theme' (GRZ 2002: 38). The social theme typically comprises health and basic education as well as various training and self-help programs. Interventions in these areas are meant to complement the growth-stimulation effort, and 'target the poor against the adverse impacts of economic reforms and other internal and external factors' (ibid.: 38). The approach resembles the rhetoric that came in after some years of structural adjustment.

The PRSP clearly states that stimulating economic growth is to be the primary objective of the strategy for poverty reduction in Zambia. Growth must take precedence. However, the focus on growth is apparently also a focus on poverty reduction, as growth is expected to lead to poverty reduction. In certain parts of the document, this link is set in the language of the trickle-down line of thought: 'The expanded export base will earn more foreign exchange, which will further expand the economy, create jobs, and subsequently reduce poverty' (ibid.: 58). In line with the overall direction of the PRSP, the agricultural chapter also keeps a strong focus on the objective of economic growth. Growth in the sector is intended to contribute to creating a new economic base for the country: indeed, the agricultural sector is seen as one of the 'driving engines for the

anticipated economic growth' (ibid.: 53). In order to achieve this, '*increased market competitiveness*' is necessary (ibid.: 57): 'A major objective in agriculture will be to build its capacity to expand production, productivity and competitiveness' (ibid.: 58). Thus, 'the liberalisation process embarked on earlier is virtually irreversible' if Zambia is to respond to the 'requirements of the global economy' (ibid.: 57). The focus lies on export-oriented agriculture. And this export-led growth relies on increased competitiveness, and thus continued liberalisation. Though this view has remained controversial in Zambia, the agriculture chapter gives the impression of broad consensus regarding its necessity.

Despite the pronounced growth focus of the chapter, there is also recognition of the need for more broad-based growth (ibid.: 57), where a broader section of the population is meant to contribute to growth, thereby benefiting more people. Broad-based growth is thought to accrue from exploiting possible synergies between large and small-scale farmers (as will be expanded upon in the next section). However, it is also expected to take place through direct support to certain farmers: '[...] vulnerable groups of farmers will be assisted to grow more food to meet the household food security needs [...]' (ibid.: 58). This is in line with the livelihoods representation, and must be seen as an achievement on the part of those actors who pushed for that approach: the WfC, PAM, the consultant; as well as possibly the Ministry of Agriculture. However, interventions for improving food security are listed as the last of five priority areas.⁸⁴ The frame of the agriculture chapter remains that of growth, and increased competitiveness. It builds on the Agriculture Commercialisation Programme (ACP), and as such, according to a DFID report, cannot be termed pro-poor: '[T]he ACP policy is not pro-poor. Consequently, the PRSPs pro-poor ideals will remain on paper and increase rather than decrease the levels of poverty in outlying rural areas that are not designated as "high potential"' (Pinder and Wood 2003: 14).

⁸⁴ Interventions in the sector are grouped under five clusters of outputs, ranked thus: (1) Finance and Investment Climate Improved; (2) Marketing, Trade, and Agricultural-business Climate Improved; (3) Land and Infrastructure Development Improved (4) Technology Development and Dissemination Improved; (5) Targeted Support System for Food Security Established. For the comprehensive list of priorities in the agriculture sector, see Appendix.

'Large-scale versus small-scale' in the Working Group

The clash of growth versus livelihoods largely coincided with another issue, that of large-scale versus small-scale farming. Spokespersons for the large-scale farmers generally supported the 'growth' representation, whereas those advocating the case of the small-scale or subsistence farmers tended to argue in favour of the livelihoods representation.

The argument for supporting large-scale farmers would be to generate quick growth, which would result in increased export revenues for government as well as increased employment rates, and ultimately lead to poverty reduction (Mwila, A. 2003 [interview]; Bangwe 2003 [interview]): 'you need now to show the linkages, that maybe [supporting] these 300 [large-scale farmers] will result in production of so much maize, which will contribute to GDP, then that GDP will create employment for the [...] youth' (Mwila, A. 2003 [interview]). The general view of small-scale farming in this representation is that those who cannot relatively quickly graduate into commercial farming should seek other employment, perhaps as farm workers (Bangwe 2003 [interview]).

The opposite approach was to start out with the small-scale farmers in order to achieve the goal of poverty reduction. The general argument was: focus on the small farmers' ability to grow their own produce, in order to improve their livelihood situation and their food security (Ng'ona 2003 [interview]). The underlying view is that the way out of poverty can go through the poor themselves: they can contribute to their own household food security, as well as to national food security, as their production represents a substantial share of the total maize production.⁸⁵ Here small-scale farmers seemed to be regarded as a resource in achieving poverty reduction and food security, and not a problem that needs to be dealt with (CSPR 2001a: 76). Not surprisingly, this view was also predominant in the report from the province-level consultations in Luapula Province: small-scale farmers should be supported in order to secure local production and farmers' access to markets.

Most participants would, however, say that there is need to take both the small- and

⁸⁵ Small- and middle-scale farmers contributed 71% of the total maize production in the 2004/5 production season, according to FewNet (2005: 2).

the large-scale farmers' interests into account. Virtually all participants made sure to demonstrate their awareness of the research that discounts the trickle-down effect. All were clear on the point that growth alone is not sufficient. Moreover, given the severity of the situation, it was felt that possible adverse effects of growth on the situation of the poor would have to be mitigated.

However, those who tend to point to the benefits resulting from interaction between the two are quite often the same as those who speak for the large-scale farmers. As noted above, these stress possible synergies such as practical and infrastructure benefits resulting from arrangements such as out-grower schemes (Mwila A. 2003 [interview]; Bangwe 2003 [interview]; Haantuba 2003 [interview]). They see them as prime examples of the beneficial linkages that proceed from the large-scale to the small-scale farmers. These synergies solve the problem of input supply and marketing for the small-scale farmers who join, and facilitate transfer of technology from the large to the small. Furthermore, this arrangement is the ideal way of combining the growth focus with the concerns of small-scale farmers. Thus, the Ministry of Agriculture is greatly in favour (Haantuba 2003 [interview]).

Critics of this kind of approach insist that out-grower schemes are often more beneficial to large farmers than to small-scale ones (Simwansa 2003 [interview]; Njobvu 2003 [interview]; Lipalile 2003 [interview]). Apparently there are many examples of small-scale farmers being exploited through this kind of arrangement. Large-scale farmers or other commercial interests running the scheme ultimately have to make money. And as these will most likely control the price, as well as the terms of the agreement, out-grower schemes may mean maintaining a situation of dependency on the part of small-scale farmers (Simwansa 2003 [interview]; Lipalile 2003 [interview]).

The alternative approach is for farmers to organise into groups: cooperatives or farmers' associations (Njobvu 2003 [interview]; Lipalile 2003 [interview]; CSPR 2001a: 83). It is felt that such arrangements can potentially be much more empowering, by giving farmers greater power to control the terms of their production (Matyola 2003 [interview]). Nonetheless, the CSPR-PRSP does encourage out-grower schemes (CSPR 2001a: 84), as do some district farmers' associations as well (Boma 2003 [interview]).

The report from the province-level consultations gives recommendations that encourage both forms of organisation – out-grower schemes and cooperatives – though the demand for strengthening cooperatives and farmers’ organisations is much stronger than the call for out-grower schemes (Office of the Permanent Secretary, Luapula Province 2001; GRZ 2002: 144). So though different groups had different views on what should be the preferred approach, in general, both approaches were encouraged by participants, and were not necessarily seen as mutually exclusive.

‘Large-scale versus small-scale’ in the PRSP document

Given the focus on growth, important concerns in the PRSP revolve around increasing the volume of production, diverting to the production of high-value crops, and producing for export. The PRSP assumes that large-scale producers can meet these objectives more effectively than small-scale ones: while ‘smallholder agriculture [...] impacts on a higher number of people [...], the risk it carries with it is that it may be slow to expand at a time when, threatened by the adverse developments in the mining industry, Zambia needs to quickly find a new economic base’ (GRZ 2002: 58). Thus, interventions directed at large-scale producers are given more space in the chapter. Even if all the clusters of priorities (cf. Appendix) concern both large-scale and small-scale farmers, the emphasis lies on interventions that will benefit large (and medium-scale) farmers to a greater extent (Haantuba 2003 [interview]). Various interventions intended to increase production, especially for export, are listed, and the focus on building the competitiveness of the sector is quite dominant. Take for example infrastructure development. This pertains both to small- and large-scale producers, but the conditions of these farmers vary greatly: small farmers in remote areas are often without functioning roads, whereas most large-scale farmers live in relatively central areas with better infrastructure. Needs range from the provision of a working road on the one hand, to provision of electricity and telecommunications on the other. In the PRSP the priority is to provide for what is termed ‘high potential areas’ first (GRZ 2002: 60). This means that the most remote areas – and the fair share of small-scale farmers – will probably not be provided for in this round (Pinder and Wood 2003: 17).

There is no one-sided focus on large-scale production. Small-scale farmers make up around 70% of all farmers in Zambia (Øygaard et al. 2003: 14),⁸⁶ so they cannot be overlooked. The chapter recognises that liberalisation has been very damaging to the small-scale farmers, and that their conditions need to be addressed. Indeed, enabling them to access inputs and credit under the current conditions is termed ‘a major national challenge under the PRSP’ (GRZ 2002: 59). The small-scale challenge is to be tackled in two main ways. Firstly, certain small-scale farmers are to be targeted. This means affordable credit and inputs such as seed and fertiliser, as well as a market, should be provided for them (ibid.: 59). Those targeted should be so-called ‘vulnerable, but viable’ farmers (Bwalya, P. 2003 [interview]) – which means that they should have the potential of graduating into commercial farming. Secondly, possible fruitful links between large- and small-scale farmers should be taken advantage of. This means encouraging the establishment of out-grower schemes (GRZ 2002: 58), but the PRSP also lists seasonal farm work as an alternative source of livelihood for small farmers. As we have seen, the out-grower arrangement combines the focus on small-scale farmers’ livelihoods with the export focus, as well as being in the interests of the large-scale farmers. In that way, it satisfies most of the participants in the Agriculture Working Group. On the other hand, there is in the chapter no explicit mention of strengthening or forming farmers’ associations or cooperatives, despite the near-unanimous call for this in the province-level consultations (ibid.: 144).⁸⁷ In sum, it seems the NGOs influence on this matter was limited, as was that of the province level input.

‘Government versus private sector involvement’ in the Working Group

Government involvement in terms of input supply, credit and marketing in the agricultural sector was also a major issue in the group. This is not surprising, considering the history of Zambian agricultural policy: from thirty years of nearly full state control, to ten years of very limited state involvement – each arrangement controversial in its own right. Debates must be seen in light of this history. During the 1990s, claiming that government should involve itself more strongly in agriculture was close to a taboo. Now

⁸⁶ Commercial farmers make up around 8% and so-called emergent farmers around 17% of the total (CSPR 2001: 74).

⁸⁷ Since the shift in government in 2002 however, the policy has changed in favour of the formation of cooperatives. In line with

it seems that, given the failure of recent policies, there is acceptance of the view that government will have to be involved over a transition period, until private sector has developed and rural infrastructure is improved. With the mainstream, however, it is still not considered 'appropriate' to argue for a return to full government involvement.

On the one side, there were those who wanted to see government not as an active part, but as a facilitator. According to these participants, government should simply provide a 'conducive environment' for private sector to enter into both supply and marketing. Government should largely restrict itself to providing infrastructure and extension services. This is the World Bank's position, as it considers that government involvement on the supply and marketing side can easily make for patrimonial practices (Mwanakasale 2003 [interview]), in addition to creating imbalances in the market.

Similarly, the CSPR-PRSP states that government should 'create an enabling environment which encourages investment and trade, thereby leading to job creation, which would also be of direct benefit to the poor' (CSPR 2001a: 83). Government should be engaged in 'fulfilling those functions that are truly public goods' (ibid.: 83). This is similar to the World Bank's argumentation. In this respect, the CSPR-PRSP departs somewhat from the NGOs of the working group,⁸⁸ who were arguing for greater state involvement in agriculture, in terms of inputs distribution and marketing. The CSPR-PRSP demands a very comprehensive effort of government in areas like infrastructure, extension and information dissemination, as well as in promoting the production and processing of high-value crops.

Women's rights NGO WfC, on the other hand, put it very directly: 'We were saying, bring back those government institutions that used to support small-scale farmers' (Simwanza 2003 [interview]): The NGOs in the Working Group argued that government must be involved in providing inputs and marketing arrangements for the small-scale farmers, because the private sector is unable to. They hold that, being driven by profit, and considering the costs and risks involved, private dealers will not go into the remotest areas. And if indeed they do go in, they are likely to exploit the farmers, who lack

this the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries was renamed Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives.

⁸⁸ Still, those same organisations were among those who provided the input for that chapter.

information on how the market works and on price levels, and are often desperate to sell because they lack other options (Ng'ona 2003 [interview]; Njovbu 2003 [interview]). The province-level consultations also reflect these concerns (Office of the Permanent Secretary 2001; GRZ 2002: 144). Some argue that subsidies should be reintroduced: in that way the farmers would be more self-reliant, and government would not have to give out food aid as they had to because of liberalisation (Luhila 2003 [interview]).⁸⁹ Besides, Northern governments subsidise their own agricultural sectors, so why should Zambia not be allowed to do so, they wonder (Haachiinda 2003 [interview]). This was also a major concern at the province level (Office of the Permanent Secretary, Luapula Province 2001: 22; GRZ 2002: 144). The understanding is that Zambia's liberalisation is a result of IMF/World Bank diktat. The NGOs thus ask for empirical examples from countries where complete liberalisation of the agriculture sector has proven beneficial to development in the sector, as they suspect that there are none (Luhila 2003 [interview]; Haachiinda 2003 [interview]; Simwansa 2003 [interview]).

Some kind of a middle position was dominant in the group. Most participants would say that agriculture should be private-sector driven, but some would say that the principle needed to be temporarily put aside. One participant otherwise in favour of liberalisation of the sector put it like this: '[...] at the time we were formulating the PRSP the poverty levels were too high to justify [a] complete[ly] liberalised free market system' (Mwanaumo 2003 [interview]). On those grounds a majority came to agree that government needed to be involved in the supply and marketing of agricultural produce, granting some form of subsidy, in order to provide for farmers in remote areas. Apparently, the group came to an understanding that subsidies could be acceptable if they were designed to boost production (Zyambo 2003 [interview]; Bwalya, P. 2003 [interview]).

However, the different actors had various qualifications to this. Many insisted that this kind of arrangement should be limited to a defined interim period (Mwanakasale 2003 [interview]). Others held that government should seek partners in the private sector

⁸⁹ To be sure, there were droughts in 1991/2, 1993/4 and 2001/2 that made the need for food aid high, but some of the food shortage was attributed to liberalisation (Luhila 2003 [interview]).

or NGOs for the actual delivery of services. The ZNFU stressed that subsidies on fertiliser should not undermine the operations of private dealers in the sector, or aggravate the conditions for commercial farmers (Zyambo 2003 [interview]).

'The role of government' in the PRSP document

The agriculture chapter ascertains that, despite the intention to maintain a liberalised agricultural sector, the government still has a part in agriculture. However, this role is primarily that of a facilitator. The main task should be to provide an enabling environment for private-sector handling of credit provision, input supply, and marketing (GRZ 2002: 59). We see that the good governance model of the minimal state is held as the standard, whereas the involvement of government outside of its role as facilitator is seen as a 'necessary evil'. The private sector is meant to be the major actor in the market. Should government involve itself in these functions, its role is to be 'indirect and supportive rather than direct and competitive' towards the private sector (ibid.: 59). Although it is still the responsible actor, government should subcontract the distribution of inputs for small-scale farmers to the private sector, NGOs or other organisations, such as local farmers' associations. Some of the organisations of the CSPR will support this point. Further, government should 'continue to encourage the development of an effective farm input supply system by promoting public-private-partnership (PPP) in the input supply sections' (ibid.: 59). This facilitator role also means that, while government may target certain farmers in outlying areas and provide them with the necessary input, it must make sure that subsidised fertiliser does not find its way into the market, ousting out private dealers. This was one of the concerns raised by the ZNFU in particular.

Some operations stand out as the facilitator's (government's) role – infrastructure development and extension services in particular. However, increasingly, arrangements like out-grower schemes should help to provide services like extension, for small-scale farmers. In conclusion, it seems fair to say that the participating NGOs were not very influential on this matter.

Gender in the Working Group

All Working Groups of the PRSP were meant to take the 'crosscutting issues' into consideration – in particular, gender, the environment and HIV/AIDS. Here, only gender will be taken up as this seems to have been a point of conflict in the group – with

women's rights NGO WfC being among the participants. Moreover, the gender issue offers a good illustration of the power of an effective frame, such as 'growth' representation in this case.

By far the majority of participants in the Working Group were men, although this in itself should not in itself disqualify the group from taking gender issues into account. In the Agriculture Working Group, representatives from the governmental Gender in Development Department (GIDD) and WfC were given seats. However, most participants did not see women's issues as relevant for their discussions. One of the more growth-oriented participants expressed annoyance at contributions that focused on the conditions of women producers: such arguments were not useful to the planning process as they were too general (anonymous informant 2003 [interview]). Thus, the space for raising women's concerns was limited. Moreover, as we have noted, leading members of the group wanted to see the definition of a 'farmer' reserved for commercial producers. Most female farmers produce for household consumption, and as such are not considered 'real' farmers. Even peasant farmers' organisations tend to see the farmer as inherently male (Chama 2003 [interview]). The land tenure system also exacerbates this problem. Women cannot inherit land from their fathers, and married women who grow crops on their husbands' land do not own what they produce. Women are often not recognised as farmers, because of their lack of title deeds. According to the CSPR-PRSP: 'Due to gender bias in owning land under the customary system, farmers are still generally perceived as "male" by policy-makers, development planners and agriculture service providers. For this reason women find it more difficult to than men to gain access to valuable resources such as credit and agricultural inputs, technology, extension, training and other services that would enhance their production capacity' (CSPR 2001a: 74). Women farmers have very limited access to basic inputs and to the services provided by government in the sector. The CSPR-PRSP therefore sets as one of its recommendations that gender concerns be taken into extension services (ibid.: 90). Women's organisations were not invited to the government-organised province-level consultations, and though the issue of gender imbalance was raised, the conditions of female farmers in particular were not dealt with.

Gender in the PRSP document

The agriculture chapter has only one reference to the situation of women in agriculture. Otherwise, the overall impression is that farmers are taken to be male. In Zambia, the conditions for female farmers are so radically different from those of male farmers that their concerns need to be addressed specifically. This was not done in the agriculture chapter. Moreover, the growth focus dominating the PRSP must be seen as unfavourable to female farmers. As Geisler (1992: 125–128) has shown, commercialisation and promotion of cash-crop production is likely to marginalise women further, because of the prevailing gender relations in local communities and in the home.

Defined as a ‘crosscutting’ issue, gender was dealt with under a separate chapter. In relation to agriculture, the gender section addressed the question of ownership of land and other productive assets. This issue was recognised as a major factor contributing to women’s increased vulnerability to poverty, and the PRSP states that laws will be reviewed and amended in order to ensure women’s right to own land (GRZ 2002: 115). It also says that the PRSP will enhance women’s access to credit (*ibid.*: 115), which would have a positive effect on their ability to produce. The section is quite comprehensive, but it lacks concrete links to the sector chapters.

Summing up the discussions

It seems safe to say that there were two dominant representations in the group struggling to frame the domain of agricultural development. These met in clashes on important issues, and more or less consistently held positions on opposite ends of a scale. They are illustrated by the table below.

Growth representation	Livelihoods representation
Poverty as lack of income	Poverty as lack of means to control one’s own life
Achieve economic growth	Secure livelihoods
Large-scale focus	Small-scale focus
Private sector driven	Government involvement
‘The farmer’ perceived as male	Gender perspective on agriculture

Table 5.1

Obviously, this scheme is a simplification. Firstly, it should be read as a sliding scale. Far from all bearers of either representation would be one-sidedly in favour of the one,

and totally opposed to the other: most would be positioned somewhere along a continuum between the two. Thus, the positions sketched out under each representation must be understood as the extreme points on either end of a scale. Secondly, they must not be understood as completely consistent. Not all participants holding a small-scale farmer perspective, and fronting government involvement, were gender-sensitive in their approach to agricultural matters. Nonetheless on the whole, most participants can be said to have inclined more to one of these bipolar clusters than the other. Thirdly, this is an outline of the most controversial issues debated within agriculture under the PRSP – not necessarily in the Zambian agricultural debate in general. Although these points are indeed important issues in the general debate, this outline is not an exhaustive list of conflict points in this debate as such.

As we can see from the main points of discussion above, the major conflicts revolve around the question of the level of interventions: at which level should interventions be concentrated? At the level of those who already have the capacity to produce, so that overall production can be increased substantially, and contribute to the country's GDP? Or at the level of the poor, aimed at improving their livelihoods by enabling them to grow their own produce? In general, a position more inclined to the 'growth' representation was dominant in the group.

This was reflected in the PRSP. The result was a chapter that focuses on achieving growth through relying on the capacity of the large-scale farmers to generate quick growth. The chapter states that while small-scale farming has the potential of benefiting a larger number of people, it entails uncertainty in terms of its ability to generate quick growth (GRZ 2002: 58). Thus, it recommends strong support of large-scale farmers in order to achieve that. The main line of thought was to make agriculture competitive, which would also entail pushing the greater part of small-scale and peasant farmers into the field of social services, so that their problems need not be dealt with in the agricultural sector. As we have seen, however, this last point did not win through. Though the PRSP is imbued with this kind of thinking, it also includes points to curb its total dominance. In agriculture, the most important ones were the recognition of the issue of food security as part of the agriculture sector, and the reintroduction of direct

support measures for small-scale farmers. These were issues that were fronted by the CSPR network, in the province-level consultations, and by the NGOs in the Working Group, as well as by the group's consultant. Even if it need not be only the result of the contributions of these actors, they must be said to have enjoyed some degree of influence. Despite the inclusion of these views, however, the focus on economic growth remains very strong. And as long as the main structural frameworks remain, the inclusion of some 'soft issues' may not amount to much in terms of the direction of agricultural policy in Zambia.

Another, related aspect which has come out quite strongly is that the state should as much as possible confine itself to providing an enabling environment for private-sector operations. Thus, the perspective also entails a rolling back of the state – as prescribed in the good governance agenda. This view was fronted by all the growth proponents, and largely backed by the CSPR-PRSP. Both of the major NGOs participating in the Agriculture Working Group were opposed in this matter.

Understood in discourse analytical terms, the dominance of the growth perspective can be seen as a relatively successful case of framing. The growth representation quickly became dominant in the Working Group (due to several factors discussed below). Through this effective frame, it appears to have gained the opportunity to set the conditions for discussions, defining what were considered rational and fruitful contributions, and what was considered as obstructing the work in the group.

5.2.3 The actors' perceptions of their own influence

The two main NGOs participating in the Working Group for agriculture both expressed feelings that their own influence on the paper had been minimal. They indicated dissatisfaction with the considerable influence that the IFIs had had on the document; with the growth focus of the chapter; what they saw as trickle-down thinking in the document; and the document's disregard for the concerns of the small-scale farmer, women in particular (Ng'ona 2003 [interview]; Samatawele 2003 [interview]). Contrary to this pessimism, organisations that participated in the PRSP process through the CSPR network were relatively satisfied with the yields of 'civil society' participation in the

PRSP. Many organisations estimated that around 80%⁹⁰ of their input was included in the final document, even if many appreciated the influence of the IFIs on the paper, and expressed disappointment over the limitations of the concept of PRSP. As a representative from the CSPR put it: ‘If the PRSP came out like a socialist document, who was going to fund it?’ (Chikwanka 2003 [interview]).

Nonetheless, organisations from the CSPR that did not participate in any Working Group were more satisfied with the end result, than the NGOs that did participate.⁹¹ The two participating NGOs are admittedly among the most outspoken IFI critics in Zambia. However, I do not think that that explains the whole difference. My interpretation is that the two NGOs, in interacting with other members of the Working Group, felt the limits of their power to influence in a more direct manner. Both these organisations strongly emphasised the power of the IFIs vis-à-vis the PRSP. Also, one of the organisations expressed difficulty in following discussions, as well as making contributions, as the meetings were often conducted at a very high technical and/or theoretical level (Ng’ona 2003 [interview]). This may also have increased the feeling of not having influenced the document.

Another interesting thing to note is that those organisations perhaps most in favour of liberalisation of the sector, the ZNFU and the ACF, both expressed considerable satisfaction with the end result. Both felt that they had been at the ‘steering wheel’ in developing the chapter. The ACF coordinator stated that: ‘Literally, I think this chapter was basically developed here’ (Mwanaumo 2003 [interview]). This was referring to the organisation’s providing both analytical work for the chapter, as well as contributing views, and providing the premises for some of the meetings in the Agriculture Working Group.

5.3 Conditions for ‘civil society’ participation

In the Agriculture Working Group, ‘civil society’ was represented by two of the strongest organisations in the public debate, WfC and PAM. Both possess analytical as

⁹⁰ Apparently, this percentage figure first came up at a CSPR meeting where the first draft of the PRSP was compared to the CSPR-PRSP. Participants were asked to rate the uptake, and came up with an average of 80% (Chikwanka 2003 [interview]).

⁹¹ Again, I build on the accounts of organisations engaged in agriculture and rural development; and thus those participating in the Agriculture Working Group. The results may not be representative of ‘civil society’ in general.

well as material resources that should enable them to contribute in that forum. However, in the end they both emerged dissatisfied with the end result. Why?

The sheer number of 'civil society' representatives also tells us something about their strength in the group's meetings. Judging from the selection of minutes that I have been able to look at, the average ratio between 'civil society' representatives (mostly livelihoods proponents) and others (mostly growth proponents) was 1 or 2 to 13.

As noted, one delegate complained that discussions in the Working Group were conducted either at a very theoretical level, or at a very technical level. She felt her ability to contribute was lessened. And indeed, the academic qualifications of the growth proponents in the group combined were significant, with a substantial number of Ph.D. holders. Her feeling was that the practical first-hand experience of working in poor communities, which was what she wished to contribute to the group, was not appreciated. Does this explain the discontent? It may be part of the explanation. On the other hand, another representative of the organisations did not mention this problem of communication. Her previous experience as a government employee may have made her familiar with the mode of work in this setting. Nonetheless, this did not ensure her influence on the result.

My attempt at explaining the disappointment with the PRSP process, and the PRSP document, felt by these NGOs leans rather more on the insights provided by the concept of framing. I would contend that, through the representation of the problem at hand as a lack of economic growth, and the framing of the domain of agricultural development by the growth representation, other approaches were effectively rejected as irrelevant and seen as disturbing the agenda. The concept of power/knowledge is instructive in this regard. The successful establishment of the efficiency of the growth representation as a common sense-approach to poverty reduction, reflected and effectively shaped the system of domination within the Working Group. Appeals by the livelihoods proponents to another segment of the development discourse that gives attention to the provision of voice to the poor and marginalised, did not win through. This was how the question of conditions for female farmers was easily avoided. It is further my contention that the frame by the growth representation was strengthened, if not caused, by the underlying

technical/economic logic of the development discourse, in which the PRS is situated. The growth representation found resonance in the IFI approach, and was allowed to dominate the process.

5.4 Summary: a case of depoliticisation?

Chapter 2 outlined the dynamics of depoliticisation as a technical approach, and a harmony model of dealing with political issues. Were these dynamics at play in the Zambian case?

The technical/economic approach was visible in various ways in the Zambian PRSP process. The dominance of the ‘growth’ representation – which guided the work in the group for agriculture to a substantial degree – can be seen to have both been facilitated by, and in turn to have facilitated, a depoliticisation of the paper. The growth focus as such does not necessarily entail a depoliticised approach to development, and to poverty reduction in particular. It is the way in which it is presented as being a technical measure or as ‘common sense’, rather than the result of a political choice, that led to a depoliticisation of the actual contents of the plan.

The focus on economic growth as a means for poverty reduction seems to have been facilitated by several dynamics, supra-national as well as national. On the one hand, as indicated above, the growth representation as a frame for poverty reduction seems already to have been part of the PRSP package, before the national-level process started. The general policy framework of the IFIs must be said to be highly growth-oriented. The PRS approach, though adding new elements such as social aspects and institutional reform, still represents a continuance of the stabilisation and adjustment policies of the traditional approach (UNCTAD 2002: 6). This is illustrated as the claim by the NGOs to represent the interests of the poor – which is presented as an important supplement to the traditional approach in the development discourse – was to a large extent disregarded in the Agriculture Working Group. It seems that the arguments of efficiency and problem-solving are still the most influential in the field. Moreover, the Zambian government is still bound by existing agreements with the IFIs even as the PRSP is to be implemented. At the national level, the dynamics interpreted as ‘governmentality’ strengthens this tendency: the Zambian government is disciplined by the IFIs as important bearers of the development discourse, with resultant compliance to their agenda. This is a case of

depoliticisation of development at a supra-national level that in turn permeates the domestic policymaking arena.

The above account should not be taken to mean that influential actors in the development scene, such as the World Bank does not, in line with the research in this field, consider other factors than growth as a means for poverty reduction: the Bank looks at redistribution, and even deals with the question of inequality in its policy papers (e.g. World Bank 2002: ch 2). However, as we have seen (following e.g. Bøås and McNeill 2004b; 2004c), such incorporation of challenging concepts and ideas tends to reframe them in a technical discourse that drains them of political content. Similarly, the *Zambian PRSP* talks about the multi-dimensional character of poverty, the challenges of small-scale farmers, and even broad-based growth – but still falls back on the primacy of economic growth as far as the strategic proposals are concerned. The growth representation seems to have taken precedence relatively easily, perhaps because it had the backing of the IFIs who initiated it in the first place.

While the *PRSP* supposedly restrains conditionality with the introduction of participatory processes of policy formulation, and the emphasis on country ownership, it seems that the logic of ‘governmentality’ curbs this apparent freedom of the countries in question. As shown in the *Zambian* case, this logic of governmentality also becomes visible with statements from ‘civil society’ actors that reveal an adjustment of expectations of the *PRSP*, to known acceptable standards of the IFIs.

Factors at the national level also facilitated the dominance of the growth representation. Perhaps most importantly, the fact that the Ministry of Finance was the leading actor in the development of the *PRSP* made an economic representation of the problem likely. Though other ministries were involved, they seem to have been influential to varying degrees, with probably the most relevant ministry for the issue at hand, the Ministry of Social Services and Community Development sidelined in terms of the overall design of the plan. Another point that helped consolidate the dominance of the growth representation, at least in the *Agriculture Working Group*, was the fact that those focusing on economic growth were in the majority. Adding to this strength was the formal professionalism of these growth proponents. Finally, the existing programmes

and policy documents in the sphere of agriculture (developed in collaboration with important donors in the sector) which were used as a starting point in developing the agriculture chapter for the PRSP were generally directed at commercialising Zambian agriculture and creating economic growth, and had not necessarily been developed with poverty reduction as the primary goal. Combined, this helped to facilitate the framing of the sphere of agriculture by the growth representation, effectively excluding alternative approaches.

Elements of a harmony model of thinking were also present, both in the design of the PRSP at the supra-national level, and at the national level. Firstly, the very idea of country ownership may contribute to an undue romanticisation of the PRS approach, as it will tend to overestimate the real possibilities for developing countries like Zambia to control domestic policy-making. As pointed out by the coordinator of Jubilee Zambia, the PRS approach facilitates a focus on the internal causes of poverty (Musamba 2003 [interview]). This means largely ignoring factors which contribute to the high levels of poverty, but which are not under the government's control, such as the debt situation and the global terms of trade.⁹² Secondly, the naming of the approach – '*poverty reduction strategy*' – is likely to have had an impact on how the development of the paper was tackled. In the international development discourse, the language is one of 'poverty' not 'inequality'. Representing the problem as 'poverty' made it possible to treat poverty reduction as feasible within the current socio-economic structures, and this was largely done in the Zambian case. Inequality was mentioned briefly in the chapter on poverty, but was not taken up in the actual planning part. As we saw from the section on the Working Group discussions, the matter seems to have been generally sidelined.

Thirdly, the notion that if only 'civil society' is allowed to participate in the process this will ensure that the views of the poor and marginalised are taken into the end result, contributes to depoliticising the PRSP processes. This is an idea that fed into the PRS approach from the good governance agenda, and as such was part of the design of the PRSP processes. One problem with this approach is the tendency to treat 'civil society'

⁹² True, the PRS approach is structurally connected to the HIPC initiative, which addresses the problem of unsustainable debt. But this lies in the hands of the IFIs: thus in the PRSP talks, the focus remains on internal causes of poverty.

as pro-poor by default. As shown in chapter 3, it cannot be taken as a given that ‘civil society’ is a representative of the poor. Moreover, this approach tends to ignore the power relations at country level that are likely to make themselves felt in such processes of policy-making. This points back to the notion of ‘national ownership’ of the PRSP. According to the PRSP Sourcebook, one of the key outcomes of the participation process should be a ‘shared long-term vision among all stakeholders for development’ (World Bank 2002: 239). The idea is that everyone will agree on what constitutes the major challenges to be tackled, as well as on the strategies to overcome these challenges. This seems naïve at best, and exemplifies the romanticisation and consequent depoliticisation entailed by the PRS approach. For someone to gain influence, someone else must give up a little of his/her position. As White points out, ‘change hurts’ (2000: 155). In the PRSP, the participation process was formalised, and, as such, space was provided for influence. However, in the ideational field of policy decisions, space is not that easily given. Even if some NGOs gained access to the policymaking fora, the space for making contributions was limited due to the effective framing of the sphere of agriculture by the growth representation.

On the part of the Zambian government, the decision to make the PRSP an apolitical process (in the sense of keeping it out of party politics), can also be interpreted as a case of ‘romanticisation’. In this way, the process is presented as being feasible without specifically political (in the widest sense) discussion and conflict, in that the paper can be formulated through a process where participants simply bring their expertise and knowledge. In reality, this can help to mask the power relations that, unless active measures are taken to curb them, are likely to be at play in such processes, regardless of party politics.

On the positive side, proponents of the livelihoods representation did succeed in getting the issue of food security recognised as something to be tackled within the sphere of agriculture – indicating that there was some space for considerations other than economic ones. Nonetheless, the opening for political concerns was fairly limited, and, with the overall framework centred on growth, the arguments of efficiency remained the most influential.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This thesis has set out to explore the effects of the ‘good governance’ agenda on local processes of development planning. More specifically, it has sought to provide answers to the question posed in the introduction: *To what extent was the PRSP formulation process in Zambia depoliticised?* In the three preceding chapters I have explored three different parts of the overriding problem statement of this thesis, using very different theoretical perspectives. This chapter provides a summary of the major points, as well as an attempt to assemble main findings from the various parts of the research question, and to view them in light of the overriding problem statement.

6.2 ‘Civil society’

In the 1990s, as donor funding for ‘civil society’ increased substantially, the number of organisations dealing with development-related activities in Zambia virtually exploded. At present, ‘civil society’ in Zambia largely signifies so-called intermediary organisations. This is in line with what was prescribed by the liberal perspective as conducive to the development of a democratic culture, and to the articulation of the interests of the grass-roots vis-à-vis the state – as adopted by important actors in the global development scene through the good governance agenda. Above, this was in part interpreted as governmentality: ‘civil society’ disciplining itself to conform to the rules of the game in the development field.

This self-identification as ‘civil society’ by many Zambian organisations is closely related to notions of solidarity with marginalised groups and poor people. Organisations seen as not exhibiting such values, such as certain producers’ organisations and organisations representing private sector actors, are explicitly excluded from the term ‘civil society’. ‘Civil society’, then, is for the most part made up of relatively formalised organisations – mainly NGOs – who are involved in development activities and advocacy on issues such as gender, human rights and poverty reduction, and who work in solidarity with poor and marginalised groups.

However, while Zambian ‘civil society’ sees itself as the embodiment of the good governance version of the concept of ‘civil society’ (which PRS is based on) – acting on

the one hand as a representative of the poor and the grassroots, and on the other as a watch-dog regarding the state – the extent to which it conforms to these assumptions is questionable. As shown above, this seems to be the result of an inherent paradox in the structures for ‘civil society’ funding. While donors conceptualise ‘civil society’ as representing the poor and as acting as a watchdog respectively, the funding pattern increasingly renders ‘civil society’ in Zambia incapable of performing these functions. Firstly, the dependence on donor funds makes for an urbanised and professionalised ‘civil society’ that is somewhat detached from the rural poor whose interests they are supposed to represent. Secondly, the new trend of ‘partnership’ makes the watchdog role increasingly difficult, as ‘civil society’ is thought to enter into partnership with the state in a joint effort for developing the country. The PRS can be understood as an example of the partnership model, in the sense that ‘civil society’ is expected to engage in policy-making with the government, as well as to monitor the implementation of PRSP activities. Inasmuch as the partnership approach is followed through with regard to implementation of these activities as well, ‘civil society’ organisations may find themselves expected to fulfil conflicting roles. And here enters the danger of unduly legitimising parts of the PRSP towards which ‘civil society’ has been actively opposed.

6.3 Participation

As we have seen, the danger of lending undue legitimacy to the PRSP was initially one of the major points of debate within the group of organisations of the emerging CSCR: whether the involvement of ‘civil society’ in the PRSP process would contribute legitimacy to a process in which it would not be allowed meaningful participation.

The process of formulating the PRSP was carried out above all through the eight Working Groups at national level. The groups involved actors such as the relevant ministries, donors, interest organisations and NGOs. As shown above, the NGOs made up a small number relative to the total number of representatives in the groups. Moreover, the extent of professionalism, at least in the Agriculture Working Group, made the NGOs less capable of fronting their views vis-à-vis the rest of the group. At the province level, consultations were carried out in each provincial capital. These consultations came very late in the process of formulation, and have been widely criticised for being too government-dominated and for having an urban bias.

Outside of such formal arrangements, we have seen that the CSPR Steering Committee found ways to channel ‘civil society’ perspectives into the official process. It was active in following the process through NGOs sitting on the various Working Groups. It conducted its own province-level consultations, and contributed to the formal process by submitting a ‘civil society’ perspective PRSP to the government.

The participation process in the formulation of the PRSP in Zambia has been characterised as reasonably good by among others Bwalya et al. (2003) and Walan (2002). Involving NGOs in policy making is fairly new in Zambia, so that in itself can be regarded as an achievement. However, the two above accounts have focused more on the process as such, and not so much on the impact that ‘civil society’ involvement made on the final paper. Using the terminology of the ‘ladder of participation’ applied in the analysis of the process, ‘civil society’ cannot be said to have been part of ‘joint decision-making’ to any substantial degree. Moreover, the concept of framing demonstrated that the space for making contributions was limited. And participation without influence can be damaging in that it can contribute legitimacy to the process without giving much in return to the participants.

6.4 Relative influence of the actors

The question of actor influence and the deliberations in the main arena for decision-making in the PRSP, the Working Groups, was analysed using the discourse analytical tool of framing. As shown in chapters 4 and 5, the representation of the problem at hand as a lack of economic growth, and the consequent dominance of a growth representation in the field of poverty reduction as well as agricultural development, placed substantial constraints on the ability of ‘civil society’ to contribute to the policy-making. The successful framing of the field in question by the growth representation relatively effectively excluded the livelihoods proponents from the debate, making them look unconstructive and irrational. Using the concept of power/knowledge enabled me to hold that this had significant power effects, without claiming that it was necessarily the result of intentional use of power by one or more of the participants. The effective framing by the growth representation appears to have been facilitated by several interrelated factors. Firstly, the influence of the IFIs on the document, through the overriding framework of the PRS agenda and the general development discourse, as well as existing agreements

with the government, seems to have strengthened the focus on achieving economic growth. Also, the government seems to have exerted self-discipline in terms of macro-economic issues in the PRSP process in light of its dire need for continued funding from the IFIs and bilateral donors. This was interpreted as a case of ‘governmentality’, as conceptualised by Foucault. Secondly, the fact that the Ministry of Finance was the ministry that drove the process seems to have facilitated an economic approach to the problem at hand, as well as the establishment of economic growth as the main objective for planning. Thirdly, with regard to agriculture, the growth representation already held a strong position, as existing programmes and policy documents focused on transforming agriculture into a sector based on commercial farming. Fourthly, within the Working Group for agriculture, the growth proponents were strong in number and in academic qualifications, making it relatively easy to get agriculture framed along the lines of the growth representation.

The influence of ‘civil society’ on the final document was relatively limited. In agriculture, as noted, the growth representation took precedence. However, the NGOs seem to have been successful in pressing to get the issue of food security seen as part of the agricultural sphere in terms of policy-making. As shown above, some growth proponents advocated that this issue belonged to the field of social services. This represents one of the major achievements of the NGOs participating in the Agriculture Working Group.

With regard to the actors’ own evaluation of their impact on the document, many were very positive. The most important growth proponents of the Agriculture Working Group were very satisfied with the end result. Paradoxically, many of the organisations of the CSPR that did not participate in the Working Groups of the government-led process, deemed the impact of ‘civil society’ as good. By contrast the NGOs who took part in the Agriculture Working Group were much more moderate, and said that it was very difficult to make fruitful contributions in the group. This was interpreted as resulting from the effective framing by the growth representation at an early stage in the formulation process. It may also be that the seemingly positive evaluation by many of the CSPR organisations is an expression of downscaled expectations: knowing that the

paper must be acceptable to the IFIs, and that their country is dependent on the good will of these institutions for funding, they would be satisfied if their proposals won through in areas where they knew there was a chance of influencing. Through the mechanism of governmentality, much of the direction of the document was already set.

6.5 Poverty reduction depoliticised?

To the principal problem statement then: *To what extent was the Zambian PRSP formulation process depoliticised?* As shown above, the process has some traits of depoliticisation, both through the dynamics of the technical/economic approach and through the harmony model. This appears to have had consequences for the actors' ability to make contributions to the PRSP, as well as for the final result – the PRSP document.

The PRSP process seems to have been depoliticised by certain romanticised notions in the discourse underpinning the PRS approach. Firstly, the idea of national ownership probably overstates the possibility of the HIPC countries to drive their own development. Secondly, the notion that all actors should come together under one common goal though the PRSP essentially disregards political conflict and disagreement. Thirdly, the assumption that participation by 'civil society' will automatically contribute to bringing out the concerns of poor and marginalised people is simplistic. Adding to this, the decision by the Zambian government to define the process as non-political (in the party-political sense) facilitated a romanticisation of the process which may have reduced the scope for political discussion on the actual contents of the plan. The process was also depoliticised through the technical/economic approach of the IFIs. This was conducive to an atmosphere where the challenge was to 'solve a problem', more than to bring out different opinions and discuss alternative approaches to poverty reduction and to development in general. In the Agriculture Working Group this tendency was strengthened with the effective framing of the sphere of agriculture by the growth perspective, as described above. The fact that the Ministry of Finance was the government institution driving the process at the national level made this tendency a general trait of the process. Combined, these factors seem to have created a climate of decision-making with little room for essentially political discussion. This had very real effects on the substantial output of the process, the PRSP.

Above all it facilitated the focus on economic growth as the overriding strategy for poverty reduction in Zambia, and the presentation of this as being a simple matter of ‘common sense’. Moreover, the framework of the PRS approach made for a concentration on specifically internal causes of poverty, as opposed to factors in the international system. In the vein of the harmony model, it also facilitated a focus on poverty reduction as achievable within the existing socio-economic structures – as opposed to, for example, a focus on the structures of inequality which are widely recognised as contributing to upholding and producing widespread poverty. In agriculture in particular, it effectuated the framing of agricultural development (as well as poverty reduction more generally) in the growth representation. As shown above, this significantly restricted the space for contributions from a representation centred on livelihoods improvement for the poor. However, as also noted above, the proponents of the livelihoods representation managed to keep the issue of food security as a concern within the sphere of agriculture. This shows that the framing of the growth representation was not completely fixed, and also that there was indeed some space for political considerations within the boundaries of the PRSP.

We should bear in mind that the PRS approach represents something genuinely new, in the sense that the document that will inform the relationship between the IFIs and the Zambian government has been formulated in Zambia, and not in Washington. This could lead to greater openness on the agreements as well as more general debate surrounding these issues in Zambia. Moreover, the relationship between government and ‘civil society’ may improve as a result of the PRSP process. The budget advisory groups set up after the PRSP can be seen as an example of this.

In sum, however, it seems that the PRS agenda – within the confines of the good governance regime, and the largely operational thinking of the World Bank which remains technical/economic – facilitates a depoliticisation of processes of policy-making at national level. And this, by masking power relations both nationally and internationally, makes for a continuation of past policies, but with renewed legitimacy – with Northern governments, if not with populations of countries in the South. In order to understand why the traditional IFI measures were taken on as the main strategies in the

Zambian case, the concept of governmentality was applied. This provides useful insights into the relationship between developing countries and their creditors. Disciplined into a system where the creditors are the ones controlling the agenda, the Zambian government seems to a considerable degree to have adjusted to what they know the IFIs want to see in the PRSPs. Despite the mantra of ownership, there was little room for formulating specifically national policy responses to the poverty situation in Zambia.

6.6 Revisiting the theoretical underpinnings of the study

Much has been written on the PRS approach and on national PRSP processes in recent years. However, there have been few studies that analyse such processes using explicit theoretical tools and perspectives. This is where this thesis aims to contribute. Using literature critical to the mainstream approach in development thinking and practice has enabled me to take into account questions of inequality and power relations, which significantly affect the actors' ability to participate and make contributions. In my opinion this has proven more fruitful than using liberal approaches that largely accept the benefits of 'civil society' and 'participation' in development at face value. Analysing Zambian 'civil society', I found that keeping a spatial and non-value based definition and drawing on literature critical of the liberal perspective added value. It enabled me to dismantle the seemingly homogeneous entity labelled 'civil society' in Zambia, giving nuance to the picture painted in the good governance agenda. As regards the analysis of the participation process, a scale model was applied. The strong point of this model is also its weakness: while it is sufficiently general for application across different contexts, it is not sensitive to contextual factors that may be relevant in the analysis. This was, however, found to be a feature of most of the literature on participation reviewed for this study. As noted, but found to be beyond our scope here, the analysis of the participation process would probably have benefited from including specifically Africanist perspectives that emphasise the role of patrimonial relations in social and political processes on the continent. The absence of such perspectives in this analysis must be seen as a shortcoming, but it should also inspire further research on participatory policy-making in the African context. Applying discourse analytical tools and frameworks as opposed to using traditional policy analysis looking at the discussions and the actors' impact on the final document has enabled me to show that the *represen-*

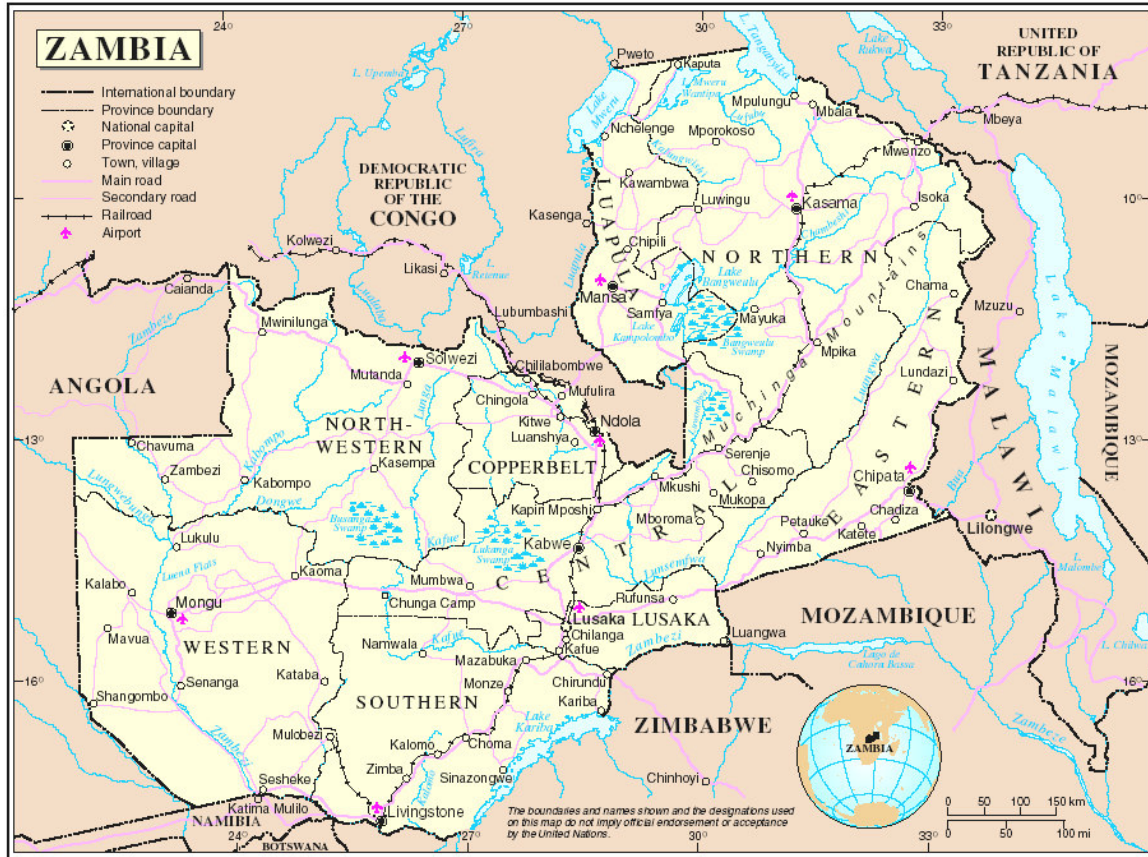
tation of the problem at hand is a discursive construction, and not a given, and that this has consequences for negotiating the strategies to tackle that problem. Further, through the concept of framing, I have been able to show how the discussions were effectively restricted to the logic of one representation, with arguments emanating from a conflicting representation dismissed as unfruitful and irrelevant. The concept of governmentality has contributed fruitful perspectives on the relationship between the government of Zambia and the IFIs, as well as between Zambian ‘civil society’ and the donors more generally.

My conclusions regarding the PRSP process in Zambia are essentially not so different from much of the existing literature on PRSP processes. However, this analysis of the policymaking process of one sector at the national level in Zambia illustrates in greater depth how these conclusions have come about. This analysis also represents a contribution to the analysis of power. Using a Foucauldian concept of power, I was able to show how the agriculture section of the PRSP in Zambia was dominated by one representation of the problem at hand, without saying that it was the result of the intentional use of power by one or more of the actors. Rather, this representation’s dominance was seen to largely result from its successful framing exercise, which in turn had significant power *effects*. The concept of power/knowledge, which implies that knowledge and rationality is a construction that (re)produces relations of power in a given field, provided useful pointers as to how the growth representation could effectively shut alternative representations out of the debates. It contributed the insight that it is the *way* in which growth was presented as being the only common sense alternative to poverty reduction that restricts the space for making alternative contributions and that causes the depoliticisation of the issue at hand – and not a focus on growth *per se*. Combined, this illustrates the fruitfulness of this understanding of power in the analysis of processes of policy making. The thesis has also aspired to expand the insights provided by Ferguson (1990) among others, on depoliticisation. Analysing the discussions under the PRSP as struggles to frame the sphere of agriculture has demonstrated that the growth representation which enjoyed the backing of the IFIs significantly reduced the scope for alternative contributions – and thus, that the

possibility for political discussion of the problems was restricted. This indicates that the assertions made on the dynamics of depoliticisation are applicable to policymaking processes at the national level. This perspective, as well as discourse analytical approaches more generally, can provide useful pointers for a deeper understanding of processes of policy-making in developing countries, within the broader context of an increasingly uniform and pervasive development discourse.

Appendix

Map of Zambia



Source: <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/zambia.pdf>

Agriculture Working Group Members

1	Dr. Hyde Haantuba	Chairman of the Working Group, Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Fisheries
2	Dr. Faustin Mwape	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries/University of Zambia
3	Dr. C. Njobvu	Consultant of the Working Group, University of Zambia/Institute of Economic and Social Research
4	Mr. Songowayo Zyambo	Zambia National Farmers Union
5	Mr. Charles K. Chileya	Food and Agriculture Organisation (UN)
6	Mr. Siangongo D. Siakalenge	Ministry of Lands
7	Mr. Niinuma Takashi	Japanese Embassy
8	Mr. S.S. Banda	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
9	Mr. T. Mulimbika	Gender in Development Department, Cabinet Office
10	Ms. Godfrida Manjomba	NUPAW (National Union of Plantation and Agricultural Workers)/ZCTU (Zambia Congress of Trade Unions)
11	Mr. John Mulombwa	Forestry Department

12	Mr. Wilfred Serenje	Energy Department
13	Mr. Alex Mwanakasale	World Bank
14	Dr. Anthony Mwanaumo	Agriculture Consultative Forum
15	Mrs. Pamela K. Bwalya	Secretariat for the Working Group, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
16	Ms. Freda Luhila	Programme Against Malnutrition
17	Mr. Hasselback	GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit)
18	Mr. P. Njeleka	JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency)
19	F.M. Muma	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
20		Women for Change

Based on information retrieved from the Ministry of Finance and National Planning, 2003.

Priorities of the Agriculture Working Group

Output 1: Finance and Investment Climate Improved

- Establish an Agriculture Development Fund (ADF) with innovative management.
- Improve access to credit and insurance services.
- Increase volume of credit at affordable rates.
- Increase private sector investment.
- Establish financial infrastructure for rural credit, especially for outgrower schemes.
- Enact and enforce legislation and regulations for sustainable management of financial systems.

Output 2: Marketing, Trade, and Agricultural-business Climate Improved

- Identify and promote products with comparative advantage.
- Develop Agriculture Export Zones.
- Identify and develop Export-oriented Livestock Disease-Free Zones.
- Orient extension staff and public support services towards market-based agriculture.
- Develop entrepreneurship skills and capacity among extension workers.
- Maintain sustainable non-market-distorting strategic food reserves.
- Promote production of a diversity of food crops among smallholder farmers.
- Promote production of a diversity of high-value crops.
- Improve agro-processing and in-situ value-adding activities.
- Strengthen rural business groups.
- Strengthen efficient private sector input supply and output marketing agencies.
- Strengthen public-private sector partnerships.
- Strengthen market information systems.
- Improve the enactment and enforcement of legislation and regulations.

Output 3: Land and Infrastructure Development Improved

- Establish a Land Information Centre.
- Establish functioning stakeholder task forces.
- Identify and demarcate suitable land by stakeholder task forces.
- Identify and develop resettlement and farm blocks.
- Develop trunk and feeder roads in high-potential areas.
- Rehabilitate and maintain new trunk and feeder roads in high-potential areas.
- Develop telecommunications in high-potential areas.
- Provide electricity in high-potential areas.
- Construct and rehabilitate rural dams and irrigation facilities.
- Establish an incentive and monitoring system to encourage utilisation of land.

Output 4: Technology Development and Dissemination Improved

- Establish a Technology Development and Transfer Fund.
- Adapt demand-driven technology for increased production of products with competitive advantage.
- Package and disseminate improved technology.
- Introduce sustainable measures to control outbreaks of major diseases.
- Improve livestock disease monitoring and eradication.
- Improve the enactment and enforcement of legislation and regulations.
- Disseminate messages on improved irrigation technology.
- Promote labour-saving techniques in farming and other rural livelihoods.
- Improve technical skills for farmers, farmer groups, extension staff and NGOs.

Output 5: Targeted Support System for Food Security Established

- Promote the use of low-input and conservation farming technologies.
- Select target farmers who meet criteria.
- Distribute required enterprise inputs on time.
- Provide extension messages to support the enterprises.

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