

The causal effect of NGOs on democratization: a case study of Tanzania

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to explain the paradoxical Tanzanian case where a strong NGO landscape is co-existent with a growing tendency to authoritarianism. Following the thought of the ‘civil society paradigm’, a blooming NGO landscape, often considered as strong civil society, should lead to a well-functioning democracy. As this is not the case in Tanzania, the Tanzanian NGO sector is analyzed through secondary as well as primary data analysis, using data collected during an internship at a Tanzanian NGO in 2018. The analysis shows the Tanzanian NGO sector is interconnected with the state, dominated by structures of patronage and generally weak. These three characteristics undermine the working of the causal mechanisms through which a strong civil society would lead to democratization and clearly explain how a blooming NGO landscape is able to co-exist with growing authoritarianism in Tanzania. The findings lead to two contradicting implications. On the one hand, that if Tanzanian NGOs want to stimulate democratization, they should transform more to fulfil to the conventional notion of civil society. On the other hand, that the civil society paradigm is not applicable to the Tanzanian case and more research should be conducted to develop a model more compatible with the Sub-Saharan African context.

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Introduction

For the African continent, the 1990s are commonly referred to as the ‘Third Wave of democratization’. In this period, almost every Sub-Saharan African country introduced formal multiparty democracy (van Eerd, 2017, p. 6). Many of these democratic transitions were started by civil society actors leading protests against repressive, patrimonial and authoritarian regimes (Solomon & Liebenberg, 2000, p. 96). This led to increased support of civil society actors and civil society building by international donors in the interest of democratization (Cheeseman, 2015, p. 115).

Furthermore, the African ‘Third Wave of Democratization’ generated a large volume of scholarship focusing on the causes and consequences of the democratization process (Schraeder, 1995, p. 1160). A prominent part of the scholarship is occupied by the neoliberal ‘civil society paradigm’, which identifies a general causal relation between strong civil society and democratisation. As nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) are often equated with civil society in Sub-Saharan Africa, this paradigm expects NGOs to strengthen civil society and thereby foster democratization (Mercer, 2002, pp. 8-9). In the 1990s, the wave of democratization and the civil society paradigm generated a boom in the establishment of NGOs in Sub-Saharan Africa (Demars, 2005, p. 34-37).

Tanzania is a characteristic example of a country where an ‘NGO boom’ took place. The country went from 41 registered NGOs in 1990, to more than 10.000 by the year 2000 (Hearn, 2007, p. 1096). According to McQuinn (2011, p. 311), NGOs have come to dominate the civil society input on national policy-making processes in Tanzania.

With this large number of NGOs and their influence in national policy making, Tanzania seems to have a strong civil society. In line with the civil society paradigm on democratization, it can therefore be expected that Tanzania would have a relative strong democracy as well. However, this is not the case. Since the 1990s, Tanzania has been rated as a partly free country by Freedom House. Moreover, according to Kabendera (2018), Tanzania has recently started to descend further to authoritarianism.

This thesis aims to explain this paradoxical situation. *How can growing authoritarianism be reconciled with the strong NGO landscape of Tanzania?* The research follows a case-study approach, in which Tanzania will function as a deviant case. The analysis uses secondary as well as primary data, retrieved during my internship at a Tanzanian NGO from August until October 2018.

The theoretical framework will set out the causal mechanisms through which civil society can lead to democratization and will discuss the applicability of the civil society paradigm to the Sub-Saharan context. Subsequently, after a general exploration of the Tanzanian case, the analysis will focus on three typical features of African civil society which differ from the Western conceptualization: the interconnectedness of civil society and the state, structures of patronage within civil society and its general weakness. I address these in the Tanzanian context and investigate how they affect the potential of NGOs to support democratization in the country.

Theoretical framework

Civil Society as a pre-condition for democracy

Most modern uses of the concept of civil society fall back on the work of Alexis de Tocqueville. In his view, civil society groups are situated between the state and its citizens. However, they are considered simultaneously distinct and interdependent of the state. Civil society is regarded to have a complementary function vis-à-vis the state as well as an integrative function in society, since it provides a role of basic socialization and enhanced democratic skills and norms (Beichelt, Hahn-Furh, Schimmelfennig & Worschech, 2014, p. 18). Furthermore, civil society organisations are considered to be able to curb the power of centralizing institutions and protect pluralism (Lavalette & Ferguson, 2007, p. 451).

In line with this perspective, civil society can be defined as ‘the wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations’ (World Bank, n.d.).

De Tocqueville argued that civil society functions as the foundation of a stable democratic polity and a barrier to anti-democratic forces (Lavalette & Ferguson, 2007, p. 451). He considered a strong civil society a necessary precondition for democracy. Many researchers have followed this line of thought and their work is considered the ‘civil society paradigm’. Cohen and Arato (1990), Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti (1994), and Edwards (2014) for example, found a substantial empirical correlation between a strong civil society and a functioning democracy, in which both mutually reinforce each other.

There are several causal mechanisms that can explain the relationship between civil society and democracy. First, according to some authors (Mercer, 2002; Diamond, 1994; Biekart, 1999; Sørensen, 2008), civil society is necessary to bring about an initial push towards democratization by mobilizing citizens against authoritarian rulers.

Second, civil society is able to check abuses of state power and prevent backsliding into authoritarian rule by encouraging and organizing public scrutiny of the state and promote wider citizen participation (Diamond, 1994; Mercer, 2002; White, 2004; Warren, 2011).

Third, civil society organizations can stimulate political participation and democratic citizenship of individuals as they function as schools of democracy through educating political efficiency and civic virtues (Diamond, 1994; Warren, 2011; Putnam, Leonardi & Nanetti, 1994; Kamstra, 2014).

Fourth, civil society is able to create channels other than political parties for the articulation, aggregation, and representation of interests of citizens. Furthermore, it can facilitate public deliberation and increase participation through bringing in the voice of marginalized groups (White, 2004; Warren, 2011; Diamond, 1994; Kamstra, 2014; Fowler, 2000).

Fifth, civil society associations can contribute to effective and equitable policy-making through influencing laws and regulations. They are able to redefine the rules of the political game along democratic lines (Howard, 2003; White, 2004).

Sixth, civil society organizations can play a role in the advancement of developing countries through co-operation with the government. They can function as strategic partners, increase efficiency within government agencies, and fill voids in the government's social service delivery role. Civil society is thereby assumed to contribute to democratization in an indirect way, since there is an empirical connection between economic development and democracy, one of the iron laws of political sociology (Burkhart & Lewis-Beck, 1994, p. 903).

Seventh, civil society organizations can co-operate with the government in the support of policymaking through generating expert knowledge, mobilizing support and negotiating a policy direction (Kamstra, 2014; Clarke, 1998; Warren, 2011).

Civil society in the development discourse

From the 1990s, many scholars and donors started to consider civil society as a prominent driver of development and an instrument that would make African states more democratic, more transparent and more accountable' (Kasfir, 1998b, p. 1). Consequently, civil society was increasingly supported by international donors and included in policy-making (McQuinn, 2011, p. 18). According to Powell and Geoghegan (2005, p. 129), this trend coincided with the rise of a new development model after the collapse of the 1970s state-led development model and the 1980s market-led development model. Other factors causing this trend can be the demise of communism in Eastern Europe, the third wave of democratization in Africa and Latin America, and the 'rolling back of the state' under the neo-liberal economic paradigm (Lewis, 2002).

This policy of rolling back the state in the 1990s encouraged many governments in developing countries to expand the number of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) for service provision. This led to a worldwide strong rise in number, size and level of activity of development-based NGOs, which is also called the 'NGO boom' (McQuinn, 2011, p. 58).

NGOs can be defined as "independent development actors existing apart from governments and corporations, operating on a non-profit or not-for-profit basis with an

emphasis on voluntarism, and pursuing a mandate of providing development services, undertaking communal development work or advocating on development issues” (Michael, 2004, p.3).

Within the development field, NGOs are regarded as the most important civil society actors by donors and national governments (McQuinn, 2011, p. 58). Indeed, according to Shivji (2006), the discourse on civil society in Africa uses the concept of civil society organizations (CSOs) interchangeably with NGOs. They have been attributed a unique position in society because they ‘can reach the people, educate and empower them hence enabling them to assert themselves and struggle for the democratisation of the socio-political space’ (Okuku, 2002, p. 93).

As NGOs are often equated with civil society in Sub-Saharan Africa, the causal mechanisms linking them to democratization are similar to those of the ‘civil society paradigm’ discussed above. According to Mercer (2002, pp. 8-9), NGOs foster democratization since they give a voice to different interest groups vis-à-vis the government and function as watchdog of the state. Furthermore, through working with marginalized groups and representing their interests, NGOs widen and deepen citizen participation and keep state power in check through challenging and pressing the government.

The civil society paradigm in the African context

However, some scholars have argued that the ‘civil society paradigm’ is not applicable to the African continent. According to Burnell and Calvert (2004), for instance, the concept of civil society captures little of African politics. Törnquist (1999, pp. 93-94), has stated this concept is primarily a European framework that tends to set aside historical realities, such as the legacy of colonialism. Furthermore, McQuinn (2011 p. 46) argues the civil society paradigm is based on circumstances of associational life in nineteenth century America, which is incomparable to the situation in contemporary Africa.

Most scholars refer to the Western perception of civil society as ‘the conventional notion of civil society’ (Orji, 2009, p. 1). According to Orji, analysing African civil society using the conventional notion of civil society can be considered problematic. It excludes many traditional African organizations from civil society, since they cannot fulfil the Western ‘civility criteria’ such as voluntarism, economic freedom, citizenship, rights, rule of law and democratic representation. Subsequently, as traditional African civil society organisations become excluded, issues of a large number of citizens will not be represented, which damages democracy instead of enforcing it.

For many scholars, the different nature of civil society organizations in Africa has served as an argument against the civil society-democracy relationship in African contexts. Generally, African civil society is claimed to be different in three fundamental ways. First, many civil society organizations are linked to the state rather than separated from it (Okuku, 2002, p. 84). An example given by Bratton (1989), is the non-profit voluntary association 'Community Development Trust Fund of Tanzania (CDTF), which was governed by a board composed of senior political officials, including the Prime Minister. The interconnectedness between the state and civil society may limit the capacity of civil society organisations to cause democratization as state officials can threaten and infiltrate organisations to hold back reform (Okuku, 2002, p. 85).

A second difference in the nature of African civil society organisations is created by the African patronage-based political economies (Kasfir, 1998a, p. 126). A system of patronage, also termed as neopatrimonialism, is considered a core feature of politics in Africa (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997, p. 62). Neopatrimonialism is characterized by personal rule and a network of relations between patrons and clients. 'Patrons offer resources to their clients in exchange for their loyalty, and clients support their patrons to access rewards that cannot be readily attained in a weak formal economy' (Arriola, 2009, p. 1344). Patronage networks not only distribute material benefits, but are also expected to sustain an intimacy of relations between patrons and clients (Berman, 1998, p. 337). There are many different forms of patronage in Sub-Saharan Africa. Okuku (2002, p. 89) provides an example of patronage in Uganda, where the Church received four-wheel drive vehicles from the government and in turn blessed the governments agenda. As the system of patronage is characterized by unclear boundaries between the state and society as well as the private and public sphere, it becomes difficult to reconcile it with the conventional notion of civil society (Berman, 1998, p. 340).

A third aspect which distinguishes African civil society from the Western conventional notion is the general weakness of African civil society. This weakness can be attributed to the fact that most African civil society organisations are characterized as new, lacking social roots, heavily financed by outsiders and pursuing objectives unrelated to ongoing political conflict (Kasfir, 1998a, pp. 142-143).

The three typical features of African civil society can be used to rebut the causal effect of a strong civil society on democratization in Africa, as claimed by the 'civil society paradigm'. Since the development field considers NGOs the most important civil society actors, the occurrence of the 'NGO boom' in many development countries would imply the creation of a strong civil society and therefore high levels of democratisation and consolidation of

democracy. However, there are numerous African countries, such as Tanzania and Uganda, where a blooming NGO landscape co-exists with a government showing autocratic tendencies.

This thesis will explore this paradoxical situation. As it aims to conduct an in-depth examination of the causal mechanisms between civil society and democracy, a case-study design is used, in which Tanzania functions as a deviant case.

To answer the research question: *‘how can growing authoritarianism be reconciled with the strong NGO landscape of Tanzania?’*, a qualitative analysis is employed comprising of primary as well as secondary data analysis. The primary data consists of legal texts, such as government bills and policy strategies, indicators, such as Freedom House reports, and data collected during an internship in 2018 at an NGO in Tanzania, such as interviews with the target group of the NGO and participatory observations. The secondary data consists of academic books and journal articles, as well as news reports and reports of international organizations.

The analysis focuses on the three typical features of African civil society that differ from the Western conventional notion of civil society: interconnectedness with the state, structures of patronage, and general weakness of civil society. It is examined if these typical features are present in the Tanzanian case and how this effects the causal mechanisms between civil society and democracy, as assumed by the civil society paradigm. The research contributes to existing theory through setting out if and how NGOs lead to democratization. Therefore, the thesis will conclude with policy as well as research implications.

Case selection

Tanzania was selected as deviant case because of two characteristics: first, it is a typical example of a country where an ‘NGO boom’ took place (McQuinn, 2011, p. 134) and second, the country has made a steady shift towards authoritarian rule since independence (Lofchie, 2014, pp.52-54). The country hence deviates from the theoretical expectation that a strong civil society fosters democratization.

Tanzania gained independence in 1964, after little more than seventy-five years of being ruled by German and British colonial powers (Kussendrager, 1996, pp. 7-13). Indigenous civil society organizations have played a significant role in Tanzania’s independence struggle, which was remarkably peaceful (McQuinn, 2011, pp. 88-94). In general, Tanzania stands out because of its history of civil peace after independence (Lofchie, 2014, p. 1). This characteristic is mostly attributed to the introduction of Swahili as the common language and government policies directed at unifying the people (van Cranenburgh & Sasse, 1995, p. 16).

However, the unifying policies of the United Republic of Tanzania can also be seen as a first move towards authoritarian rule. In order to avert ethnic division and promote unity, Tanzania’s first president, Julius Nyerere, declared Tanzania to be a one-party state in 1965 (van Cranenburgh & Sasse, 1995, p. 12).

In 1967, Nyerere’s government introduced the ‘Arusha Declaration’, based on Nyerere’s socialist philosophy of Ujamaa (Nyerere, 1997, p. 1). This led to policies of nationalization, a focus on education, and policies on communal living in ‘ujamaa villages’ (Coulson, 2013, p. 217). Although the Arusha declaration became very popular in the country, the ujamaa policy led to ineffective management, shortages of materials and disruption of crop production (van Cranenburgh & Sasse, 1995, pp. 12-13). This caused a period of economic decline in the 1970s which led to an economic deadlock in 1979 (Kussendrager, 1996, p. 21). From 1986, Tanzania received extended funding from the IMF and the World Bank in the form of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). The SAPs provided funds under the condition of the introduction of several neo-liberal economic adjustments (Ewald, 2013, p. 107).

The neo-liberal economic paradigm included the ‘rolling back of the state’, which led to a gap in social services provision that was increasingly filled by NGOs. Additionally, NGOs were seen by major donors as more efficient, less bureaucratic and less corrupt than the state sector (McQuinn, 2011, p. 130). These developments led to a Tanzanian NGO boom in the 1990s. From 1986 to 1995, Tanzania went from a number of twenty-five registered NGOs to

six hundred and four (McQuinn, 2011, p. 134). The number of NGOs kept increasing and currently there are almost 9000 NGOs registered in Tanzania (Business Daily Africa, 2017).

In the 1990s, during the same period as the start of the NGO boom, international donors started to demand Tanzania to adopt the main feature of the New Policy agenda: liberal multi-party democracy (Harrison, 2001; Vener & Liddle, 1996). In 1992, Tanzania formally transitioned into a multi-party system and thereby became part of the worldwide *third wave of democratization* (Kussendrager, 1996, p. 28). In reality, however, Tanzania remained a one-party system. The political party Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) has functioned as the predominant party since independence (Egboh & Aniche, 2015, p. 17).

Tanzania's autocratic tendency grew under the current Tanzanian government of president Magufuli, who took office in 2015. Magufuli has limited freedoms and has been deeply intolerant of criticism. (Kabendera, 2018). According to the Economist (2018), under Magufuli's government, opposition politicians were shot and activists and journalists disappeared. Furthermore, the government took severe measures to restrict homosexual citizens (Akumu, 2018).

According to the Freedom in the World report, Tanzania is considered party free. On a scale of 1 to 7 in their freedom rating, where 7 is least free, Tanzania scores 4,5. Under the current government political and civil rights weakened. From 2014 until 2018 the Freedom Rating worsened from 3 to 4,5. Furthermore, the political rights score went from 3 to 4 and the civil liberty score from 3 to 5 (Freedom House, n.d.). Freedom House (2018b) determined that Magufuli is limiting channels for expression, undermining and discrediting independent institutions such as NGOs and silencing government critics. International news organization Reuters reported two opposition leaders were sentenced to five months in prison in February 2018 after insulting president Magufuli (Ng'wanakilala, 2018). An article of African Arguments (2018) revealed how leaders from different civil society sectors spoke out about the growing assaults on freedoms and political violence in Tanzania. The head of an NGO affiliated with a large international charity told African Arguments many government abuses in Tanzania go untold:

'The space for critique and discussion has now shrunk...It's just common knowledge that police and army will use violence and are not accountable...and we're not able to publish reports which clearly state this.'

Analysis

In my analysis, I will focus on the three typical features of African civil society that many scholars view as different from the Western conventional notion of civil society. First, the interconnectedness of the NGO sector and the state. Second, structures of patronage within the NGO sector. And third, the general weakness of the NGO sector. It will be examined if the three features are present in the Tanzanian NGO sector. If this is the case, it can explain the ineffectiveness of the causal mechanisms between a strong civil society and democratization in Tanzania and the coexistence of an extensive NGO sector and autocratic tendencies of the government.

The analysis is composed of mostly secondary data, such as case studies conducted in Tanzania, however it is supplemented by participant observations I made during my internship at a Tanzanian NGO from August until October 2018.

Interconnectedness of the NGO sector and the state

The relationship between the Tanzanian state and NGOs has been fragile for years. Research of Daly (2007) and Mercer (1999) has determined a mutual atmosphere of suspicion between NGOs and the state. According to Mercer, the Tanzanian NGO policy (The United Republic of Tanzania, 2001) reveals the state's inherent mistrust of the NGO sector (Mercer, 1999, pp. 250-251). The NGO policy and the Tanzanian NGO Act were formulated between 1996 and 2002. After a near breakdown of the process, the Tanzanian government continued to develop the NGO act without NGO consultation. This caused NGOs to start a public campaign against the bill, however the Parliament passed it into law in 2002 (Breen, Dunn, Sidel & Fremont-Smith, 2017, p. 87).

The NGO act, drafted to provide registration of NGOs and coordinate and regulate NGO activities (The United Republic of Tanzania, 2002, p. 3), introduced the establishment of a National Council for NGOs (NACONGO). The council, made up of representatives of different NGOs, was supposed to develop a code of conduct to facilitate self-regulation of NGOs (The United Republic of Tanzania, 2002, p. 14). According to the NGO act, the NGO Co-ordination Board, which had to be established, should check the developed code of conduct. Other tasks of the Board would be to approve and co-ordinate NGO registration, facilitate implementation of the NGO policy, examine annual reports of NGOs and direct suspension or cancellation of NGOs (The United Republic of Tanzania, 2002, p. 6). While NACONGO functions independently of the government, the members of the NGO Coordination Board are all

appointed by either the President or the Minister responsible for NGOs (The United Republic of Tanzania, 2002, p. 17). This suggests a high level of control of the state on NGOs. Furthermore, the Tanzanian National Policy on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) of 2001 states:

'The Government shall work in partnership with NGOs [in all sectors] in the delivery of public services and programmes. That is, the Government shall be free to subcontract NGOs to undertake programmes, where NGOs have comparative advantages and have expressed interest.'

Regarding partnership relations between NGOs and the state, McQuinn's (2011) interviews with officials of NGOs, made it clear that they considered their relationship with the government as the most important (McQuinn, 2011, p. 160). The research of Daly (2007), based on survey interviews with 81 Tanzanian NGOs, showed 94% of the NGOs engaged directly with the government (Daly, 2007, p. 13). Shivji (2004), who reflected on the identity of NGOs in Tanzania, is critical of the role of NGOs as 'partner of the state', because it can abdicate the government of its primary responsibility to create policy. Nevertheless, the empirical research of McQuinn (2011) showed no partnership relationship between NGOs and the state existed in Tanzania. Instead, the Tanzanian government was taking a top-down attitude to NGOs since it tackled NGOs that expressed criticism towards government policies (McQuinn, 2011, pp. 163-164).

Mercer (1999) has elaborated on the top-down approach of the Tanzanian government as well. Her field research showed that, while the state used rhetoric of participation and empowering development, 'certain individuals or factions within the state attempted to remain powerful, to exert control and to co-opt the NGO sector into social service provision' (Mercer, 1999, pp. 251-252). Other examples of the state co-opting NGOs can be found in the research of Manara (2012) and McQuinn (2011). Manara found that the NGO network TEN/MET (Tanzania Education Network/*Mtandao wa Elimu Tanzania*) had become a reliable ally of the government. In conducted interviews, some members of the network stated TEN/MET behaved as if it was a government organ (Manara, 2012, pp. 15-16). McQuinn found that civil society taking part in the PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper) process was dominated by a small number of influential NGOs that comprised representatives from the Ministry of Finance, sectoral ministries, the President's Office, Regional Administration and Local Government (McQuinn, 2011, p. 142).

Besides being co-opted by the government, NGOs started to be more and more controlled by the state after the Magufuli government took office in 2015. The implementation of the Cybercrime Act, that restricts online space, and the ban on public meetings in June 2016 directly affected NGOs and can be seen as an attempt of the government to silence critical voices (Cicheka, 2018). Furthermore, several incidents reveal the governments grip on NGOs is getting stronger. In June 2017, the Home Affairs minister, Mr Mwigulu Nchemga, had threatened civil society organizations advocating teen mother's education and homosexuality, by saying they faced deregistration (Kolumbia, 2017). In August 2017 Magufuli's government instructed all NGOs to submit documents to verify their registration status and threatened with deregistration for those NGOs that failed to comply (Freedom House, 2018). Many NGOs were delisted for lack of transparency or non-adherence to the NGO code of conduct (Karega, 2017) and the policy is considered by some as a form of government harassment (DefendDefenders, 2018). In April 2018, Magufuli warned NGOs that were 'financed to oppose the government', by saying they would not be allowed to exist since they would harm peace in Tanzania (AllAfrica, 2018). Furthermore, this year the Non-Governmental Organizations Coordination Board has de-registered six NGOs for allegedly violating laws and working against their own constitutions (The Citizen, 2019). According to a recent Freedom House report, this is part of a trend among many African regimes in which NGOs are restricted, democratic space is narrowed and challenges to governing parties prevented. The report states Tanzania has drawn attention in recent years for implementing legislation constraining the NGO sector (Musila, 2019, p. 14).

The interconnectedness between the state and NGOs is also present on the local level. After her field research on NGO activities in Tanzania's Hai District, Mercer (1999) determined a complex picture of relations between NGOs and the state. Her research showed the local state often functioned as a broker between Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and donors. 'In order for CBOs to attract funds, they must contact their village extension officer, who can then approach the district administration in search of donors' (Mercer, 1999, p. 253). The research showed an alignment between major donors of the CBOs and the government as well as participation by village extension officers in the CBOs. Mercer concluded this situation was leading to the perpetuation of a state-led, top-down approach to development (Mercer, 1999, pp. 253-254).

Additionally, the research of McNeill, Furuly and Vatn (2018) on NGO projects in Tanzania shows how district governments are generally involved in most stages of the implementation phase of the projects. Gibbon's (2001) research confirmed that NGOs often

worked through district-level government, with whom they shared the same employees and buildings (Gibbon, 2001, p. 837). For the success of the projects, NGOs were fully dependent on co-operation by the district authorities, who function as legal custodians of villages within their district (McNeill, Furuly, & Vatn, 2018, p. 379). Therefore, many NGOs valued a good relationship with the district and the villages as this was needed for effective implementation.

My own experiences, retrieved during my internship at a Tanzanian national NGO from August until October 2018, relate to the observations of Mercer and McNeill, Furuly and Vatn. The NGO had offered youth entrepreneurship training programmes in the Iringa District. I visited the district after the programme had ended to conduct several interviews with former participants. The process of interviewing twelve youth in six different villages in the district, was organized in co-operation with the Community Development Office of the Iringa District. Before and after the data collection I met with the head of the Community Development Office. Furthermore, the interview process was organized by a Community Development Officer (CDO). On some days we would drive to the village in a government jeep.

Additionally, during the interviews all the youth told me the entrepreneurship training programme was carried out by CDO of the village:

‘Once per week we had this teacher, he is the Community Development Officer. He was always coming to educate us about entrepreneurship’

Tanzanian NGOs seem strongly dependent on local government, however the empirical research of Dodworth (2014) on NGO work in Tanzania’s Bagamoyo district, leads to a more nuanced picture. Although her research showed how NGO’s position themselves horizontally vis-à-vis government, especially the District Council (Dodworth, 2014, p. 28), she concludes NGOs are neither ‘surrogates’ nor adversaries of the state but rather strategists in a political playing field in which they creatively generate space and opportunities for themselves to operate in (Dodworth, 2014, p. 35).

Nevertheless, the elements of interconnectedness between NGOs and the Tanzanian state can eliminate the working of the causal mechanisms by which a strong civil society leads to democratization. The Tanzanian governments’ top-down attitude towards NGOs, its attempt to control and co-opt the sector, its aimed relations of partnership with NGOs make it difficult for NGO’s to check on state power and organize public scrutiny of the state. Furthermore, it makes it hard for NGOs to represent the interests of citizens and give a voice to marginalized groups. Recent events during Magufuli’s presidency, such as the restriction of online space, the

ban on public meetings and the threat with deregistration of NGOs critical towards the government, have limited NGOs even more in their democratizing roles of representing the interests of citizens, mobilizing citizens against authoritarian rule, and checking on state power.

Structures of patronage within the NGO sector

Bratton and van de Walle (2007) have identified Tanzania as a competitive one-party state regime characterized by neopatrimonialism. Field research of Ewald (2013, p. 208) has confirmed that Tanzanian society is still marked by a culture of dominance and patronage. Within this culture, Chabal and Daloz (1999, p. 22) state ‘NGOs are often nothing other than new “structures” with which Africans can seek to establish instrumentally profitable positions’. Kiondo (1995, p. 111) has pointed out a large number of NGOs in Tanzania were either government-organized or elite-organized for the purpose of accumulation of wealth. According to Kelsall (2002, p. 597), this was due to the democratization and liberalization processes in the 1990s, which caused a growth of political struggle for economic resources through personalized regional networks. Currently, there are multiple signs of the interweaving of the Tanzanian NGO sector and a system of patronage used for accumulation of either political power or wealth.

First, the use of patronage networks for political power increased with the introduction of multi-party elections in 1992, when Tanzania’s districts emerged as key centres for political competition (Gibbon, 2001, p. 842). The research of Kelsall (2002) sets out Tanzanian national elites patronized local trust funds and NGOs for political support in the local areas. He concluded ‘patrimonial politics consists in local elites, operating out of ethnic trust funds, NGOs and district councils, cultivating strong personal ties, and exchanging favours with national elites, including national politicians’. The field work of Kiondo (1995) in Pemba region provides a good example of patrimonial politics on the local level. His research revealed a patronage relationship between Community Development Activity (CDA) groups and the dominant political party (CCM). The formation of the CDA groups was initiated by the CCM who showered them with money and resources for their own political gain. In general, the connection between NGOs and politics is strengthened further by a typical characteristic of Tanzanian NGOs: many local NGO directors work with their NGO on a part-time basis while occupying full-time positions in government (Michael, p. 74).

Second, there are examples of the Tanzanian NGO sector using patronage networks for the accumulation of wealth. The research of Igoe (2003, p. 868) showed how NGOs used donor money for the benefit of people within particular patron-client networks. Additionally, research

of Green (2012, p. 319) has set out how local and national NGOs started to compete for contracts with donors in a profit-seeking and self-interested way. The field work of Kiondo (1995) in the Hai region provided a good example of these practices. It revealed how a merger of politicians and a strong business community would design the development agenda, after which influential people in high positions would respond and induce NGOs and donors to channel resources to Hai (Kiondo, 1995, p. 170).

Additionally, Kiondo's research distinguished two general types of patronage of local communities in Tanzania. First, patronage by outsiders such as Tanzanian or foreign NGOs, religious organizations, foreign donors or the Tanzanian state. According to Mc Quinn (2011, p. 124), 'in the post-liberalization period [1990s] a small group of large, urban-based NGOs rose to power, largely through the funding and patronage of multilateral and bilateral donors' (McQuinn, 2011, p. 124). Dodworth (2019, p. 130) states Tanzanian civil society has been predominately occupied by foreign-funded NGOs. Foreigners have been keen to sponsor NGOs in order to by-pass inefficient and corrupt state bureaucracies (Lange, Wallevik & Kiondo, 2000, p. 6). Additionally, foreign donors appreciated the Tanzanian social and political stability (Eriksen, 2018, p. 3) and the hospitable atmosphere for NGOs created by the government (Lofchie, 2014, p. 1). Furthermore, Tanzania has been considered a 'donor darling' of international funders and organisations for a long time (Provini & Schlimmer, 2016, p. 2) and development organizations have clumped together in Tanzania because of its favourable working conditions (Koch, 2009).

A second patronage relation in local level development, distinguished by Kiondo, is the linkage between Community Development Activity (CDA) groups and other development actors. African-based NGOs function as patrons of CDA groups, through the provision of funding, while simultaneously acting as clients of foreign organizations or Tanzanian state elite. In this sense NGOs are brokers that establish a link between a group of clients and a patron. Mercer's (1999) field research in Tanzania's Hai district has shown the local state adopted the role of broker between Community Based Organizations and donors as well.

Patronage networks not only distribute material or political benefits, but are also expected to sustain an intimacy of relations between patrons and clients (Berman, 1998, p. 337). The field work of Michael (2004), confirmed the existence of a close relationship between NGO and government personnel in Tanzania. A large number of NGO directors hold government jobs or are former employees of the government. Therefore, they have strong personal ties with their present and post colleagues in government. According to Michael these ties encouraged co-operation between the government and the NGO sector (Michael, 2004, pp. 84-85).

During my internship in 2018, I found myself being part of a network of personal relations as well. Firstly, I had gotten the internship position at the NGO because of my friendship with the executive director of the organization. I had met him in 2005, when we were colleagues at a secondary school in Iringa district, where I worked as a volunteer for almost one year. We stayed in touch through social media and came to the internship agreement in 2018. The arrangement was mutually beneficial: I would be able to gain work experience at a national NGO and in conducting field research, while he would receive my research report which would be helpful in attracting funds from donors.

Secondly, in the process of data-collection for my field research, I worked together with another friend I had made at the secondary school in Iringa in 2005. This man had become a Community Development Officer (CDO) for the Iringa District and had been responsible for the implementation of the NGO programme. He was also a good friend of the executive director of the NGO during the time they were both teachers at the secondary school in Iringa. Moreover, the programme of the NGO was conducted in the Iringa District because of the personal relations between the executive director and the CDO of the Iringa district. Furthermore, my research project was made possible by this CDO as well.

The Tanzanian NGO sector seems to be interwoven with a culture of patronage in different ways, which has a negative influence on the causal mechanisms by which a strong civil society can lead to democratization. The existing use within the NGO sector of patronage for the accumulation of political power and wealth and the patronage of local communities by external donors show that Tanzanian NGOs do not represent the interests of citizens. The NGOs are furthermore not able to perform this democratizing task because they function as brokers between civil society groups and a patron. Additionally, acting as a broker makes it almost impossible for NGOs to function as schools of democracy because this function contradicts with democratic values and makes NGOs mostly accountable to foreign donors. Finally, the close relationship between NGOs and the government makes it hard for NGOs to function as a check on state power or organize public scrutiny of the state.

General weakness of the NGO sector

The Tanzanian NGO boom in the 1990s resulted in the growth of small, understaffed, underfunded and heavily donor dependent NGOs (Mercer, 2003, p. 754). According to Mercer (1999, p. 249), the new space for NGOs was certainly not occupied by a plethora of grassroots organizations, representing the interests of the poorest. Research of Daly (2007, pp. 23-24) confirmed that the Tanzanian NGO sector often ignored poor, rural and isolated communities.

Shivji (2004, p. 689) considers this a result of NGOs not being constituency- or membership-based organizations. He even claims NGOs have played a role in undermining traditional people's organizations. The Tanzanian NGO sector seems to lack social roots, which is an indication of its weakness.

The weakness of the sector is furthermore confirmed by three typical characteristics. Firstly, different studies have shown many Tanzanian NGOs are top-down organisations led by elites (Mercer, 1999; Daly, 2007; Shivji, 2004; McQuinn, 2011; Mercer, 2003). According to Kiondo (1995), when state resources diminished, elites found a new avenue for accumulation in the NGO sector. This was easy for them, since they were well educated and possessed the knowledge and contacts to start an NGO successfully (McQuinn, 2011, p. 134). Elite dominance is present in the national and local NGO sector. Mercer's (1999) research in Tanzania's Hai district showed how local elites were involved in almost all NGO activity. The members of Hai's successful Community Development Activity groups consisted of villagers from middle socio-economic groups who would join for economic, social and prestigious reasons (Mercer, 1999. P. 254).

A second typical feature of Tanzania's NGO sector which may indicate its weakness, is that NGO work is mainly considered to be a part-time endeavour. Many local NGO directors only work with their NGO on a part-time basis, while still holding a full-time position in government or academia. Their NGOs rely on volunteer members to carry out their mandates (Michael, 2004, p. 74).

A final characteristic of the Tanzanian NGO sector, which demonstrates weakness because of a lack of social roots, is that most of the NGOs are urban based and situated in and around Dar es Salaam (Mercer, 1999; Daly, 2007; Shivji, 2004; McQuinn, 2011). According to the research of Daly (2007), there is often a strong sense of marginalization felt by NGOs outside of Dar es Salaam.

The Tanzanian NGO where I did my internship complied with all three typical features described above. The organization had an office in Dar es Salaam, in a neighbourhood mainly inhabited by expats and middle and upper-class Tanzanians. When I arrived at the end of July, the organization consisted of one executive director and four staff members. The executive director was the only one with a salary, while the others were volunteers. The volunteers were mostly young graduates from University who had difficulty finding a job. They all seemed to come from well-off families since some of them possessed a car, had studied in Europe, and were engaged in different expensive hobbies. During my three-month internship the staff members didn't have much to do, since the organization had to wait for funding to come in for

the start of a new project. I noticed how the volunteers used the office space for their personal business or studies. During that period, two of the staff members quit their job without giving notice to the executive director. Both volunteers just stopped coming to the office from one day to the next. Overall, the staff members were not coming from grassroots communities and did not seem to be very dedicated to the work of the NGO supporting Tanzanian youth.

The three typical characteristics of the Tanzanian NGO sector show how the NGOs lack social roots. These features are heavily shaped by NGOs dependence on external donors, which is another sign of weak civil society. According to Mercer (2003, p. 755) ‘donor and international NGO attention has concentrated on the small group of established, professionalized, elite-led, urban-based NGOs which are most likely to be successfully moulded in the donors’ vision’. Mercer noted the types of work carried out by NGOs mirror the priorities of the international donor community (Mercer, 2003, p. 754). According to Shivji (2004, p. 689), this has led to Tanzanian NGOs being often more accountable to donors than the Tanzanian people.

Additionally, research of Gould and Ojanen (2003) has set out how the influence of international donors caused local organizations to get pushed out of policy-making in favour of the more professionalized international NGOs. Only the professionalized NGO coalitions, would be asked by the government to participate in policy-making (Mercer, 2003, p. 756).

Exemplary for the role of NGOs in policy making is their participation in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process, which was dominated by just a small number of influential, elite and urban-based NGOs (McQuinn, 2011, pp. 141-142). Although the inclusion of NGOs in the process made it more possible than ever before for civil society to contest the state, it was substantively shaped by external donors (McQuinn, 2011, p. 150). Civil society groups were only able to present a single view and conflicting civil society perspectives were lost in the process (McQuinn, 2011, p. 324). Furthermore, NGOs were sometimes excluded from meetings and had a primarily consultative function without being able to deliver substantive input to the process. According to Mercer (2003, pp. 756-757), the role given to NGOs could be seen as an attempt of external donors and the government to discipline critics of the process, as the NGOs received funds for monitoring the PRSP process.

The Tanzanian NGO sector can be considered weak as it lacks social roots, is heavily financed by outsiders and pursues objectives unrelated to ongoing political conflict. Additionally, the weakness can be attributed to the lack of unity between NGOs on important issues and the intolerance of the state towards oversight and criticism (Daly, 2007; McQuinn, 2011). It will hinder the causal mechanism through which civil society can lead to

democratization. As many Tanzanian NGOs are urban based organizations, led by elites on a part-time basis, with most accountability towards external donors, they are not functioning as representatives of citizen interests or as a voice of marginalized groups. Although Tanzanian NGOs are asked by the government to participate in policy-making, their support in these processes is only given by a small group of elitist, professional and well-funded NGOs. Additionally, the PRSP process showed how NGOs functioned primarily in a consultative role without being able to deliver substantive input. Therefore, Tanzanian NGOs seem to be restricted in carrying out the democratic duties of supporting policy making or influencing laws and regulations.

The democratizing role of Tanzanian NGOs

In the analysis, multiple examples have been set out that demonstrate how the Tanzanian NGO sector is interconnected with the state, characterized by structures of patronage and general weakness. These features limit the causal mechanisms between civil society and democratization. According to Ewald (2013, pp. 196-197), although there are a number of NGOs committed to advocacy work and holding the government accountable, many NGOs should be regarded more as consultancy firms or small-scale entrepreneurs providing social services and trying to get contracts from international or national actors.

However, Ewald states more democratic space has been created in Tanzania. Firstly, through the creation of four major NGO umbrella organizations which strengthened the NGOs accountability functions. Secondly, by the participatory processes, encouraged by international donors, which gradually gave NGOs new space. A few NGOs have managed to use the new space to participate in the policy formulation processes. The NGOs HakiElimu and TGNP have attempted to change the development discourse and criticized and challenged the hegemony of the state (McQuinn, 2011, pp. 155-157).

However, from 2005 HakiElimu was confronted with harassment from the government. It was banned from undertaking studies or publishing reports and threatened with de-registration (Ewald, 2013; McQuinn, 2011). Although the increase in implementation of legislation to constrain the NGO sector is obvious, there are examples of NGOs fighting back against oppression from the state. In March 2017 eight Tanzanian NGOs and civil society groups launched a year-long campaign calling on the government to respect the right to assembly, freedom of association and freedom of expression (Gumede, 2017). In March 2018, three Tanzanian NGOs filed a case at the East Africa Court of Justice (EACJ) over a 2016 law of which they claimed to be in violation with the freedom of press (Magubira, 2018). On the

28th of March 2019 the court agreed with this claim (Behles, 2019). Furthermore, some NGOs have tried to limit the governments restrictions by influencing policy making. In response to the recent government announcement to introduce a new NGO policy, many NGOs prepared a 'model' policy to contribute to the process. It remains to be seen however, whether the government will follow through with the new policy (Musila, 2019, p. 20).

In sum, there are some exceptions in which Tanzanian NGOs try to foster democratization. Cicheka (2018, pp. 168-170) is positive about the democratizing role of Tanzanian NGOs. She states the NGOs are able to formulate new strategies and create effective forms of advocacy because they are better organized and more experienced than before the NGO boom. Furthermore, she predicts the government repression will result in political opposition and become an opportunity to strengthen structures of civil society and consolidate the democratization process.

Conclusion

The civil society paradigm considers a strong civil society a causal factor of democratization. Since the development field regards NGOs as the most important civil society actors, NGO's are reckoned to foster democratization as well. Tanzania has a blooming NGO landscape, however it has been sliding back to authoritarianism in the last years. How can this growing authoritarianism be reconciled with the strong NGO landscape in Tanzania?

There are many possible explanations for this paradoxical situation. For instance, the causal mechanisms of the civil society paradigm could not be accurate, the civil society paradigm could not be applicable to the Tanzanian or African context, or Tanzanian NGOs should not be considered civil society.

This research has shown that the Tanzanian NGO sector is indeed fundamentally different from the conventional notion of civil society used in the Western civil society paradigm. First, the NGO sector is at many points interconnected with the Tanzanian state. Although Tanzania's NGO policy pursues a partnership between NGOs and the state, there are many signs the government takes a top-down approach and attempts to control and co-opt NGOs. On the local level, district governments are generally involved in most stages of the implementation phase of NGO projects. Moreover, the government of the current president Magufuli has restricted and controlled NGOs more and more.

Secondly, this research revealed how the Tanzanian NGO sector is interwoven with a culture of patronage, which makes it distinct from the conventional notion of civil society. Within the Tanzanian NGO sector, patronage networks are used for the accumulation of political power or wealth. The research laid out different examples of strong personal ties between NGO and government personnel in Tanzania. Moreover, it was explicated how foreign donors patronage local communities in Tanzania, which makes NGOs donor-dependent and accountable to international benefactors instead of the Tanzanian people.

A third finding that emerged from the research, is the relative weakness of the Tanzanian NGO sector. The sector lacks social roots, is heavily financed by outsiders, pursues objectives unrelated to ongoing political conflict and is often not able to participate in policy making. Most NGOs are urban-based, elitist organisations that do not represent marginalized people.

These three characteristics undermine the working of the causal mechanisms through which a strong civil society would lead to democratization. Many NGOs are not able to fulfil their democratic functions. This research presented different examples of the Tanzanian NGO sector not representing the interests of citizens, not checking on state power, not mobilizing

citizens against authoritarian rule, not influencing laws and regulations, not supporting policy making and not functioning as schools of democracy.

Although a number of NGOs try to fight the state oppression which provides evidence of the creation of more democratic space, most Tanzanian NGOs seem only able to contribute to democratization in an indirect way by co-operation with the government. Through providing social services and functioning as strategic partners with the government Tanzanian NGOs contribute to economic development, which subsequently is supposed to lead to democratization in the long run.

However, the features of the Tanzanian NGO sector clearly explain how a blooming NGO landscape is able to co-exist with growing authoritarianism in Tanzania. This research has established that the causal mechanisms of the civil society paradigm are not working in the Tanzanian case, since Tanzanian NGOs cannot be considered civil society organizations as conceptualized by the paradigm. Instead, the Tanzanian NGO sector shows signs that are typical for Sub-Saharan African civil society: NGOs are interconnected with the state, they function in networks of patronage and the overall NGO sector is weak.

On the one hand, this can imply that Tanzanian NGOs, if they want to stimulate democratization, should transform more to fulfil to the conventional notion of civil society. In this case, Tanzanian NGOs should focus specifically on their independence. The NGOs should try to become independent of the state, of patronage networks, and of external donors. This would enforce the causal mechanisms contributing to democratization.

On the other hand, this research can imply that, because of the fundamental differences between Tanzanian NGOs and the conventional notion of civil society, the application of the civil society paradigm on the Tanzanian case is problematic. In this view, a different model should be developed, that is more compatible with the Sub-Saharan African context. This research has focussed on how Tanzanian NGOs do not contribute to democratization. However, in order to design a new model, more research should be conducted on how NGOs, given important context-specific constraints, can contribute to democratization in the African context.

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