



MAY 2019

Unpacking Civil Society

An insight in the unique characteristics
of South African civil society, 25 years
after Apartheid



Master Thesis
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Cover photo source: The Daily Maverick

“People respond in accordance to how you relate to them. If you approach them on the basis of violence, that’s how they’ll react. But if you say, ‘We want peace, we want stability,’ we can then do a lot of things that will contribute towards the progress of our society.”

- **Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela**

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May 2019

Master: Political Science

Specialization: Conflict, Power and Politics

Nijmegen School of Management

Radboud University

Nijmegen, The Netherlands

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Word count: 22062

Abstract

This research aims to understand the unique characteristics of the civil society in post-Apartheid South Africa by answering the following research question: To what extent is the South African civil society in line with the standard notions of the Western civil society literature and to what extent does it exhibit a unique character? During a period of three months field research in South Africa, 30 in-depth interviews were conducted with civil society actors, governmental representatives and a variety of other actors who shared their perspective on civil society. The research is guided by the assumptions of methodological individualism, which allows social phenomena to be explained through, on the one hand, the interaction of individuals and, on the other hand, the context in which these individuals are embedded. South African civil society is studied from three different angles: (1) its relationship with the state, (2) its representation of interests and (3) the strategy it uses to engage with the government. The results show that some aspects of civil society in South Africa are in line with the Western, De Tocqueville inspired civil society literature. Yet, South Africa's civil society also exhibits characteristics that are in line with the literature from the Global South, which shows the deviance of the South African case. This thesis illustrates that civil society has to be studied in the light of historical and cultural context.

Key words: South Africa, Civil Society, Democracy, Qualitative Research

Preface

Before you lies the final episode of my academic career and the last part of my master Political Science Conflict Power and Politics at the Radboud University. When I look back at the whole process I am extremely proud of the end result. During my master I lost my heart to South Africa and literally dived into the fascinating socio-political environment on the other side of the world. My field research of three months in South Africa definitely stand out as the most interesting and educational part of my master thesis. Living in South Africa for the total of eight months allowed me to understand this country. Every interview was inspiring and gave me many useful insights for my thesis, therefore I would like to thank all the respondents for sharing their thoughts with me.

I could not have written this thesis without my supervisor Jutta Joachim, especially for supporting my ambition to do fieldwork and to listen to my stories when I was in South Africa. When my thoughts were all over the place and when I was lost within an overload of information, she helped me to organize it into a complete academic research.

This research would not have been possible without the fruitful discussions I had with my interview respondents. I would like to thank every single individual who was part of the interview process. Meeting all these incredible inspiring people would not have been possible without the help of my colleagues at the Dutch Consulate General in Cape Town, therefore I would like to thank all my dearest colleagues who also inspired me and helped me to organize my thoughts.

Being a researcher far away from home in a different country was not always a great pleasure because of safety issues and misunderstandings between cultures. I could not have done this field research without the encouragement and loving support of Michiel. He was always there for me, even when I was on the other side of the world, I knew that I could count on him. Also, I could not have completed my studies without the support of my father, mother and brother. My family always supported my ambitions and were there for me when I needed them the most.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my friends who were still present at the Radboud University when I was writing my thesis in the library. They were always there to cheer me up and keep me motivated with good conversations and a cup of coffee. I would like to thank Emma and Yaël in particular, without these two talented Political Scientists, my years of study would not have been the same.

English Summary

This thesis aims to unpack the unique characteristics of South African civil society. The notions of civil society are studied from two perspectives namely the Western school of thought, inspired by Western scholars, and theories from the Global South which are guided by the unique context of this region and research civil society in the light of the unique culture and history of the Global South. Civil society is understood as an autonomous sphere from government, where individuals voluntarily organize themselves in networks and associations and use this as a vehicle to express their interests and desires. Proper functioning democratic governmental institutions respond to the voices from civil society and put these interests and desires on the governmental agenda. A good functioning democracy is complemented with a vibrant civil society and a vibrant civil society needs a well-functioning democracy in order to survive. In this manner, civil society and democracy are mutually dependent on each other.

Democracy is a broad phenomenon, which is more than just free and fair elections and democratic governmental institutions. Contemporary democracies are subject to the complexity of today's decision-making process. Various spheres inside and outside of the government, affect the multiple levels of the decision-making process. All kinds of associations, individuals and spheres play a role in this process. Civil society is an important aspect of this and thus cannot be left out of the democratization discourse.

In order to obtain a clear understanding of the mechanisms at play, this thesis studies civil society with respect to its historical and cultural context. Therefore, 30 in-depth open-ended interviews are conducted with actors from civil society, governmental representatives and a variety of others who share their insights on South African civil society. The goal is to understand the deviance of the South African case when compared to the more general Western model of civil society. The chosen research method allows to study civil society according to the assumptions of methodological individualism which entails that social phenomena are to be explained through the interaction of individuals and the context in which these individuals are embedded.

Three sets of hypothesis are derived from the literature overview with respect to three themes namely the relationship between civil society and the state, the representation of interests and the strategy of civil society organizations when engaging with government. In this fashion, the civil society in South Africa is studied from different angles. The hypotheses are tested against the empirical reality and show us that civil society in South Africa exhibits outcomes that are in line with expectations from the Western literature, yet also show us interesting insights why this case is deviant.

Opsomming in Afrikaans

Hierdie proefskrif poog om die unieke eienskappe van die Suid-Afrikaanse burgerlike samelewing te ontsyfer. Die begrip burgerlike samelewing word bestudeer uit twee perspektiewe, naamlik die Westerse denkskool, geïnspireer deur Westerse geleerdes en teorieë uit die Globale Suide wat gelei word deur die unieke konteks van hierdie streek. Die burgerlike samelewing word gesien in die lig van die unieke kultuur en geskiedenis van die globale suide. In hierdie perspektief word die burgerlike samelewing beskou as 'n outonome sfeer van die regering, waar individue vrywillig hulself in netwerke en verenigings kan organiseer en dit as 'n voertuig gebruik om hul belange en begeertes uit te druk. Behoorlike funksionele demokratiese regeringsinstellings reageer op die stemme van die burgerlike samelewing en plaas hierdie belange en begeertes op die regering se agenda. 'n Goeie funksionele demokrasie word aangevul met 'n lewendige burgerlike samelewing en 'n lewendige burgerlike samelewing het 'n goed funksionerende demokrasie nodig om te kan oorleef. Op hierdie manier is die burgerlike samelewing en demokrasie onderling afhanklik van mekaar.

Hierdie proefskrif sien demokrasie as 'n breë verskynsel, wat meer is as vrye en regverdigte verkiesings en regeringsinstellings. Hedendaagse demokrasieë is onderworpe aan die kompleksiteit van vandag se besluitnemingsproses. Veelvuldige sfere, binne en buite die regering, beïnvloed die veelvoudige vlakke van die besluitnemingsproses. Alle soorte verenigings, individue en sfere speel 'n rol in hierdie proses. Die burgerlike samelewing is 'n belangrike aspek hiervan en kan dus nie uit die demokratiseringsdiskoers gelaat word nie.

Daar is nie 'n standaarddefinisie vir die begrip burgerlike samelewing nie. Hierdie proefskrif bestudeer die burgerlike samelewing met betrekking tot sy historiese en kulturele konteks om 'n duidelike begrip te kry van die meganismes wat by die spel betrokke is. Daarom ondersoek hierdie studie die burgerlike samelewing in Suid-Afrika op 'n diepgaande kwalitatiewe wyse deur ope vroe onderhoude te voer met rolspelers van die burgerlike samelewing, regeringsvertegenwoordigers en 'n verskeidenheid ander wat hul insigte oor die burgerlike samelewing deel. Die doel hiervan is om die nie ooreenstemming of dan afwyking van die Suid-Afrikaanse saak (steekproef) te verstaan in vergelyking met die meer algemene Westerse model vir die begrip burgerlike samelewing. Met hierdie metode kan die burgerlike samelewing bestudeer word volgens die aannames van metodologiese individualisme wat impliseer dat sosiale verskynsels verklaar moet word deur die interaksie van individue en die konteks waarin hierdie individue verskans word.

Drie stelle hipotese word afgelei uit die literatuuroorsig ten opsigte van drie temas, naamlik die verhouding tussen die burgerlike samelewing en die staat, die verteenwoordiging van belange en die strategie van burgerlike samelewingsorganisasies wanneer hulle met die regering betrokke raak. Op hierdie manier word die burgerlike samelewing in Suid-Afrika vanuit verskillende hoeke

bestudeer. Hierdie hipoteses word getoets teen die empiriese realiteit en wys ons dat die burgerlike samelewing in Suid-Afrika uitkomstige toon wat in lyn is met die verwagtinge van die Westerse literatuur, maar wys ook interessante insigte waarom hierdie saak as afwykend beskou sou kon word.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Recent developments

On the ninth of April 2015 the statue of Cecil Rhodes in front of the University of Cape Town was removed after a month of student protests at the campus. This statue was a symbol of colonialism, racism and white supremacy and its positioning in front of a university was unacceptable according to the movement #RhodesMustFall. The student protest inspired more student protests in the country and led the wider movement of the decolonization of education. A couple of months later, October 2015 marked the beginning of a new student-led protest that aimed to stop the increases in tuition fees for all South African universities. The #FeesMustFall movement was a cry from society against financial exclusion for economically disadvantaged students (Pillay, 2016). Eventually, after series of protests that did not go without violence, the government gave in and adjusted the university fees. Both protests show how cries from society result into action.

On the fifteenth of February 2018 Cyril Ramaphosa was sworn in as the new president of South Africa. His predecessor Jacob Zuma, who is accused of corruption and nepotism, finally stepped down after a presidency of nine years (The Guardian, 2018). This change in presidency took place during my first week in South Africa and I felt that there was renewed hope among the South Africans. An economic result was that the ZAR (South African currency) immediately increased in value after the fall of Zuma (XE Currency Charts, 2018). President Ramaphosa has the opportunity to close a chapter of corruption and influences of private interest that had a negative effect on good governance (The Freedom House, 2018). With the change in presidency, South Africa has the opportunity to return to its position as a democratic country both regionally and globally and rediscover its core constitutional values (ibid.). This May, the South African citizens were able to vote for the national parliament for the fifth time since the ending of Apartheid in 1994. Again, the ANC remained the biggest party in parliament. Remarkably, the 'Born Free Generation', the youngest generation who were born after Apartheid, remained absent during the elections (CNN, 2019).

New times for South Africa have come but the question remains whether South Africa is actually moving forward into steady waters. Even though there is a democratic constitution, the country still faces many socio-economic challenges such as an unemployment rate of 27,6% (Trading Economics, January 2019), increasing poverty, human rights violations and huge inequality issues which have harmful consequences to the stability and sustainability of the country's democracy (Masipa, 2018). Despite 25 years of democracy, South Africa is currently the most economically unequal country in the world with a Gini-Coefficient of 0.63 (World Bank, 2018). In addition to this, recent survey results show that less than a third of South Africans often socialize with someone from a different racial group and that perceived inequality between the rich and the poor increased for

70% of the population (David et al. 2018). Inequality is ranked as the greatest source of social division in the country and race was ranked second by South Africans (Institute of Justice and Reconciliation, 2017). These recent findings and developments leave us with the realization that South Africa is not yet there where it hoped to be.

During my internship at the Dutch Consulate General of The Netherlands in Cape Town I experienced that South African society is shaped by its complex history and is a mosaic of cultures. Behind the gorgeous scenery of a paradisiacal looking country lie the very deep scars of the Apartheid regime. I was part of various situations and conversations, which made me experience the complexity of this diverse nation. The countless interesting people from South Africa, who all had their own unique story and opinion inspired and motivated me to find answers to my questions and to reveal the untold stories of this country. I took the chance to go back to South Africa and to get answers to questions that dominated my mind.

The aim of this master thesis is to get to the core understanding of South African civil society and seeks to find out, via interviews with various actors from civil society, whether the assumptions from the widespread civil society literature are applicable to the civil society in South Africa. The prediction is that South African civil society behaves differently than is expected but what these differences exactly are, is to be found in this master thesis. The next section will discuss the theoretical framework as backbone of this research, the research puzzle, the methods how to find an answer to the proposed research question and the relevance of this research.

1.2 Civil society in the South African context

Today, democracy goes beyond the concept of electoral democracy, which entails the construction of formal institutions and free and fair elections. The concept of democracy refers to all the different means that individuals are able to use when affecting the collective decision-making process (Warren, 2011). There are various ways how individuals can influence the politics of a country and there are multiple spheres that affect the individuals in their influence (Warren, 2011). The decision-making process in contemporary democracies is very complex because various levels outside of the governmental sphere affect this process. In order to understand this process, one must explore the ways in which individuals are able to self-organize and influence government and explore the organizations that affect the decisions of the individuals (Warren, 2011). This is where civil society steps in. Civil society is the public sphere where a wide variety of actors come together and express their interests, values and opinions to the government and function as a counterweight against the power of the state (Warren, 2011). Civil society and democracy are assumed to have a reinforcing

relationship and in order to understand this relationship, one must look at the specific context of a certain case because where civil society is able to be a constructing factor of democracy, it is also able to undermine it, depending on the context (Diamond, 1994).

The concept of civil society is mainly defined in a Western context and is derived from Western notions and assumptions on state-society engagement (Anciano, 2018). In order to provide a complete understanding of civil society in a more complex and developing society, one must include the understanding of the structures of society itself, including power relations and the underlying cultural and historical values (Anciano, 2018). With respect to the African context, multiple scholars show that the dynamics of civil society differ from more developed Western contexts because of the dynamics of the pre-existing political regime and the characteristics shaped by neo-patrimonialism (Bratton & Van De Walle, 1994), the fractured social foundations as a result of colonialism (Osaghae, 2006) and weak state institutions (Pietrzyk, 2003: 43, Chabal & Daloz, 1999). All these dynamics form the context in which African civil society operates.

South African civil society marked its growth in 1980. At that time, the country experienced a strong authoritarian regime based on racial segregation and white supremacy: the Apartheid. Black civil society actors and civil society that was critical of the state had been banned or prevented from operating in the public arena during the Apartheid. President P. W. Botha liberalized the political system, which allowed some civil society groups to represent the black communities. The destruction of the Apartheid system was powered by the reemergence of civil society, which is ironic because one of South Africa's most authoritarian leaders was responsible for the emergence of the anti-Apartheid civil society (Habib, 2005).

South Africa is an interesting case for political research because of its (political) history and considering the value of the unique network I built during my internship in South Africa, this thesis focuses on the civil society of South Africa. One would expect civil society in South Africa to be in line with the assumptions according to the wide spread Western literature as well as to simultaneously exhibit unique characteristics that are in line with the literature from the Global South. The following research question is constructed:

To what extent is the South African civil society in line with the standard notions of the Western civil society literature and to what extent does it exhibit a unique character?

This thesis allows to study South African civil society from different angles in order to give a complete overview of its characteristics and provide an answer to the research question. Three sets of hypotheses are developed from a combination of both the Western literature as well as the Global South literature and pay attention to three different themes namely the relationship between civil

society and the state, the representation of interests and the strategy civil society uses to engage with government.

During three months of field research in South Africa, respondents from the South African civil society sector, the government and other actors shared their insights on civil society. This method allowed creating a unique data set that is tested against the hypotheses. In-depth interviews allow to study the South African civil society in its full context and will give unique insights of the phenomena under study. Thereby, interviews allow to go into the minds of the actors which will provide useful information that would not be found with other methods.

1.3 Scientific and societal relevance

This research adds relevance to the scientific literature in several ways. To start with, this thesis studies civil society from both a Western as well as from an African perspective. Most studies on civil society focus on one school of thought; this thesis opposes both perspectives and seeks to find out which school of thought is most relevant for the South African case. Thereby, most studies of South African civil society focus on one single aspect, this thesis studies civil society with respect to three different themes, which provides a more comprehensive overview of South African civil society today. The methods of this thesis provide an in-depth analysis of South African civil society, which contributes to the knowledge on contemporary civil society in South Africa.

In addition to its scientific relevance, this research also has societal relevance. Since South Africa faces multiple socio-economic and political challenges, this research contributes to the understanding of contemporary South Africa and will give useful insights that could hopefully contribute to overcoming or at least contribute to a better understanding of the societal challenges. Thereby, this research will be useful for South African civil society organizations as well as for actors within the international sphere. The analysis gives insight in the relationship between civil society and external counterparts, which will help both civil society and external counterparts such as the South African government, international organizations and foreign states to make strategical choices based on scientific evidence.

1.4 Research outline

The next chapter will explore the theoretical debates of democratization and discuss why civil society is such an important aspect. Then, two different perspectives on civil society will be opposed to each other and construct three sets of hypotheses based on theoretical assumptions from both Western and African notions. The third chapter will discuss the methodology of this research and give an overview of the case selection method. In this chapter, the theoretical concepts will be operationalized into measurable variables that will be tested against the South African case. In the analysis an overview of the results will be given and eventually the main findings from this research will be discussed and interpreted in the conclusion. This thesis concludes with the strengths and challenges of the research and potential implications for further research.

Chapter 2 - Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, the aim of this thesis is to obtain a better understanding of civil society in post-Apartheid South Africa and investigate how the South African case fits in the dominant civil society literature. First it has to be clear why it is important to study civil society. This section will serve as a theoretical backbone for the rest of this research.

Within the democratization literature, civil society is recognized as an important piece in explaining democratic transitions (Dahl, 2000). The pressure to complete the process of a democratic transition comes from the rising demands from within civil society (Diamond, 1994). In order to study the role of civil society in contemporary South Africa, one must first understand its role in the democratization discourse. Therefore, this chapter starts with an explanation of the concepts of democracy and democratization. This chapter will give an overview of the democratization literature discussing two opposite scientific approaches in explaining the concept, namely the structural approach and the agency-based approach. It is discussed why structural explanations are either too limited or insufficient in explaining democratization, therefore the focus will be on agency-based explanations of democracy and democratization.

This chapter shows that there are contrasting theoretical assumptions with respect to the civil society literature. Some scholars criticize the widespread civil society literature for being biased by the Western perspective and thus too limited in explaining civil society in other contexts. Eventually, this thesis seeks to find out whether this critique is justified by testing the theoretical assumptions against the South African case. The debates discussed in this theoretical framework will serve as the foundation for a set of three hypotheses, which will be tested against the empirical evidence from the South African case in the later chapters and eventually answer the research question of this thesis.

2.2 Defining Democracy

The following section will discuss several explanations of the concept of democracy and will show that within the literature on democracy, the concept has been defined in different ways. There is a distinction between more institutional-based definitions, electoral definitions and more liberal definitions. The focus will be on Warren's (2011) definition of democracy because it includes the complexity of today's decision-making process, which other definitions lack to include. This thesis is interested in the outer circles of democracy and the more informal participation processes such as

civil society instead of institutional explanations of democracy. This section will explain why institutional explanations of the definition of democracy are too limited.

In order to understand democratization, one must first have a clear understanding of the concept 'democracy'. The literal meaning of democracy comes from the Greek word δημοκρατία (say: *dēmokratía*), which means 'rule by the people'. This can be understood as an ideology, a concept or a theory (Grugel & Bishop, 2014: 14). In order to be a democrat, one must have faith in the people and believe that they all have the equal right to make decisions (ibid: 21). Democracy can be described as a mode of decision-making about collectively binding rules and policies over which the people have control (Beetham, 1992: 40). When all members of a society have the same right to take part in these decision-making processes, the greatest degree in popular control and equality would be met (ibid.). Both the input legitimacy as well as the output legitimacy of the political system are important for achieving democratic legitimacy; it is a two-dimensional concept working at the same time (Scharpf, 1997: 19). Input legitimacy refers to certain procedures or mechanisms that link political decisions with citizen's preferences and are reflected in democratically chosen representative institutions. In order to achieve output legitimacy, democratic procedures should be able to produce effective outcomes, which refers to 'the achievement of goals that the citizens collectively care about' (Scharpf, 1997: 19). It is of great importance that the government is held accountable by the governed in order to control those who rule and guard against power abusing in a democracy (Tomini & Sandri, 2018: 54).

One could make a distinction between formal (procedural) and substantive democracy (Kaldor & Vejvoda, 1997: 61). The first entails a certain set of political rules, procedures and institutions, while substantive democracy entails a process that has to be continually reproduced. This process regulates powers in such a way that the opportunities for the citizens to affect their living conditions are maximized via political participation and the ability to influence the public debate (ibid: 62). The latter is a thicker concept of democracy as proponents of the concept emphasize that the government reflects the interests of those who are governed and not just focus on institutional democratic procedures. These formal democratic mechanisms and procedures represent a safeguard against power abusing and are a necessary condition for democracy, however they are not a sufficient condition for a substantive democracy (ibid: 63). As noted before, this thesis focuses on the understanding and importance of the outer circles of democracy such as the ability to influence the political debate. Defining democracy by only its democratic procedures is thus too limited. In a similar way, Diamond (1994) extends the concept of electoral democracy, referred to as a civilian governmental system with free and fair elections based on a constitution, to the concept of liberal democracy. This more extended definition describes democracy as a pluralistic representative

governmental system based on a constitution with free and fair elections, supported by a civil society where civilians actively participate and associate in politics. An explanation of liberal democracy focuses on the link between the citizens and politics within a democracy (Diamond, 1994: 8-11).

The tradition of liberal democracy entails that each individual is ought to benefit from collective self-rule and each individual should have the equal opportunity to affect the decisions that could potentially affect them (Warren, 2002: 678). The view of democracy that every person equally has the opportunity to participate in the collective decision-making process seems hard to sustain because of the complexity of today's pluralistic and large-scale societies (ibid.). The complexity lies in the fact that possibilities for self-governance are not simply through the state alone; new venues of politics such as NGOs and local associations function as an agent of collective action which diminishes the scope of the state (ibid: 682-683). There are increasing opportunities for democratic participation, combined with increasing democratic expectations which suggests that democratic scholars should rethink what participation in the decision-making process actually means in contemporary societies (ibid.).

The previous definitions of democracy discussed in this section fail to include this, therefore the definition of democracy in this thesis will be based on Warren's definition of democracy that focuses on the complexity of today's decision making process and includes the multiple ways individuals are able to affect collective decisions (Warren, 2011: 381). Warren stresses that "*all those potentially affected by collective decisions have opportunities to affect these decisions in ways proportional to the potential effects*" (Warren, 2011: 378). This definition is normative in the sense that it focuses on what a democracy *should* accomplish. It allows scholars to judge institutions to be more or less democratic on behalf of their institutional means for achieving their democratic goals (ibid: 379). He stresses that traditional sites of democracy such as elections are only one part of the contemporary democratic decision-making process. Democracy today goes beyond individuals voting for government because there are many ways in which individuals are affected by collectives that influence their decision. This has to do with the interdependencies of multiple areas, affecting the decision-making process. There are certain chains of affectedness, which refers to the individuals' means and capacities to influence and be influenced by these different spheres. The complexity of today's decision-making process lies in the fact that the individuals in the process are affected by multiple levels of government and other collectives outside of the governmental sphere such as business, religion, education and other non-political organizations (Warren, 2011). This thesis focuses on the broader definition of democracy, which includes these collectives that, according to Warren, all play a certain role in the decision-making process.

2.3 Theorizing Democratization

This section will focus on the theoretical explanations of democratization and show that there is a debate within the literature between structure and agency approaches to democratization. The following section will explain that Warren's assumptions of democracy is supported by agency-based theories because it emphasizes what happens outside of the traditional democratic institution channels and focuses on the role of individuals in the democratic process. This section will show that the agency-based approaches are distinct from structural explanations of democratization and argue that the structural theories are not sufficient in explaining the process. The emphasis will thus be on the importance of agency-approach theories and finally, the chapter will elaborate upon the role of civil society on which the rest of this thesis will be based.

2.3.1 Methodological Individualism

Within the scientific literature there are mainly two opposite approaches when it comes to explaining social phenomena, namely individualistic or holistic. Yet this picture is over simplistic. Udehn (2002) explains the concept of methodological individualism, which entails that social phenomena are created or caused by individuals and made up of individuals. Based on this concept, social phenomena are thus to be explained in terms of individuals and their interaction. It is not sufficient to focus on only macro-relationships when explaining social phenomena; the macro-context only exists because of the interactions between individuals on the micro-level. This does not entail that *every* social phenomena should be explained through individuals and their interaction with each other. Therefore, the strong methodological individualism, which entails explaining the social life strictly in terms of individuals' interaction, is often opposed to criticism because it does not pay enough attention to the role of the individual's social context (Udehn, 2002: 501). Weaker versions of methodological individualism also explain the social life as a result from social interaction, however these also pay attention to the role of social institutions and structure in their explanation (Udehn, 2002). The methodological individualism approach allows scholars to move away from the distinction between individualism and holism as opposite paradigms and to rather speak about the divide between strong and weak methodological individualism. This thesis follows the assumptions of methodological individualism and thus allows social phenomena to be explained through the interaction of individuals among each other *and* pays attention to the role of the context in which these individuals operate.

2.3.2 The importance of agency

The following section will show that explaining democratization with structural theories is not sufficient and therefore this thesis will focus further on agency-based theories. This is in line with the abovementioned concept of methodological individualism; democratization is a social phenomenon to be explained in terms of individuals and their interactions among each other within their societal context.

According to Lipset's modernization theory, the heart of democracy lies in capitalism and the production of wealth (Lipset, 1959). Because of economic growth, an educated middle class will arise and class conflict within a country will decrease, which leads to a more modernized society with a democratic culture. Lipset argues that the more economically developed a country, the greater the chances are that democracy will sustain. The decrease in poverty will lead to a situation where the vast majority of the population will intelligently participate in politics and have the knowledge and capacity to refrain from extremist ideas and practices (Lipset, 1959, 75). Lipset's modernization theory entails that democracy is the direct result of economic growth; democracy is a result from the structure of capitalism. This highly deterministic relationship between capitalism and democracy ignores the behavior and interaction of individuals, groups and classes and focuses primarily on the role of structure (Grugel & Bishop, 2014: 78). Thus, explaining democratization via Lipset's modernization theory leaves out the assumptions of methodological individualism as discussed by Udehn (2002). The causal explanation in modernization theory is criticized for being too simplistic and it focuses too much on the role of structure, that is capitalism, in the sense that people's behavior is a by-product and individual actors are unimportant (Grugel & Bishop, 2014: 78).

Inglehart and Welzel (2010) revise the causal path of Lipset's modernization theory by including subjective indicators from the World Value Survey in their theoretical model and develop a more agency-based theory by focusing on the role of individuals in the democratization process. The authors posit that democracy does not emerge in response to economic growth. The real link between modernization and democratization is that rising levels of existential security, which are linked with modernization, shift from survival values to self-expression values (Inglehart & Welzel, 2010: 5). These self-expression values include social toleration, life satisfaction, public expression and the desire for freedom of expression. Their theory implies that there are strong links between this cluster of values and the emergence of civil society activities which gives rise to a democratic society. The change in self-expression values are in favor of the emergence of social institutions and a strong civil society which make the rise and survival of democratic institutions more likely (Inglehart & Welzel, 2010: 15-16). The theory shows that the road from modernization to democracy is a two-step process and is transmitted through the mass attitudinal changes of people, as a result of economic

development, which motivates the demand for democracy from below. It is thus not sufficient to explain the democratic process through a linear relationship between modernization and democracy as Lipset argues.

Democratization is achieved through both citizenship and state institutions; a legitimate democratic state is only achievable when both the political and social realm is democratized (Gleditsch & Herge, 2014). Changes in institutions have to go paired with socio-economic changes in order for democracy to survive and to be beneficial (ibid.). Early research on the democratization of the social sphere by Almond and Verba (1963) finds that the transition towards democracy lies in civic culture, which is characterized by the civil acceptance of state authority and the belief of citizens in their duties. Their research focuses on the understanding of the relationship between the individual and the political institutions and the type of political culture in the country. There are three types of political culture based on political participation of citizens and the nature of citizens' attitudes towards politics namely parochial, subject and participant (Almond & Verba, 1963: 19-21). All three types of political culture combined, create the civic culture. Parochial political culture entails the least amount of political awareness, participation and interest. Subject political culture means that citizens are aware of the central government and its power, however they do not go in any opposition. When citizens are able to influence the government in various ways, participant political culture is present (Almond & Verba, 1963). As noted before, Warren (2011) stresses that the decision-making process today is highly complex because there are multiple ways individuals can influence and be influenced by collectives which again affect the decision-making process. Political attitudes towards the role of the self in the political system should be researched in order to better understand what drives the push for democracy within a country (Almond & Verba, 1963). Putnam (2000) extends this argument by stressing that the existence of civic culture lies in the creation and organization of social associations on which a democracy arises. When citizens engage in non-political voluntary organizations, they are taught how to understand politics and be more critical towards it (Putnam, 2000).

As mentioned before, the democratic decision-making process today is affected by multiple spheres of both government and social organizations that exist outside of the governmental sphere (Warren, 2011). The influence of individuals on government operates not only through governmental representatives, but also through interest and advocacy groups and civil society actors. It is important that the state responds to the developments within the society and thus responds to the demands from different social spheres (Warren, 2011). It is the responsibility of the democratic state that all groups in society have sufficient tools to play a role in the democratic process and therefore the role of the community could not be left out of the democratization process (Grugel & Bishop,

2014: 136).

When explaining the democratization process, one should pay attention to the openness of the political sphere for political action (Grugel & Bishop, 2014: 136). Warren distinguishes between two ways in which individuals are able to have influence on the government namely directive or protective (Warren, 2011: 380). Directive influence by individuals is when citizens vote or participate in the decision-making space via elections. Protective influence refers to the power of individuals to go against harm from other collectives, which entails for instance protesting against certain decisions or holding the government accountable. According to Warren, it is impossible that everyone is represented directly in the decision-making process; therefore democracy also means that individuals have the power to resist harms to self-determination (ibid). It is essential for the functioning of a democracy that citizens have the opportunity to actively engage and demand for accountability and responsiveness of the government (Boulding, 2014: 189).

2.4 Civil society

The previous section emphasized the importance of agency within the democratization literature. This section will elaborate further on the role of agency by highlighting the concept of civil society as the sphere which allows citizens to self-organize and engage with government. The decision-making process is so diverse that elections are only one part of democracy. Individuals are affected by all kinds of collectives and organizations that exist outside of government, which influence this process. In order to understand whether democratic governments can be deepened in a way that they are responsive to and a representation of the governed, one must explore the multiple ways individuals are able to self-organize. Democracy requires that the ones who are affected by decisions should be able to influence them. An existence of civil society offers ways of organization to influence these decisions (Warren, 2011: 387-389).

Within the literature there is a debate around rising civil demands and upcoming civil society as drivers for the democratization process (Grugel & Bishop, 2014: 135; Inglehart & Welzel, 2010). Democratization is seen as the struggle to extend the rights for citizens and deepen citizenship. Thus, explanations of democratization must include the concept of civil society and explore whether civil society is open to all and if there is space for political action (Grugel & Bishop, 2014: 136). Civil society is important for building a stable and substantive democracy. Democracy can only become deeply rooted within vibrant social spaces with debate and public action on the agency level. For a number of scholars, the strength of civil society could be seen as a test of democracy itself. A weak civil society indicates that democracy is thin and that the chances for a substantive democracy based on citizens' rights are very low (ibid: 145-146). The correlation between the functioning of a

democracy and a robust civil society must be understood as reinforcing relationship (Warren, 2011: 377).

Civil society has the democratic function that people are able to organize their interests, values and opinions both directly and indirectly, which functions as a definition of 'the people' to whom the state institutions should respond (Urbinati & Warren, 2008). However, within the literature there is a debate whether civil society fosters political stability or is able to disrupt it (Boulding, 2014). In the context of young and weaker democracies, participation in civil society is often linked with high rates of protest participation (ibid.). Since this thesis pays attention to the role of civil society in a specific case, context cannot be left out of the debate. It is important to understand the exact role of civil society within the democratization process, because it can be explained as a constructing factor of democracy yet it is also able to undermine the process (Diamond, 1994: 5).

The next section will define the concept civil society. Next, this section will elaborate upon theories and assumptions of civil society drawn from the literature. In general, the notions of civil society have been mainly based on Western theories and ideas. I will argue that certain theoretical expectations of civil society appear different in the empirical reality and that civil society finds itself in a paradox regarding the African context given the unique history and political culture of these societies. The question remains whether the Western theories of civil society are applicable to the context of younger, less stable democracies such as in African countries. Eventually the following section will show that researching civil society is highly sensitive to its context. From the discussed theoretical assumptions, hypotheses will be drawn which will be tested against the South African case in the analysis chapter of this thesis.

2.4.1 Defining civil society

The concept of civil society lacks one standard definition; there are multiple characteristics when describing civil society. An important characteristic of civil society is that the organized social life is voluntary and autonomous from the state (Diamond, 1994). It is the public space where citizens come together to express their interests, desires and ideas and where they exchange all kinds of information (ibid.). This arena of associations, individual and community agency exists between the citizen and the state (Walzer, 1995).

One could make a distinction between radical and liberal perspectives on civil society (Grugel & Bishop, 2014: 137). The radical perspective entails that civil society is able to disrupt the status quo by challenging unequal power relations via community organizations as an instrument to engage with the state. The liberal perspective has little emphasis on the questioning of power relations within the state; civil society is the arena for political discussion and a tool for checking on the state

(ibid.). Hence, another important characteristic is that civil society functions as a vehicle for citizens to make demands on the state and hold state officials and institutions to account (Diamond, 1995). However, it is up to debate whether these two perspectives are distinct or overlap because civil society is also described as an area where citizens come together to discuss societal issues of common interest and form public opinion which is often translated into political action (Verkoren & Van Leeuwen, 2013: 160). Civil society includes a wide variety of actors ranging from internationally operating development organizations to local initiatives. It could entail actors from (international) NGOs, media, labor unions, political parties, human rights activists, community organizations, religion institutes and sports or other welfare organizations (ibid.). The conception of civil society is thus wider than officially registered NGOs and pressure groups lobbying for specific interests; it is the activity of voluntary organizations making attempts to shape governing rules of society (Scholte, 2002). Scholars often use the term civil society as an umbrella to describe a wide range of social activities and organizations that directly and indirectly support democracy (Grugel & Bishop, 2014: 136).

2.5 Theoretical assumptions of civil society

This section will discuss theoretical assumptions of civil society regarding its role in the democratization process, its relationship with other spheres and normative functions of civil society. The theoretical assumptions discussed in this section are based on Western theories and ideas. The section hereafter will further elaborate upon these assumptions when theorizing civil society in the African. Eventually, three sets of hypotheses will be formulated based on the theoretical assumptions from the following paragraphs.

Civil society plays a significant role in the building and consolidation of democracy (Diamond, 1994: 16). When a democracy is consolidated, democracy becomes so broadly accepted among the citizens in a country that it is very unlikely to break down. Consolidation of democracy is only possible with a supportive political culture, which develops in a vibrant civil society. A strong, active, pluralistic and institutionalized civil society will more likely foster the emergence of a democratic state (Diamond, 1994: 15-16). An important stimulus for democratization and the pressure to complete the process comes from the rise of civil society, the restructuring of public space and the mobilization of independent groups and movements (Diamond, 1994). Diamond's emphasis on the role of civil society actors shifted the democratization debate from a structural debate towards a discussion about consolidation and the quality of a democracy (Grugel & Bishop, 2014: 80).

The idea that a vibrant civil society is important for a democracy stems from De Tocquville's

work dating from 1835 (Encarnación, 2000). He describes the link between citizens and the state in America and stresses that a democracy has a strong need for organizations that mediate between individuals and the state. The widespread civil society literature builds on this assumption that a vibrant and robust civil society is a pre-condition for democratization (Encarnación, 2000: 9). Putnam builds on De Tocqueville's work and highlights the importance of citizen's organizations in sustaining a functional democracy (Verkoren & Van Leeuwen, 2013: 161). These organizations have two important functions namely checking on government's actions and representing the interest of the citizens. The European-oriented thought of civil society emphasizes the active role of citizens within civil society, shaping and reforming the character of the state. Civil society in Europe is assumed to be more activist and emancipative, striving for political equality and justice, which is different from that in the United States of which scholars claim that civil society is a mediator between citizens and the state (Verkoren & Van Leeuwen, 2013: 161). Both schools show a different view of the core function of civil society.

Regarding the location of civil society, it is understood as the realm between the state and the citizens where the voluntarily organized groups enjoy autonomy in relation to the state (White, 1995). Civil society is the sphere of individual freedom, protected against any state intervention (Eder, 2009: 24). The state institutions should pay attention to these independent groups by putting their perceived interests on the political agenda (Pietrzyk, 2003: 38-39). In this way, a developed civil society and the democratic social and political sphere are a mutual process that will eventually lead to political and economic stability of a state. It is important that citizens recognize their responsibility towards their community and towards themselves to participate actively in the public sphere of civil society. The democratic state and civil society overlap with each other because civil society is understood to be democratic, which means a representation of society, and a democracy requires the existence of a vibrant civil society (Pietrzyk, 2003: 44). In sum, civil society is the voluntary and autonomous sphere where citizens organize their interests, values and opinions through associations, where the formal institutions of democracy should be responsive to (Urbinati & Warren, 2008).

2.6 Contrasting empirical realities

The previous sections identified normative theoretical assumptions of civil society. Civil society is an important part of the democratization process of a country. It is an autonomous sphere from government and functions as a tool to hold the government accountable. Citizens should be able to organize themselves voluntarily and represent their interests via the organizations. McLaverty (2002) stresses that scholars tend to focus too much on the normative approach of *how* civil society should function instead of explaining how civil society actually functions in reality. He stresses that certain theoretical assumptions of civil society have weakly empirical evidence. The next section will pay attention to the role of context when theorizing civil society.

Pietrzyk (2003) adds an important side-note to his work: the exact role of civil society differs in each political context. De Tocquville's work, and more recent theories relying on his assumptions, are often criticized because of their Western perspective, which is perceived to be too limited to explain civil society in the context of developing countries (Encarnacion, 2000: 13). It should be questioned whether the theoretical models of civil society are applicable to non-Western settings because there is a large contrast between global ideas of civil society and local empirical realities (Verkoren & Van Leeuwen, 2013: 162).

The dynamics of democratic transition in Africa have been distinctive from other contexts such as Latin America and Europe (Bratton & Van De Walle, 1994: 453-454). Pre-existing institutional characteristics of the political regime have an impact on the dynamics of the democratic transition of a country because regime-type provides the context for institutional reform (Bratton & Van De Walle, 1994: 485). The form and character of the state is dependent on its social foundations; the often weak and ineffective African state institutions have to do with the fractured social foundations within African society, which is a result of colonialism (Osaghae, 2006: 237). Western civil society theories do not pay enough attention to the understanding of the sociocultural, historical and political contexts in which African civil society exists, which causes theoretical problems (Söderbaum, 2007b: 319). The logics of civil society are dependent upon the historical, social, cultural and political context of the society in which they operate (*ibid.*). Civil society is only able to emerge when there is a strong and differentiated state, which is often not the case in African countries (Chabal & Daloz, 1999). When the formal institutions of a state are weak, this can be a huge threshold for active citizenry and the emergence of civil society (Pietrzyk, 2003: 43, Chabal & Daloz, 1999). Both the dynamics of democratic transitions and the characteristics of civil society in Africa should be seen in the light of neo-patrimonialism and as a product of colonialism (Bratton & Van De Walle, 1994; Osaghae, 2006; Söderbaum, 2007b). The weakly institutionalized, neo-patrimonial regimes in Africa provide the dynamic framework for the functioning of democracy and civil society in the continent

(Bratton & Van De Walle, 1994) and lead to patterns of inclusion and exclusion for actors in civil society (Söderbaum, 2007b).

The next section will oppose the African civil society literature to the Western civil society literature and formulate three sets of hypotheses reflecting each one specific theme namely the relationship between civil society and the state, the representation of interests and the strategy of civil society to engage with government. In this way, civil society in South Africa is allowed to be studied from different perspectives. The following figure shows a visualization of the research model which will be elaborated upon in the following paragraphs.

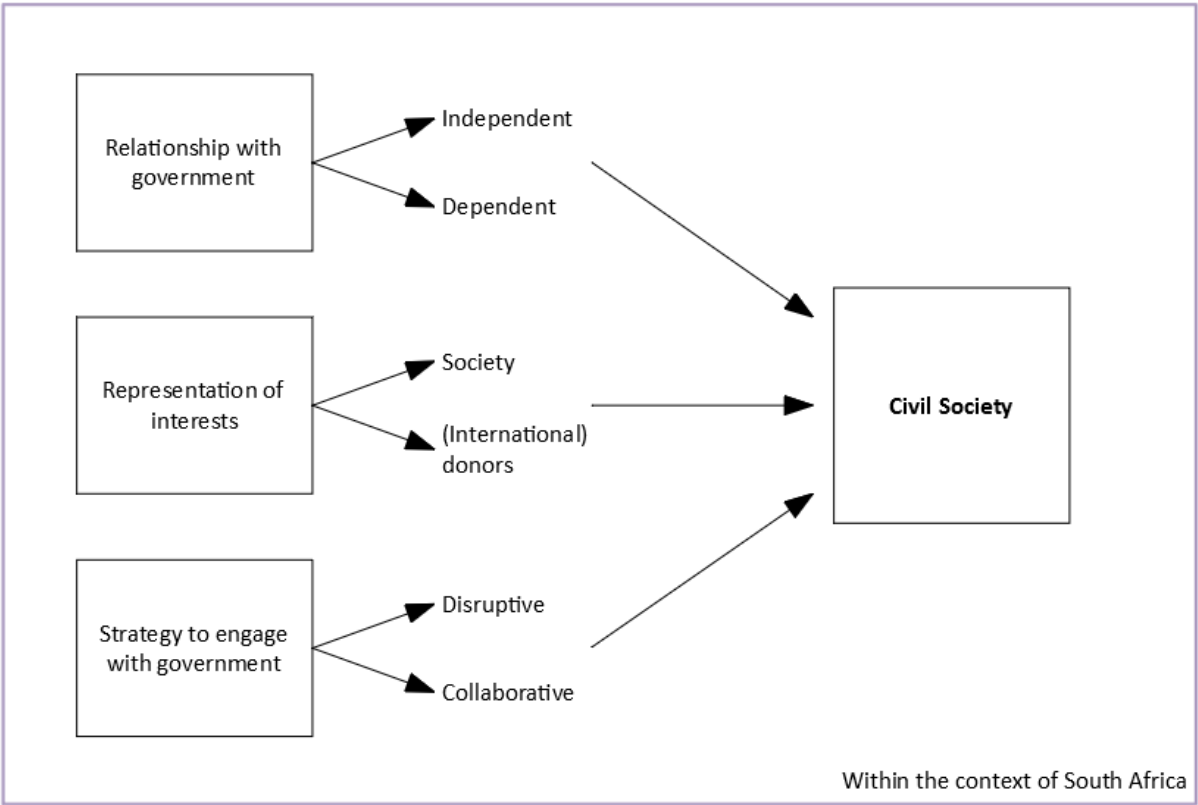


Figure 1: The research model

2.6.1 The relationship between civil society and the government

Civil society is assumed to be autonomous from the state and exist as a separate realm between the state and the citizens (Diamond, 1995; White, 1995). The organizations within civil society are voluntarily organized and function as a tool for citizens to hold the government accountable (Diamond, 1995; Pietrzyk, 2003; Verkoren & Van Leeuwen, 2013). Civil society is the activity of voluntary organizations making attempts to shape governing rules of society (Scholte, 2004).

However, the assumption that civil society is strictly separate from the state is challenged when applied to developing countries (Fioramonti, 2005: 68). In order to understand African civil society, one must analyze the relationship between civil society and others spheres such as the

government and international organizations because these tend to influence agendas (Söderbaum, 2007b: 320). The relationship between the state and civil society is often very complex in developing countries because both spheres are dependent on each other in order to survive (Bratton, 1989). The power-balance between state and civil society in developing countries is shifted from an autonomous relationship to an interdependent relationship (ibid.). The lines that divide the voluntary, autonomous organizations of civil society from the official state practices can blur in these context (Scholte, 2004). In undeveloped contexts, formal state institutions lack delivering its core functions when it comes to service delivery (Verkoren & Van Leeuwen, 2013: 168). In these contexts, civil society functions as the space where local actors provide security and other basic needs which are not provided by the government (ibid.).

In addition to this, a characteristic of regimes shaped by neo-patrimonialism is that it functions according to the dynamics of personal rule (Van De Walle, 2005). The included actors in civil society in Africa are dependent upon intimate, often informal, relationships with the government for their survival, which is highly in contrast with the idea that civil society should be operating autonomous (Söderbaum, 2007b: 325). Thereby, Hearn (2001: 44) stresses that civil society in Africa is becoming more a tool of stabilizing the status quo and building consensus instead of challenging the social and political sphere. Civil society and government partner together in favor of the development agenda. The autonomy of civil society in Africa is absent because the West uses civil society as a tool to influence social groups and to stabilize the existing order (Hearn, 2001: 52).

Drawing on these theoretical assumptions, civil society can be seen in two ways namely as an independent sphere from the state, functioning as a watchdog of government and as a dependent sphere from the state, functioning as an arm of the government. These two forms are extremes and are situated on separate sides of a continuum; hybrid forms can be expected in-between. The following competing hypotheses will be tested against the South African case:

Hypothesis 1a: Civil society functions as an independent watchdog of the state by holding governmental officials and institutions accountable.

Hypothesis 1b: Civil society and the state are interdependent because civil society functions as a service deliverer for government.

2.6.2 Representation of interests

Civil society consists of a wide variety of actors and organizations which raises the question which voices it actually represents. It is known as the public sphere where citizens come together and discuss issues of common interest (Verkoren & Van Leeuwen, 2013: 160). The De Tocquevillian thought of civil society stresses that the associations function a representation of citizen's interests

(ibid.). Urbinati and Warren (2008: 404) also stress that civil society represents the voice of the public and it seeks to influence not only the government, also the public discourse and culture, the market and corporations. The self-authorized representation in civil society represents certain voices in society that are not necessarily reflected in the electoral system and capture voices that are often unheard (Urbinati and Warren, 2008: 405).

However, civil society organizations in developing countries are often dominated and funded by external factors, such as international NGOs and foreign states which tend to shape the agendas of the organizations (Grugel & Bishop, 2014: 159; Söderbaum, 2007b: 320). Foreign aid donors support local civil society organizations because they want to promote democratic values via civil society (Robinson & Friedman, 2007). Donors use civil society as a tool to promote certain goals such as economic development, socio-economic and political equality, human rights and democratic development. Many foreign donors concentrate their financial support on advocacy groups that represent only a small part of a society's interest instead of supporting the local groups that represent the grassroots' interests and demands (Sabatini, 2002: 8-9). This raises the question whether the civil society organizations in developing contexts are a representation of the society's interests.

With respect to the African context, many NGOs and civil society organizations rely on foreign aid funding and are influenced by multinational, mainly Western, counterparts (Grugel & Bishop, 2014: 141). African civil society finds itself in a paradox because civil society is theoretically assumed to be the sphere that represents citizen's interests, however it finds itself in a complex relationship with state officials and international donors, which blurs the lines between civil society organizations and national and international governments (Söderbaum, 2007b: 335).

Based on these theoretical expectations, civil society can reflect different interests which could be categorized in two distinct groups namely the interests of the society and the interests of the (international) donors. The following set of hypotheses will be tested against the South African case:

Hypothesis 2a: Civil society reflects the different voices in society and functions as a representation of the society's interest.

Hypothesis 2b: Civil society reflects the voices of (international) donors.

2.6.3 Strategies of civil society

As discussed in the literature overview, multiple scholars emphasize the importance of civil society's role within the democratization process (Diamond, 1994; De Tocqville in Verkoren & Van Leeuwen, 2013 & in Encarnación, 2003; Pietrzyk, 2003). The functioning of both civil society and the state are mutually contingent upon each other because a properly functioning democratic state must be complemented by an active civil society and civil society can only emerge when democratic institutions function properly (Pietrzyk, 2003: 44). In order to understand the reinforcing relationship between civil society and democracy one must explore the multiple ways in which individuals are able to self-organize and examine whether democratic governments are responsive to this (Warren, 2011). The final set of hypotheses is concerned with the strategy and actions of civil society organizations to self-organize and how the government responds to this.

Foley and Edwards (1996) stress that there is a distinction between two types of civil society namely 'civil society I' and 'civil society II' that show contradictions in terms of operation. The first type includes civil society organizations that are tainted by cooperation with the existing regime. The latter includes civil society organizations that mobilize citizens against the existing regime as a counter-power to the state and emphasizes the conflictual potential of civil society organizations (ibid.). Especially regarding the African context, one should look at the larger context of the society that shapes the relationship between civil society and state and the mode of engagement between both spheres (Anciano, 2018).

The dynamics between government and civil society are different in developing and more fragile countries, which results in various ways how citizens engage with or pressure the government. When there is little political institutionalization or socio-economic development in the country, civil society will be more unpredictable and produce destabilizing effects (Encarnación, 2000: 13-17). According to Boulding (2014), civil society in fragile contexts is able to undermine the support for the political system because citizens who are more active in civil society have more knowledge and information about governmental failures and are thus more critical of the political system. This is in line with Putnam's social capital theory which entails that engagement in voluntary organizations teaches citizens to understand politics and to be more critical towards government. Citizens make demands on the government via collective engagement in order to improve its functioning (Putnam, 2000). Both theories suggest that engagement in civil society results in more educated and critical citizens.

There are different ways in how civil society engages with the state. Civil society is able to form a bridge between the citizens and the state via advocacy, lobbying and the provision of communication resources. Civil society is also able to mobilize in collective action against

government via direct protest and serve as a counter-power to the governmental institutions (Leonard & Pelling, 2010). Within the context of Africa, disruptive actions from civil society, such as protest and strikes, forced political rulers into accepting regime transitions (Fatton, 1995). These actions were often mobilized by anger which resulted in criminal and cruel behavior (ibid: 88). Thereby, in certain fragile contexts, local actors of civil society play mixed roles at the same time. They are associated with peacebuilding activities on the one side and highly political associated or even connected with armed actors on the other (Verkoren & Van Leeuwen, 2013: 169).

Based on the previous theoretical expectations, one could make a distinction between disruptive strategies of civil society and more collaborative strategies of civil society when engaging with government. The following hypotheses are both located at a different side of a continuum, one could expect mixed strategies in between:

Hypothesis 3a: Civil society uses a disruptive strategy to engage with government.

Hypothesis 3b: Civil society uses a more collaborative strategy to engage with government.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter gave an overview of the scientific literature about democratization and civil society. It made clear that this thesis seeks to understand social phenomena from the assumption of methodological individualism, which entails that social phenomena are to be explained via individuals and their interactions within their societal context. Therefore, the agency-based theories regarding democratization are emphasized with a particular focus on the role of civil society. The theoretical assumptions of civil society are explained and discussed with respect to different contexts. It showed that the theoretical assumptions are challenged when discussed in the context of more fragile and undeveloped countries.

This thesis follows the definition of democracy that includes the complexity of today's collective decision-making process and emphasizes that democracy takes place not only in the institutional but also in the social sphere. The role of civil society and active citizenry is important for the consolidation of democratic values within a democratic society. This chapter explained that structural explanations for democratization are not sufficient and therefore agency-based theories should be emphasized in the explanation. Civic culture is important for the creation and consolidation of a democracy because it makes citizens recognize what their responsibilities are towards their community. Thereby, when people associate together in voluntary organizations, they are taught to think critical about the political regime of their country. It is thus essential for a

democracy that citizens are able to organize themselves freely and engage critically with the government in order to hold their political institutions accountable, without any fear of repression. A good functioning government has to respond to these issues and put them on the political agenda.

This chapter showed that the role of civil society differs in each political context and that theories relying on the Western school of thought are often too limited when explaining civil society in more fragile and undeveloped contexts. The theory often does not match with the empirical reality, especially regarding African civil society. The historical framework and socio-political context determine the dynamics for African societies in which civil society operates. The literature overview resulted in three sets of hypotheses with expectations for civil society regarding three themes namely the relationship with the state, the representation of interests and the strategy when engaging with government. This allows civil society in South Africa to be studied from different perspectives.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The following chapter will provide a detailed outline of the research methods with a description of the specific case of South Africa, the data collection method and the operationalization of concepts in order to test the hypotheses. First, the research approach of a single case study will be discussed and the context of South African civil society will be given. This chapter will explain why interviews are used as data for this study and elaborate upon its strengths and challenges. During a period of three months field research, 30 interviews with people working in the civil society sector, the government and a variety of other actors who shared their perspectives on civil society in South Africa were conducted. A half-year prior to this field research, I worked as an intern at the Dutch Consulate General in Cape Town, which provided background information for the interviews and helped entering a network with actors working within the civil society and governmental sector. The total field research period lasted from October 2018 until January 2019.

3.2 South Africa: a deviant case study

In order to answer the research question of this thesis, a qualitative research design is chosen in the form of a case study. A case study allows studying the particular case in-depth with great attention for the details and underlying mechanisms at play. The social phenomena are studied within the boundaries of one social system in its natural context (Swanborn, 2012: 16). According to Gerring (2008: 646), there are nine techniques for case selection with their own research approach namely typical, diverse, extreme, deviant, influential, crucial, pathway, most similar and most different. The civil society in South Africa represents a deviant case. A deviant case shows a surprising value when compared with a general model of causal relations, which is contrary to the typical case that shows a common expected value when compared with a general model of causal relations (Gerring, 2008). The typical case is thus a representative case for a causal relationship; the researcher looks for a case that is a typical example of the expected causal relationship and has the goal to test a certain hypothesis with the selected case (ibid: 649). A deviant case is selected to demonstrate a surprising value when compared to the general causal model and has the goal to understand *why* this case is different (ibid: 655). Such a case-selection method in political science may focus on a country that shows a different outcome than what is expected relative to a general model. The deviant case study allows to investigate theoretical abnormality; to study the uniqueness of a certain case in comparison to what is expected. Thus, it is likely that a deviant case is unrepresentative for its population because it does not have the goal to reproduce features of the larger population. Its goal is however

to explore new explanations for a certain social phenomenon (Gerring, 2008: 647). The new explanations that are identified with the deviant case are applicable to other unique cases, which will make the selected case no longer an outlier but more typical for the explanation of unique cases (ibid.). The next paragraph will elaborate upon why South African civil society is a deviant case with a surprising value relative to the general causal model and makes clear to what general model the South African civil society is deviant.

When compared with the civil society in the rest of the world, the South African civil society shows surprising values. Trends within South African civil society challenge the assumptions underlying the widespread civil society debate (Glaser, 1997). The South African civil society is marked by the legacy of inherited inequalities that stem from the complex history of the country. Thereby, there is an increasing tense relationship between civil society actors and the ruling governmental party, the ANC, since the democratic transition. There is an alliance between the South African Trade Unions and the ANC, which questions the autonomy of South African civil society (ibid.). The South African civil society is unable to exist as a diverse array of organizations when the government keeps holding a grip on the civil society organizations (Glaser, 1997).

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, South African politics have a unique history regarding the racial segregation of the Apartheid regime. During the Apartheid in South Africa (from 1948 to 1994), a vibrant civil society was not able to emerge because of the political system based on institutionalized racial segregation and white supremacy where non-white people were suppressed and both economically and politically excluded (Shubane, 1992: 35-38). There were structural limitations against the emergence of civil groups by the Apartheid government. A real civil society was not present during the Apartheid because people who were excluded from governmental participation by law, the non-whites, were not able to organize in any form of association (ibid: 40). In the 1980's, some civil activity and representation of the black population was allowed due to institutional reforms and the influence of the international sphere (Habib, 2005). The formal institutions now recognized some black unions, which was in favor of the emergence of a greater anti-Apartheid civil society. Eventually, in the 1990's, civil society was mostly dominated by the anti-Apartheid element (Habib, 2005).

Since the democratic transition, the relationship between civil society and the government changed from an adversarial relationship towards a more collaborative relationship with the focus on policy development (Leonard, 2014: 380). Civil society organizations registered to act as partners of government for the policy-development process, which resulted in a less expressive sphere and more governmental control on the civil society sector. Civil society actors became a part of the new democratic government, which immediately blurred the lines between the state and civil society. Civil society is seen as a critical component of the new democratic society in South Africa (Leonard,

2014). As discussed in the previous theoretical chapter, an open and vibrant civil society is important for a democratic society to sustain. The civil society in South Africa has tight connections with the government and is not as open as it should be in a democratic state, which is surprising for a country with a democratic constitution.

3.3 Operationalization of concepts

In the previous chapter, three sets of contradicting hypotheses are formulated. The following paragraph will translate the theoretical concepts of these hypotheses into empirical measurable factors. The operationalization of the concepts will define the fuzzy concepts from the hypotheses in a more observable manner in order to test them against the empirical evidence in the analysis chapter.

In order to study civil society in South Africa, it must be clear what exactly is understood by this concept. As discussed in the theoretical chapter, civil society is a broad concept and lacks a clear definition. **Civil society** will be operationalized in terms of which actors are included and what actions it entails. South African civil society is studied in an extensive manner; civil society is approached as a counterweight of the government between citizen and state, and as the public sphere where actors can come together to discuss, express their interests and exchange information (Diamond, 1994; Walzer, 1995). Civil society includes (international) non-governmental organizations, non-profit organizations, voluntary organizations, pressure groups, social networks and social movements (Grugel & Bishop, 2014; Scholte, 2004; Verkoren & Van Leeuwen, 2013).

The first set of hypothesis is interested in exploring the relationship between civil society in South Africa and the government and the different functions that come with that relationship. A distinction can be made between an interdependent relationship and an independent relationship. The **interdependent relationship** between government and civil society is when both spheres are dependent on each other and where civil society functions as an arm of the government as a service deliverer of the state. In this case, civil society is a strategic partner of the government because it fills the gap in service provision and helps the government tie with the grassroots (Mercer, 2002: 18). The **independent relationship** entails that civil society and government are two strictly independent spheres. Civil society then monitors the government and holds it accountable for its actions (Diamond, 1994). Autonomous actors and organizations within civil society act as a watchdog and functions as a counterweight against the state by creating a network of actors to pressure the state (Mercer, 2002: 8).

The second set of hypotheses aims to understand which interests the South African civil society represents. A distinction is made between the representation of the society's interests and

the interests of (international) donors. Within civil society, there is a variety of ways for citizens to organize and represent themselves such as via NGOs, religious and ethnic movements and more local and traditional institutions (Verkoren & Van Leeuwen, 2013). The **society's interest** refers to the voices of groups and people within society such as communities, marginalized groups and minority groups. The self-authorized representation in civil society reflects voices that are often unheard (Urbinati and Warren, 2008). However, external counterparts such as (inter-) national NGOs, foreign and national governments tend to influence the agendas of civil society organizations via donor funding (Grugel & Bishop, 2014; Hearn, 2001; Söderbaum, 2007a). **(International) donors** are external financial sources that support civil society organizations via economic funding (Sabatini, 2002). The donors often use civil society as a vehicle to promote their own values and concentrate on specific civil society organizations that are in line with their own values instead of supporting more local and grassroots organizations (Sabatini, 2002).

The last set of hypotheses is concerned with the strategy and actions of civil society in order to engage with government. There are various ways in how citizens engage with and pressure the government via civil society (Encarnación, 2000). In the hypotheses a distinction is made between disruptive strategies and more collaborative strategies. **Disruptive strategies** of civil society are linked with civil society organizations that serve as a counter-power to the state and include collective actions against government via protest (Leonard & Pelling, 2010). More **collaborative strategies** of civil society are linked with organizations that function as a bridge between society and the state and include advocacy, lobbying and the provision of communication sources to engage with the government (Leonard & Pelling, 2010).

3.4 Methods and justification

This thesis aims to study whether the empirical reality of South African civil society matches with the expected theoretical assumptions from the literature. The civil society in South Africa represents the sample of this qualitative research. The identification of the research sample occurred in an explorative way because the first round of interviews gave a broad insight on civil society in South Africa and the second round of interviews were more guided by a goal-oriented approach. During this second round, individuals from different civil society organizations were interviewed and more specific questions, guided by the hypotheses, were asked. The questionnaire was adjusted after the first round of interviews from a very broad questionnaire towards a questionnaire with more specific and direct questions in line with the research question and hypotheses. The analysis of this thesis has an emphasis on the second round of interviews, as these are more responsive to the research question.

3.4.1 Sample size, access and approach

Since South Africa has a surface of 1.2 million square kilometers, it was beyond the capacity of this thesis to interview civil society actors across the whole country. The interviews were conducted with 30 people from the Western Cape province with an exception of two, who now live in the Gauteng province but used to work for a civil society organization located in the Western Cape. The first unit of the sample was identified via a previously built network during an internship, which allowed to meet with actors from the civil society sector and the government. During the first round of interviews, a broad perspective of civil society was obtained which allowed to develop the hypotheses in combination with a literature study. The first interviews allowed to understand the dynamics and context of South Africa and the most pressing issues that the country and its citizens are dealing with.

Via the snowballing technique, the sample size grew and gave access to more people from within the civil society sector. During this round, a better understanding of the dynamics of the civil society sector in South Africa was obtained which allowed to ask direct questions and engage in more fruitful discussions. Several protests took place during the second half of the field research period. Some of the respondents gave interesting and ad hoc insights about these protests and spoke about the relationship of their civil society organization and the protests. As the interview process moved forward, a better understanding about South African civil society was achieved and topics such as the international donors and the relationship with the government became more prominent. The last round of interviews focused mainly on the issues and topics that were most prominent during the previous interviews in order to get an in-depth understanding of contemporary civil society in South Africa.

The 30 interviews conducted for this thesis took place at different locations but mostly in the offices of the respondents. Some interviews took place in public locations such as a café and a small portion of interviews were conducted over the phone. All conversations were recorded with a voice recorder on a mobile phone and transcribed later. In order to protect the respondent and their organization, anonymity was ensured before starting the interview. In Appendix 1, a list of the interview respondents is added.



Figure 2: The Western Cape province in South Africa

Source: <https://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/heritage-trail-through-provinces-south-africa>

3.4.2 Strengths and challenges regarding interviews

In the following paragraph the strengths and challenges regarding the research method will be discussed. First, a very important side note has to be made regarding the role of the researcher. Being a white female researcher from The Netherlands was not always conducive for this research. Some respondents felt uncomfortable to be interviewed by a female from The Netherlands. This resulted in situations where the respondent answered the question in limited fashion. Despite this, the opportunity to interview South Africans on a personal level was an incredibly interesting and insightful experience. Interviewing allows to see the role of agency by getting into the minds of the specific actors. Despite certain flaws and challenges, interviewing is often the best tool for gaining insight in how subjective factors influence decision-making, understanding the motivations of actors and establishing the role of agency (Rathbun, 2008: 687).

The study of actors within South African civil society is a within-case analysis, which allows to study a single case in-depth and as an independent unity of analysis (Mills, Durepos & Wiebe, 2010: 971-972). The chosen data collection method, open-ended interviews, allows for a lot of flexibility in terms of how questions are answered by the respondents, which gives interesting and unique insights that would probably never been captured via quantitative research (Rathbun, 2008). Open-ended questions maximize the response validity because these questions provide the opportunity for the respondent to answer within their own framework (Aberbach & Rockman, 2002: 674). Interviews

allow for going in-depth in a way that secondhand sources would not allow (Rathbun, 2008). Within-case analysis allows to discover new insights that could determine further analysis of different cases and also be used to develop a theory that can be validated in other cases (Mills, Durepos & Wiebe, 2010). This case offers the opportunity to study how theoretical expectations regarding civil society unpack in the context of South Africa and allows to identify new explanations regarding the phenomena under study. In this manner an in-depth understanding of the civil society in South Africa will reveal patterns, which would otherwise be overlooked when researching the same phenomena in a cross-case analysis or with quantitative data.

The social world is very complex; one person's fact could be the other's controversial misstatement. Qualitative research allows uncovering these competing voices within society (Olsen, 2012: 69). It is the task of the researcher, the observer, to give a balanced and nuanced explanation. Observer bias is likely to occur during the interview process. This entails the one-sided viewpoint of a grounded standpoint on a certain phenomenon by the researcher, which creates a mask over a scene or twists what is said and meant during an interview (Olsen, 2012: 65). The researcher must give a balanced account of different viewpoints without masking them (Olsen, 2012: 68). During the data collection process, I did my best to remain critical in order to eliminate the observer bias as much as possible. Thereby, it is important to analyze the interview data in the broader context of the case. Interview data on its own is a limited source (Olsen, 2012: 69-70). Therefore, the data is complemented by other data sources, which provides more contextualization.

Despite the advantages of interviewing being a rich data collection method, there are some important challenges that need to be addressed. Relativist scholars critique using interview data as a source in political science because the level of objectivity is questioned (Rathbun, 2002: 687). One must be careful when interpreting interview data because the actors who are interviewed cannot always be trusted for giving honest and correct answers because they are involved in the dynamic and complex field of politics and power (Rathbun, 2002: 690). The interview data is dependent on different subjective interpretations by the researcher with the result that the information is often more an opinion from the respondent than a fact (Rathbun, 2002).

The data collection method of this master thesis was a very time-consuming process and certain unforeseen circumstances formed roadblocks on the way. Using open-ended questions resulted in the fact that the interviews were often very long and did not always capture exactly what was desired. Conducting one single interview required more time than was originally assumed; travelling to and from the interview was quite a challenge given the circumstances in South Africa. Thereby, it was not easy to get hold of interviewees because of their busy schedule and the fact that most people were out of office during the holidays. Securing an interview was time consuming

because communication between the respondents and the researcher was not always effective. An important side note is that transport, communication devices, electricity and other practicalities sometimes did not work as planned which resulted in unforeseen circumstances.

To conclude, the data collection process was the most interesting part of this master thesis. It allowed to meet inspiring people and to learn about their backgrounds and personal stories. These people would have never been met if the researcher did not have the opportunity to live in South Africa. The conversations taught me a lot about the working of political and social life in South Africa, which is such an interesting country for a political scientist.

3.4.3 Process of analysis

After conducting the interviews, the recorded data is transcribed with the program oTranscribe. The written field notes were coded in three rounds with the program AtlasTi. Developing a coding system is a critical tool in the analysis that leads to a continuous process in the understanding of the phenomenon (Weston et. al, 2001: 397). The first step in analyzing the interview data is defining the coding categories, which entails defining careful definitions of the coding concepts that are not too concrete or too abstract (Gorden, 1992). The first round of coding was guided by asking 'what stands out' and 'what is useful for the analysis'. This first round allowed to become familiar with the data and to find a productive way to code the interview data. The second round of coding was primarily guided by theory and the hypotheses. The codes were grouped in families representing the three sets of hypotheses. During this second round, multiple patterns and connections in the data were discovered. Making connections between codes helps to think systematically about the data and to identify how categories in the data relate to each other (Kendall, 1999: 747). After the grouping of the codes, some codes and patterns did not match with the code families. However, they remained very insightful for the context of the analysis. The third round of coding revealed patterns in these codes and was used to understand the context and specificity of the South African civil society. Since this thesis is focusses on uncovering the uniqueness of South African civil society, these patterns are used as the backbone of the analysis chapter.

Chapter 4 – Analysis

The following chapter will provide an overview of the qualitative data analysis and discuss the findings from the analysis. Each section of this chapter will discuss one set of hypotheses and contextualize and interpret the findings with respect to the (South) African literature on civil society. The first set of hypotheses is concerned with the relationship between civil society in South Africa and the government. Then, the representation of civil society and the possible influence of (international) donors will be discussed. The last section will explain the different strategies civil society uses to engage with the government.

4.1 The relationship between civil society and the government

As discussed in the theoretical chapter, civil society is expected to be an independent sphere from the government. However, there are theories that discuss the relationship as interdependent. The data showed various types of relationships between civil society and government in South Africa. In general, the respondents who are part of a civil society organization which function as service deliverer for government describe their relationship with government as interdependent. Civil society organizations that function as a tool to hold the government accountable describe the relationship as strictly independent. Overall, one could argue that the relationship between civil society and the government in South Africa is neither strictly independent nor fully dependent.

First, the findings regarding the independent relationship will be discussed, then those related to the interdependent relationship. This section will make clear that civil society in South Africa leaves us with a paradox: civil society is there to hold the government accountable for their actions, yet also functions as a governmental service provider with governmental funding. These findings are not exceptional for South Africa; it is common for fragile contexts that civil society organizations step in as service delivery agents of the government when the government lacks to deliver these services properly (Verkoren & Van Leeuwen, 2013). Respondent 10 (15-11-2018) who works in the field of intellectual disabled people describes the relationship between government and civil society in South Africa clearly:

“It [civil society] is not just holding government accountable. Civil society (CS) also provides a lot of functions in the absence of government. In South Africa (SA) a lot of services that could or should be provided by government are provided by CS. Actually some are very supplementary and often government works very closely with CS. It is not always an

adversarial relationship. CS generally does it cheaper, which is to certain ways problematic because it means that CS is being paid less.”

Fisher (1997) stresses that NGOs, especially in the Global South, could be seen as alternative sources of governmental development practices. NGOs are believed to be more efficient when it comes to service delivery than the state because NGOs are less constricted by bureaucracy and have closer links with the community, thus they are able to deliver social services better than the government. In this manner, NGOs were contracted by the South African government and became implementation agencies for the governmental service delivery agendas (Habib & Kotze, 2002: 4).

4.1.1 Civil society as the watchdog of government

The following paragraph will show how the strictly independent relationship with the government unpacks in South African civil society. These findings are in line with the widespread literature that discusses civil society as an autonomous sphere functioning as a watchdog of the state. However, we must continue to look at the exact context of the case as Söderbaum (2007a) and Pietrzyk (2003) emphasize in their argument.

Respondent 6 (08-11-2018) describes civil society in South Africa as an organized group that exists independent from the state or private sector and deals with social-economic issues and political issues in its local context: *“CS checks the government in terms of accountability and functions to make sure that things are done correctly.”* Civil society organizations that are independent from government function as an opponent of government and hold it to account by criticizing the government, behaving adversarial, remain strictly apolitical and try to minimize the gap between citizens and government. In South Africa, it is important that civil society operates independent from government and is able to fulfill these functions.

The interview data showed that civil society checks on the government by investigating corruption scandals, exposing the information to citizens and to provide tools for citizens to file a corruption case against governmental officials. Corruption has constraining effects for good governance in South Africa as well as the economic development of the country (Pillay, 2004). The corruption within the government violates the contract between citizens and public officials and hinders effective government (Pillay, 2004). Respondent 21 (06-12-2018) explains that a goal of civil society is to create a more transparent government by holding the government accountable for their actions: *“It [corrupt governance] has such an incredible impact upon the country that we can't ignore it. They [the government] are not going to change anything unless we make them change. You need CS to fight that, to make sure that people are held accountable for what is happening. We need an incredibly strong CS because this is not easy work, fighting politicians. We need very strong, independent organizations and they have to be resilient.”* She also stresses that in an ideal world

where government functions correctly, civil society would not necessarily need to be the watchdog. Now, independent civil society in South Africa fulfills the accountability tool that government should actually build in their institutions in order to hold themselves accountable (Respondent 16, 26-11-2018).

Since the democratic transition, the new democratic institutions offer opportunities to deal with problems of corruption openly in South Africa (Pillay, 2004). However, the systems that are designed to fight against the evils of corruption are subject to practical problems. Anti-corruption-work among various sectors of society has failed because of bad coordination and implementation (ibid.). Respondent 21 (06-12-2018) explains that even with a democratic government in power, civil society needs to continuously check the government. She says: *“Yes this is the government we wanted, but we have to hold the government to account. And to question and to fight with! I think for some people it is difficult to make that shift of ‘we wanted this black government’. (...) We are fighting the policies and the people who you put in place but who no longer have your best interest at heart.”* After the democratic transition, the so-called independent Chapter 9 institutions were created to restore the credibility of the state institutions by ensuring that democratic values and human rights flourish in the new political system. These institutions have narrow connections with political actors from the dominating party, the ANC, which questions the independent watchdog function of these institutions (De Vos, 2012: 160).

4.1.2 Civil society as the service provider of government

The interview data show us that civil society organizations in South Africa very often function as service provider of the government and replace governmental functions when it comes to social welfare for citizens. Reasons for the government to not deliver these services are the lack of money, resources, skills and political will. Respondent 18 (29-11-2018) describes how the independent relationship between civil society and the government works in practice:

“If you lack housing and shelter, you can go to the Department of Social Development and say what you need and they will help you with clothes, a blanket and direct you to a shelter. That is a CS provided resource. The state does not provide it itself. Very often CS helps to provide basic needs in SA. A lot of community-based organizations are there to deliver services, to partnership with the state. Especially when it comes to home based care, health and social welfare kind of needs.”

The respondents are aware that they are filling the gaps for service delivery where the government lacks and see themselves as the alternative sphere to deliver these services for the government and as bandages on wounds (Respondent 10, 15-11-2018). Respondents criticize the government for not

providing the required needs for society and stress that it is their job and not the job of civil society (Respondent 9, 14-11-2018; Respondent 21, 06-11-2018). Respondent 9 (14-11-2018), who's organization receives funding from government, explicitly mentions how she finds it very odd that her organization has to do what the government should actually do and expresses her concerns.

Since the democratic transition, civil society organizations that have good connections with the government are better resourced than the organizations that remain independent with the result that not all civil society organizations enjoy the same privileges (Leonard, 2014). According to Respondent 21 (06-11-2018), the government pays too little money to civil society organizations to deliver services which leads to difficult situations for civil society. A governmental official of the Department of Social Development (Respondent 5, 06-11-2018) is aware of this problem however he stresses that the governmental funding of civil society could be less, when compared to other provinces. Since the democratic transition, civil society and government are both in the same race for scarce resources and personnel (Glaser, 1997).

The government and civil society are dependent on each other when it comes to service delivery for citizens because government cannot deliver the services alone and civil society does not have enough resources to deliver (Respondent 5, 06-11-2018). The government funds civil society organizations because organizations know the needs of society best and can fulfill the service delivery function of government. The governmental official explains: *"CS can tell government 'my community needs protection against gangsters, I need jobs etc.' (...) That is the kind of stuff that CS needs to tell government so government can invest and resource the community so they do it at the right place and correctly. Addressing the needs of that community."* In this manner, civil society becomes an extension of governmental service delivery. Civil society organizations and the government thus have an interdependent relationship because both spheres need each other in order to survive. Respondent 24 (12-12-2018) explains that the relationship between civil society and government should be interactive and not confrontational and that this relationship has to be a good one: *"It is about working together. But it has not been like that. We need to rebuild the trust between government and CS and the acknowledgement by government that CS is an important stakeholder. And not see it as an opposition force. It's there as a positive."*

Thus, funding from government and a good relationship between both spheres are vital. The perspectives on the funding differ when government's perspective and civil society's perspective are compared. The government official argues (Respondent 5, 06-11-2018): *"Our partnerships are extremely good. Because of lack of money, government and CS help each other here in the Western Cape specifically."* However, a civil society actor in the housing service (Respondent 14, 23-11-2018) stresses that the government does not simply provide funding: *"They [government] might provide salaries or training. They will provide more technical assistance like sites for training and things like*

that. Varied types of capacity development. But it won't be like core funds." In order to receive governmental funding, organizations have to comply to strict rules and procedures which are mentioned to be extremely bureaucratic according to the respondents. The governmental official argues that these procedures and regularly checks are crucial because of issues related to corruption scandals. He sketches an example of a children's center, misusing governmental funding:

"We went deep into these women's books, we found that when the money comes in we would see slips for the Spurs steak house, for 5000 ZAR. We even got proof where she draws money from the ATM at Grand West Casino at 2 o'clock in the morning from that account. She denied it, never used that money to gamble." (Respondent 5, 06-11-2018).

This section showed that the government and civil society are mutual dependent on each other when it comes to funding and service delivery. Thereby, the perspectives on this relationship differ when the government's and civil society's perspective are compared. In general, the civil society actors wish to receive more funding from the government but the governmental official explains that this is not possible because of too little resources. Söderbaum (2007b) stresses that the relationship between civil society and the government becomes complex when the government funds civil society because this affects the autonomy of the civil society sphere. The relationship becomes even more complex when actors from government and actors from civil society have intimate relationships. Within the African context, there is a distinction between 'included' and 'excluded' actors from civil society; actors that are included have intimate relationships with the ruling government which affects their functioning as autonomous civil society actors and makes them dependent on the ruling regime for survival (Söderbaum, 2007b). Civil society in South Africa is unable to exist as a diverse field of organizations when the government keeps holding a grip on these organizations (Glaser, 1997). The actors that are excluded are mainly the more critical forces that challenge the existing patrimonial power and are ignored by the regime and thus experience difficulties in striving for change (Söderbaum, 2007b). We can argue that the relationship between government and civil society is dependent on the character of the civil society organization. This sectioned showed the blurriness of the relationship between civil society and the government in South Africa.

4.2 Representation of interests

According to the literature, one would expect civil society to be a reflection of the community's interest and to represent society as a whole. However there is empirical evidence that (international) donors influence the agendas of civil society organizations in the Global South. This section will show that civil society in South Africa tends to speak to the interests of the communities, although in practice (international) donors often impinge on civil society's agenda. Two main themes emerged from the interview data namely the representation of the society as a whole and the relationship between the civil society organization and its donors. It seems important to note, when the respondents were asked about their organization's relationship with donors, their answers often remained vague or incomplete.

4.2.1 The representation of society's interests

It is expected that civil society represents the voice of the society as a whole, including the often unheard voices, and influences the governmental and public sphere (Urbinati and Warren, 2008). The data was reflective of several patterns regarding the representation of society as a whole. Civil society in South Africa tends to reflect the fragmented society's interests including the marginalized and minority groups, the vulnerable and underprivileged people and those who often remain voiceless. Respondent 1 (25-10-2018) emphasizes this function of civil society: *"CS should also represent the voices of the marginalized and unheard. The people that are not represented in political systems, in leadership structures. CS can fulfill that niche of representing those marginalized voices."* Civil society engages with grassroots groups in order to understand what their interests are and puts those on the organization's agenda (Respondent 30, 23-01-2019) and identifies the interests of the community and addresses this to the government so they can invest in the community (Respondent 5, 06-2018).

Critical towards representation

Many respondents argue that civil society *should* represent the interest of the communities and society as a whole but they are aware that this unfolds differently in practice. In general, respondents critique civil society's representation of interests. South African civil society is often embodied by a representation of NGO's interests. This overrules the voices of the smaller yet very strong community-led groups that are not formally organized into an NGO (Respondent 14, 23-11-2018; Respondent 20, 03-12-2018). The larger, formally organized organizations have a less good understanding of what the pressing issues in a society are (Grugel & Bishop, 2014: 141-142). Civil society in South Africa is dominated by the agendas of the bigger (international) NGOs,

which does not necessarily meet the interests of society or makes a significant impact on the key issues (Respondent 11, 15-11-2018).

Respondent 14 (23-11-2018) explains that NGOs base their agendas on an indicator system that identifies what kind of development the country needs. She argues that this undercuts the natural formation of a community organization because the needs of society are not reflected directly. Thereby, Respondent 12 (16-11-2018) stresses that civil society in South Africa *should go* beyond the formal structures of NGOs and involve the organizations, spaces and platforms that enable people to organize around their rights and values for their communities. She is critical about the representation of civil society in South Africa at the moment because marginalized groups remain often unheard in this manner. These findings are in line with the concern whether South African civil society is able to support the grassroots to address local concerns, which is a result of the involvement of donors (Leonard, 2014). NGOs in South Africa often push the agendas of their donors instead of those of the local concerns (Leonard & Pelling, 2010). The section here after will elaborate further upon the representation of (international) donors.

Another critique concerning the representation of civil society's interest is that that South African civil society is dominated by privileged voices of society: the white, high-educated, upper class. Most of the organizations try to get rid of the image of being a white organization that aims to represent the voices of the less-fortunate people. Respondent 3 (30-10-2018) explains that engaging with the community directly can change this image. Her organization goes to the townships and engages with the community directly via storytelling in a common language. In this manner, there is a closer link between the organization and the community it tends to represent. Several respondents argue that civil society organizations have to make better attempts to be more inclusive and a better representation of society.

Another problem is that underprivileged people often cannot access the civil society organization due to mobility challenges, lack of resources or they simply are not aware of the existence of the organization due to lack of access to information. People from the rural areas are less likely to have influence in the urban-based organizations and have their voices heard, as Respondent 10 (15-11-2018) explains: *"In SA, you have CSO that is way more active and affective that are closer to the urban centers. The rural areas are more disadvantaged. They are not able to get the funding and the resources they would need in order to have more impact. Where the ones that are concentrated in the urban areas, are the ones that are getting the attention and are able to access all those resources from a funding perspective, skills, from people that are donating. In SA context that is a very relevant perspective."*

4.2.2 The representation of (international) donor's interests

According to the interview data, civil society organizations can be divided into those that remain strictly independent from (inter-)national donors and organizations that receive funding from (inter-)national government(s). Civil society organizations that function as a watchdog of government highlight that they remain strictly independent from any governmental funding because they want to be excluded from any external party influence. Respondent 21 (06-12-2018) explains: *“Because we challenge parliament and government so much, we know that if we get too much external funding, foreign funding, even if it is from philanthropic organizations, we could be said to be having a foreign agenda.”* Respondent 29 (22-01-2018) explains that remaining independent from donors is crucial for the functioning of the organization because *“By accepting money from the government when we are being critical to them, it would just not work.”*

The interview data shows that civil society organizations that act as a counterweight against government emphasize to remain strictly independent from their donors and only partner with donors if they have similar interests as their organization. Respondent 11 (15-11-2018) emphasizes that when there is no transparency regarding donor funding, it remains complex to understand which agenda is being served. As noted before, scholars stress that the interest of South African civil society is being affected by the agendas of their donors and this is negative for their functioning (Leonard & Pelling, 2010; Leonard, 2014). This helps us to understand why it is important for some organizations to remain independent from donors or to not accept donor funding at all. Not all respondents share this perspective regarding the influence of donor funding. Respondent 27 (09-01-2019) argues that donors do not set the agenda of civil society; the organization itself sets an agenda and works together with donors that have the same priorities.

Funding from the South African government

As discussed, the South African government funds civil society organizations that function as service delivery agents of government. In the province of the Western Cape, the department of Social Development advertises for financial partnerships with civil society organizations and the organizations have to follow certain rules and procedures to receive the funding (Respondent 5, 06-11-2018; Respondent 9, 14-11-2018). Respondent 9 (14-11-2018) is very positive about the relationship with the department of government that funds her organization. Remarkably, since the partnership with the provincial government, the organization changed its project focus in order to receive more governmental funding. This example shows that civil society organizations change their agendas in order to receive governmental funding. Söderbaum (2007b) argues that the functioning of civil society is affected when civil society actors have intimate relations with governmental actors regarding their dependency on the government in order to survive. A common critique on

governmental funding is that it is based on a network of patronage and friendly politics (Respondent 20, 03-12-2008; Respondent 21, 06-12-2018; Respondent 29, 22-01-2019). In order to understand civil society, one must take the structure of society into account (Anciano, 2018). Especially regarding African societies, one must look at the neo-patrimonial relations between society and the state (Anciano, 2018) and patterns of inclusion and exclusion for civil society actors (Söderbaum, 2007b).

Respondent 24 (12-12-2018) explains that the government chooses strategically which organizations they fund. According to him, his organization should get money from the government for the work they do regarding education about democratic rights that are stated in the South African constitution. However, he understands that his organization does not receive funding from the government for holding the government to account or for taking government to court when the institutions do not function properly. Some organizations demand more funding from the government because they are filling the gaps in service delivery where government lacks.

Respondent 10 (15-11-2018) explains that her organization should receive funding from multiple departments of government because her organization provides both educational as well as health services which government should actually be providing.

Receiving money from national government ties the hands of the organizations to the government because of certain procedurals limits them in their actions. Respondent 23 (11-12-2018) explains that civil society organizations that receive governmental funding often remain quite mild in their judgments against government because they are dependent upon the governmental funding for their survival.

This section showed the complexity of national government funding civil society. Resources are needed for the existence of civil society organizations however receiving governmental funding questions the autonomy of civil society organizations. Where government lacks in the provision of services, civil society organizations are funded by government and work in accordance with government to fulfill this gap. In this manner, the agendas of civil society organizations are shaped by government. Some organizations mention that because of their agenda, they cannot receive any governmental funding because it would affect their credibility and legitimacy.

Funding from international donors

Civil society organizations do not only receive funding from national government; international donors, that are international NGOs and foreign governments, also fund South African civil society. Robinson and Friedman (2007: 659) find that South African civil society organizations often depend on internally generated resources and are an exception in this regard when compared to the rest of the continent. However, international donors remain the dominant source of funding.

A pattern discovered in the data regarding international donors is that foreign governments fund civil society organizations that share similar interests and values as the donor country. Respondent 23 (11-12-2018) explains that the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs only funds organizations and projects that are in line with their governmental agenda. A similar pattern is discovered regarding foreign funding that comes from international NGOs. Foreign organizations fund civil society organizations in South Africa that are like-minded and have similar interests on their agendas. In South Africa, civil society organizations that focus on the relationship between the state and the citizens instead of focusing on single issues, receive the most funding by international donors because these organizations reflect the interests of donors regarding the promotion of democracy (Hearn, 2001: 22). Since the democratic transition, South Africa received a remarkable amount of funding from international government and NGOs (Hearn, 2000). This foreign aid had a significant influence on the maintenance of an effective democratic system. The focus was mainly on strengthening the democratic institutions of the country, not on social services (Robinson & Friedman, 2007). The influence of the international sphere affects the autonomy of civil society organizations because they are highly dependent on international donor funding (ibid.).

The perspective of respondents regarding donor funding differs; some are positive about the relationship with their donors where others argue that they do not like to fulfill the requirements of their donors. Respondent 25 (14-12-2018) stresses: *“They [international donors] are generally very supportive in terms of understanding if something is not working out. Or you need to use the money for something else. They are very understanding about how we use the resources.”* In contrast to this, Respondent 1 (25-10-2018) mentions the influence of donors on her organization and that expectations between donor and community are not always the same:

“The type of work that we do is not always dictated by us but by funders, makes it sometimes less impactful and less accessible for people from poor communities and therefore less effective for them. (...) So when they [donors] dictate an agenda it does not always meet the needs of the community. You just have to do it. You are ticking boxes. It is not making any impact and it is not effective at all because it is not what the people acquire at that time.”

Respondent 11 (15-11-2018) explains that international NGOs fund South African civil society organizations in order to achieve goals on their own agenda and is worried about which interests are actually being served. He stresses that only a few organizations are able to stand for the key challenges of the country. International donors limit their support for groups that support the local communities and grassroots (Leonard, 2014). Donor funded NGOs can only contribute to civil society when the organization helps with the capacity building element at the community level (Leonard,

2014).

Respondent 26 (08-01-2018) is really clear on the fact that his organization does not accept funding from any foreign government or private companies because his organization functions as a watchdog of government and the private sector. The organization does receive funding from international like-minded organizations and the respondent is aware of certain donor influence. He explains: *“Of course donors all want to see some sort of impact. But we would not accept a relationship with any donor where they would begin to dictate the terms of what we do. It is very clear.”* In general, most organizations that receive international funding are to some extent aware of the fact that donors have influence on their agendas and that it is inevitable to go through certain tick box procedures. However, the respondents are divided in their opinion whether this has positive or negative effects for their organization. Respondent 14 (23-11-2018) mentions an example of an organization with an agenda on sexual health that shifted its agenda towards climate change related issues because the organization had to respond to the donor’s requirements. One organization refused to sign a certain rule that was imposed by their donor (The United State government) and as a result, the organization stopped receiving funding and had major financial problems. The organization did not want to be limited in its agenda by the donor, as the respondent mentions (Respondent 30, 23-01-2019).

Many civil society organizations experience a withdrawal in international funding over the past few years. Respondents mention that the international sphere argues that South Africa has reached a certain level of development and is now a middle-income country so foreign aid funding is better spent on other countries that have larger developmental issues. It seems that the interests of international donors regarding the promotion of democracy, as Hearn (2000; 2001) mentions are sufficiently met and are now shifted towards the development of other countries.

Since the ending of Apartheid there has been a significant influence of the international sphere on South African civil society (Robinson & Friedman, 2007; Hearn, 2000). This section showed that the international sphere and South African civil society remain somehow intertwined. Actors from civil society organizations express their concern about too much international donor influence on their agendas, which would affect the credibility and the effectiveness of their organization. Some actors from civil society organizations mention to remain strictly independent from any foreign funding because they do not want any influence of other spheres. This section showed different perspectives on international donor funding and what the possible effects could be for South African civil society.

Influence of national politics

Political parties and civil society organizations have in common that they both function as mediation between the individual and the state, however there is a distinction in the way they operate (Gershman, 2007; Mexhuani & Rrahmani, 2017). Civil society, opposed to political parties, do not seek to gain any form of political power in government and cannot directly translate their interests into national decisions as political parties are able to do in government (Gershman, 2007). The South African government has a policy that political parties are not allowed to interfere with the governmental funding of civil society; the funding is declared by governmental departments (Western Cape Government, 2017). Especially in the context of South Africa, where the government is dominated by one single party (the ANC) and lacks a powerful opposition, it is of high importance that there is an existence of an autonomous public sphere without the interference of party politics so people can independently organize and act as a counterweight against government (Suttner, 2004). However, in practice, South African political parties and civil society organizations often partner with each other in order to receive more funding and for political parties to win in popularity (Respondent 5, 06-11-2018). In this manner civil society and politics become intertwined. For a health democracy it is necessary that there is a distance between civil society and political parties (Gershman, 2007), which is not always the case in South Africa.

4.3 Strategies of civil society

There are various ways in how South African civil society organizations engage with government. Some organizations pressure government where other organizations seek to work together in a more collaborative way. Other strategies that are mentioned by respondents are partnering with like-minded civil society organizations and doing research. Some organizations use a combination of different strategies in order to achieve their goals because they believe to be more effective when occupying different spaces (Respondent 27, 09-01-2019). This section will elaborate first upon collaborative strategies and then on the disruptive strategies of civil society when engaging with government. In general, it is often mentioned that the government barely listens to the voices in civil society. This section will discuss the various strategies of civil society organization to make government listen.

4.3.1 Collaborative strategy

As mentioned before, civil society and government work together when it comes to the provision of social services. The national government funds civil society organizations that function as a service delivery agent of government. It is vital that both spheres communicate with each other in order to meet the required needs of society (Respondent 5, 06-11-2018; Respondent 10, 15-11-2018). An example of a collaborative strategy between government and civil society is the 'citizen based monitory program', which helps the government and society communicate better in terms of evaluating service delivery. A local government official and a community organization member physically walk around in the neighborhood with a scorecard and put the interests of the community on the governmental agenda (Respondent 18, 29-11-2018). The South African government is encouraging collaboration between both spheres through certain instruments. The gap between society and the state in South Africa can be bridged via communication tools provided by civil society organizations (Leonard & Pelling, 2010). Respondent 18 explains that a civil society organization functions as the mediating role to bring parties together and in this manner a shared agenda with shared objectives is established. The government has a certain commitment to the community to collaborate and to act upon the interests of the community. He emphasizes: *"Sometimes the CSO might need to play that mediating role for quite some time to build that relationship of trust with the officials."* In South Africa there is a need for more social networking in order to communicate local concerns towards government (Leonard & Pelling, 2010). This requires both trust between the community and its partners as well as trust among individuals in the community (ibid.).

Another strategy of civil society to engage with government is via summits; civil society organizations organize summits around pressing issues in society and invites governmental officials in order to push these issues on the governmental agenda. The idea is to create a dialogue between government, policy developers and organizations that have good connections with the grassroots (Respondent 25, 14-12-2018). However, in practice the desired outcomes are not always met because the government either does not listen or act upon what is discussed in the meetings (Respondent 19, 30-11-2018). Thereby, it is mentioned that it is quite unthinkable to engage with government on an individual level because governmental officials tend to ignore citizens (Respondent 16, 26-11-2018; Respondent 28, 18-01-2019). Thus, citizens rely on civil society when it comes to government engagement because they see civil society as the link between society and government (Respondent 15, 26-11-2018).

Civil society uses policy-briefs to express the interests of society to government. Both spheres have to work together when it comes to the policy-making process because government is eventually the actual policy-maker (Respondent 30, 23-01-2019). Government develops the legislation with the input of the civil society organizations and NGOs (Respondent 5, 06-11-2018). Robinson and

Friedman (2017) find however that only a few organizations have a consistent level of engagement in the policy-making process or make a significant difference to policy outcomes. Only organizations with skilled personnel, financial security and good administrative capacity are likely to be effective in influencing the policy-making process (ibid.).

Since the cooperative strategy between civil society and government does not always work, civil society organizations collaborate with other like-minded organizations in order to achieve their goals (Respondent 23, 11-12-2018). Reasons to partner with other organizations that have similar interests are to reach more people, to share expertise and to share funds (Respondent 1, 25-10-2018; Respondent 26, 08-01-2019). Working together with organizations that have more capacity in community engagement create opportunities to engage directly with citizens (Respondent 21, 06-12-2018). Another reason why civil society organizations collaborate is to create more trust among citizens in society. By engaging with people from different spheres and backgrounds, trust might be generated. Especially for a fragmented society, such as South Africa, it is important that people come together and learn to trust each other and to trust other organizations via collaboration (Respondent 12, 16-11-2018). Respondent 20 emphasizes the power of collaboration within civil society: *“We have seen with #FeesMustFall and with the information bill that when CS actually comes together, there is much more that can be achieved, then when things are done by each individual organization on their own.”*

4.3.2 Disruptive strategy

“Just because government does not listen to us the first time does not mean we have to stop” (Respondent 24, 12-12-2018). As discussed, there are various ways in how civil society tries to engage with the government. Not all movements within South African civil society use the tactics of ‘friendly engagement’ via collaboration with the state (Ballard, Habib & Valodia, 2006). Next to the collaborative strategies, there are also patterns discovered in the data reflecting more disruptive strategies used by civil society to receive attention from the government.

Taking government to court

A disruptive strategy does not necessarily include protests against government; various civil society organizations mention that their strategy includes filing court cases against government. Usually the reason to take government to court is when they are not functioning correctly according to the law and act outside of the constitution (Respondent 24, 12-12-2018). Filing a court case against government is described as a frustrating and time-consuming process with often little positive results (Respondent 10, 15-11-2018). This strategy is usually the second option when engagement with government on a more friendly level does not work (Respondent 21, 06-12-2018). Civil society

organizations also facilitate as a tool for citizens to start a court case against government. Often citizens in South Africa are not aware of their democratic powers and rights; here civil society functions as an educational and facilitation tool for citizens to be more aware of their rights (Respondent 11, 15-11-2018).

An example of a successful disruptive strategy from civil society is the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC). By taking government to court, the government eventually gave in to the demands of society (Respondent 21, 06-12-2018). The TAC mobilized people to campaign for their right to health care, especially addressing the failure of the government to deliver HIV/aids treatment (Ballard, Habib & Valodia, 2005; Heywood, 2009). The TAC pressured the government by using the rule of law in order to overcome the unaffordability of HIV/aids medicines (ibid.). Respondent 21 explains that the success of the TAC showed why civil society in South Africa is so important: *"We are going to have to watch this government very closely. If we don't, then they will do their own thing and that will not be in our interest. That's when we understood that we were going to have to fight. And even that we have to fight in the streets as well as in courts. Post that, slowly CS has strengthened. I think, currently CS is the strongest it has ever been!"*

Protests

South Africa has quite a history regarding protests; protests played a significant role in the fall of Apartheid government (Zunes, 1999). In post-Apartheid South Africa, protests are still part of the daily business. 2015 marked the year of two big students protests: Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall. Both these protests were able to flourish via digital activism on social media and allowed the youth to participate in political discussions and broader socio-political issues (Bosch, 2017; Pillay, 2016). Protest is seen as a legitimate strategy to pressure the government as long as it does not turn violent, then it becomes questionable whether the behavior is still civil (Respondent 18, 29-11-2018). Respondents mention that that civil society is currently becoming more aggressive and confrontational with government; people are upset because their rights are not being met (Respondent 5, 06-11-2018; Respondent 27, 09-01-2018). There are multiple different phenomena that influenced the genesis of post-Apartheid civil society ranging from unemployment and poverty rates to the policy choices of the state elites (Ballard, Habib & Valodia, 2005: 398). Most activism in contemporary South Africa is directed against government, particularly regarding the inability of delivering services to the poor (ibid: 399). An important role of civil society is to deal with the frustrations in society and make sure that *'it [anger] does not erupt in the wrong way but that it is dealt with'* (Respondent 6, 08-11-2018). The student's protests are often mentioned by respondents as an example of what happens in South Africa when the government refuses to listen to societal needs. A UCT student (Respondent 16, 26-11-2018) who witnessed the protests explains:

“I guess protest is a pretty big tool here. Like service deliver protests are a big one. I think it is that relationship of, not mistrust, you just question everything. You don’t trust the government with the things that they are doing. Government is not always very responsive to people, it ends up going to the protest level to actually be heard. I think their [government] responsiveness is really, really lacking!”

Multiple civil society actors stress that civil society organizations function as protest facilitators (Respondent 14, 23-11-2018; Respondent 21, 06-12-2018; Respondent 22, 10-12-2018 & Respondent 25, 14-12-2018). This is not exceptional for South Africa; in younger and weaker democracies civil society participation is linked with high rates of protest participation (Boulding, 2004). In these contexts, civil society organizations are resource providers for citizens to engage in collective action against the government; civil society gives a voice and opportunity to the people to express their grievances to the government (Boulding, 2004). People do not always know what their rights are and how to organize. Here a community organization can facilitate the tools for protest, but not take part in the protest itself (Respondent 22, 10-12-2018). Respondent 25 (14-12-2018) highlights that the actual protest should be left to the people in the communities and the civil society organization has the function to make the space available for protest. However, the involvement of a well-known civil society organization gives the protest more leverage and positively contributes to the achievement of the organization’s goal (Respondent 27, 09-01-2019).

Protests do not always lead to the desired response from government. Respondent 22 (10-12-2018) stresses that the community feels let down by government because the government did not listen to the demands of community that were expressed through the protests. Thereby, the data showed some examples of peaceful protests being unjustly interfered with violent action coming from the government (Respondent 22, 10-12-2018; Respondent 28, 18-01-2019).

4.3.3 Research strategy

Civil society organizations often do their own research and use it for various reasons. Research makes an argument of a civil society organization stronger (Respondent 1, 25-10-2018). Research can be used in both a disruptive and a collaborative strategy because it can give a protest or court case more leverage, however research can also function as an information provider for both the government and society. Respondent 19 (30-11-2018) explains that his organization does research in order to make their policy influence stronger and that the research has to be available for all spheres of society and function as an information tool to create openness about pressing issues in South Africa. Other organizations that function as a watchdog of government investigate in corruption scandals and publish their research in the media in order to communicate errors of governmental functioning to the public (Respondent 21, 06-12-2018; Respondent 24, 12-12-2018; Respondent 27, 09-01-2019).

This section showed that there are multiple ways in how civil society organizations engage with government and that certain strategies are not exceptional for the South African case. Government does not always listen to the voices from civil society so the South African civil society has to stay creative in ways how to achieve their goals.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion and Discussion

This thesis aimed to understand the unique characteristics of South African civil society by answering the following research question: *To what extent is the South African civil society in line with the standard notions of the Western civil society literature and to what extent does it exhibit a unique character?* This section will provide an overview from the main conclusions following from the analysis, discuss and interpret the results, elaborate upon the strengths and weaknesses of this research and suggest potential implications for further research.

5.1 Conclusion

One could conclude that South African civil society both shows characteristics that are in line with the Western literature as well as it exhibits characteristics that show its unique character and are to some extent in line with the African literature. Within the South African civil society there is a division between organizations that function as a service provider for the government in a mutually depending relationship with the government and organizations that function as counterweight against the state, strictly independent from the government. The division in the type of relationship with the government is linked with the function of the civil society organization. In order to hold the governing power accountable, the watchdog civil society organization strives to remain strictly independent from the national government. Civil society organizations that deliver social welfare services are in a mutual dependent relationship with the national government because they are dependent on the government for their survival when it comes to resources and government relies on these organizations when it comes to service delivery for the citizens. It is not exceptional for South African civil society to be dependent on the national government for survival; in African contexts, civil society actors often have intimate relations with government. South African civil society organizations are aware that the governmental funding affects their credibility, therefore organizations make the tradeoff between resources and credibility. Organizations and government act strategically when it comes to funding because the government does not support organizations that question their functioning and civil society organizations often do not accept funding because this would question their legitimacy and credibility.

There is a distinction in how the funding relationship with the government is viewed. On the one hand it is viewed as a positive because civil society organizations are able to deliver more and serve the needs of citizens better with the resources that are made available by the government. On the other hand, governmental funding is paired with bureaucratic procedures and is based on a system of inclusion and exclusion, which results in the fact that some organizations are excluded

from the funding process. The South African government is aware that the bureaucratic procedures are a threshold for civil society organizations to work together with the government, however these procedures are necessary because often, civil society organizations are subject to corruption scandals. From the results we can conclude that South African civil society includes organizations that function as an independent watchdog of the state and includes organizations that function as a service deliverer for the government.

South African civil society tends to reflect the interests of society as a whole yet it lacks inclusivity. The results indicate that civil society organizations are dominated by a privileged class and are not fully accessible for people from underprivileged communities. Thereby, South African civil society is for a large part dominated by the interests of donors; South African civil society is subject to the influence of external counterparts. The organizations align with national government and political parties which influences the interests that are being represented. Thereby, the international sphere has a significant influence on the agendas of South African civil society. Multiple organizations are dependent on the international sphere when it comes to the provision of resources. International NGOs and governments have supported the democratic process in South Africa since the last decades of the Apartheid. It is not exceptional for South African civil society that it works together with international donors to achieve its goals; the international sphere often has a funding relationship with the civil society of a developing country. There is a distinction within South African civil society actors on the perception of donor funding. Some organizations remain strictly independent from donors because donor funding would affect the functioning of the organization whereas other organizations accept the fact that donors influence their agendas. Organizations make a tradeoff between the provision of resources and donor influence. From the results we can conclude that South African civil society does not fully represent the interests of society because of the influence of donors.

With respect to the democratic transition, South African civil society played an important role in the ending of the Apartheid regime. Since the democratic transition, the relationship between civil society and the government changed from a confronting relationship towards a more collaborative relationship because actors from the anti-Apartheid civil society became part of the government and helped with the construction of new democratic institutions. The results showed that South Africans are not very positive about the functioning of government and use civil society to express their grievances towards government. Citizens rely on civil society organizations when it comes to engagement with the government. The results show that civil society organizations use both collaborative as well as disruptive strategies when engaging with the government. South African civil society functions as a communication tool for citizens and as an information provider. The results indicate that civil society does not really have a significant impact on the policy-making

process. On the local level, some collaboration between civil society and the government is found where community organizations function as a communication tool between society and the government. The data also showed us that civil society organizations in South Africa often work together in order to create more leverage and to fulfill the needs of society. A great deal of civil society organizations in South Africa facilitate the tools for protest. It is not exceptional that the South African civil society is a facilitator of protests because civil society organizations are often vehicles for protests in fragile contexts. The findings indicate that the South African government is generally not very responsive to the demands of civil society organizations. From the results we can conclude that South African civil society organizations use both collaborative as well as disruptive strategies when engaging with the government.

This research showed us that South African civil society both shows characteristics that are in line with what is expected from the Western literature as well as what is expected from theories from the Global South. To conclude, South African civil society is maybe not as deviant a case as expected, yet this research contributed to the insight and the understanding of South African civil society with respect to the dynamic context of South Africa.

5.2 Discussion and interpretation

This study finds itself in the wider discussion of African civil society and its relationship with respect to the scientific debate on civil society. As the literature discussion in Chapter 2 has shown, the concept of civil society is an important part of the democratization discourse. It showed us that structural factors do not sufficiently explain democratization and put an emphasis on the agency approach when explaining democracies. Chapter 2 showed that democratic societies today are shaped by spheres outside of the formal governmental decision-making processes and highlighted the importance of a vibrant civil society. The analysis of South African civil society showed us that civil society organizations tend to influence the governmental spheres, yet the data showed us that the South African government lacks in responsivity towards the civil society. Reasons why the government is not very responsive to civil society, are likely to be an effect of the character of the political regime shaped by the political culture and history.

As mentioned in the conclusion, it is not exceptional for South African civil society to have intimate relationships with the government. The interdependent relationship between civil society and government questions the assumption that civil society should be an autonomous sphere. Some civil society organizations remain autonomous because they function as an independent watchdog of the government and do not want to be affected by any governmental influence, which is in line with

the assumption that civil society should operate as an independent sphere outside of the government. The fact that some civil society organizations are in a mutual dependent relationship with the government are a result of the historical context of the country; patterns of inclusion and exclusion are a result of the characteristics of the neo-patrimonial regimes.

Chapter 2 showed us that civil society should represent the interests of society as a whole, especially including the marginalized communities and often unheard, underprivileged people. The analysis of South African civil society showed us that this is not always the case because external counterparts tend to influence the agendas of South African civil society and the underprivileged do not always have access to civil society. This is in contrast with the assumption that civil society should be open to everyone and operates as an autonomous sphere. The involvement of the international sphere hinders the practices of civil society on the more local level which questions who's voices are represented and whether the South African civil society is able to represent the interests of society as a whole. The influence of the international sphere also questions the autonomy of civil society as an independent sphere. Thereby, the influence of the national government and the alignment with political parties also question whether South African civil society is a real representation of society's interests. Narrow connections between civil society and the national government also hinders the functioning of civil society as an autonomous sphere. It is up for debate whether it is negative for South African civil society that donors, both national as well as international, influence the agendas of civil society organizations. South African civil society organizations are dependent on their donors for survival and international donors did have a significant influence on the development and strengthening of the democracy.

The results showed that civil society functions as a bridge between society and the state in multiple ways. Civil society organizations use both disruptive as well as collaborative strategies in order to engage with the government. The engagement with the government does not always have the desired results which leaves us with the question why civil society in South Africa is not able to succeed in this. It is possible that this is the result of civil society organizations having little resources because of patterns of inclusion and exclusion or it could be an effect of the political culture that indicates that government is not responsive to society's needs in general.

5.3 Strengths and weaknesses

This section will reflect on the research by discussing the importance and impact of each limitation and justify the choices that were made during the research process. The section hereafter will discuss the limitations as possible opportunities for future research. Despite the ambition of doing a comprehensive research, there are certain limitations to this study. Some characteristics of the

research impacted, affected and influenced the interpretation of the findings.

To start with, the own presence of the researcher, the skin color, gender and nationality may have interfered with the interview process. Despite the awareness of this challenge before the start of the research, this research method is chosen because of the opportunity to conduct unique in-depth information of the phenomena under study. In order to overcome research bias during the interviews, adequate attention was paid to making the respondent feel comfortable during the interview. To overcome a certain cultural bias, the researcher remained as neutral as possible and avoided the interference of own opinions. An important aspect to this was gaining mutual trust between the interviewer and respondent. Previous gained knowledge about South African cultural norms and values were very valuable during the interview process.

The results of the analysis were compared with and complemented by the existing literature on civil society in South Africa in order to provide a complete understanding of the phenomena and to check whether there are extreme outliers in the interview data. In this fashion, the interview data is understood in its complete context and therefore provides a good qualitative overview of the phenomena under study.

The field research took place during an exceptional time because the national elections were coming up which resulted in a tense atmosphere when discussing political topics with respondents. Thereby, during the field research period, there were multiple protests in Cape Town against the local government on gentrification issues. Those current events possibly affected the discussions with the respondents. If this research would be repeated in a different period of time, there would possibly be different outcomes.

When the interview process started, the research focus remained very broad. Therefore, the first interviews did not necessarily meet the internal validity of this research. However, the first interviews remained very useful in terms of understanding the context of this research and to gain experience in conducting interviews. As the research process moved forward, the research focus narrowed down and allowed to ask more direct question which affected the internal validity positively.

To conclude, the research sample only included actors from the Western Cape province. This might affect the generalizability of this research to the wider population. To conduct interviews with actors from every province was simply beyond the capacity of this research. Overall, a big strength of this research lies in the fact that the researcher lived in the South Africa for a total of eight months which allowed to better interpret the results and to construct a unique research on civil society in South Africa.

5.5. Further research

The limitations discussed in the previous section are possible opportunities for further research. It would be interesting to compare the results from this research with the results from research that has a bigger sample size and includes civil society actors and governmental actors from over the whole country. This research could serve as a base for new research on the funding of South African civil society and study the difference between organizations that receive funding and those that remain strictly independent from any funding. In this manner it could be researched what the exact impact is of donor funding on civil society organizations in South Africa. This research showed that South African government often does not listen to civil society. It would be useful for civil society organizations to find out why this is the case and what strategies civil society organizations could use best. A topic that was frequently discussed during the interviews was the lack of trust between citizens and government and among citizens individually. It was beyond the scope of this research to include trust as an extra variable. This research could serve as the base for further research on how trust relates with South African civil society.

Appendixes

Appendix 1 – List of respondents

To ensure anonymity of the respondents identity, the names and the exact position of the individual remains absent.

Number	Date	Organization	Function	Field of work
1	25-10-2018	Institute of Justice and Reconciliation	Program leader	Political and societal research
2	25-10-2018	Institute of Justice and Reconciliation	Program leader	Political and societal research
3	30-10-2018	SASNEV	Higher management	Culture, language and shared heritage
4	31-10-2018	Langa Heritage Foundation	Program leader	Community development (townships)
5	06-11-2018	Department of Social Development, Western Cape Government	Higher management	Government
6	08-11-2018	Development Action Group	Program leader	Urban planning
7	08-11-2018	Land and Accountability Research Center UCT & Rhodes Must Fall Movement	Researcher	Political and societal research
8	08-11-2018	University of Cape Town	Student	Fine Arts – Photography
9	14-11-2018	UMNYANA	Higher management	Community development (elderly people)
10	15-11-2018	Western Cape Forum for Intellectual Disabled	Higher management	Community development (disabled people)

Number	Date	Organization	Function	Field of work
12	16-11-2018	Institute of Justice and Reconciliation & South African Reconciliation Barometer	Researcher	Political and societal research
13	20-11-2018	SideBySide	Higher management	Community development (entrepreneurship in townships)
14	23-11-2018	Center Affordable Housing For Africa	Researcher	Community development (housing)
15	26-11-2018	University of Cape Town	Post Graduate Student	Political Science
16	26-11-2018	University of Cape Town	Post Graduate Student	Politic Science
17	27-11-2018	Golden Future University of Cape Town	Program Leader	Community development (township education)
18	29-11-2018	Human Science Research Council, Department Democracy, Governance and Service Delivery	Researcher	Political and societal research
19	30-11-2018	Alternative Information and Development Center	Activist and Researcher	Community development (minority groups)
20	03-12-2018	University of Cape Town	Professor	Political Science
21	06-12-2018	My Vote Counts	Higher management	Electoral accountability
22	10-12-2018	Bridges not Barriers	Higher management	Community development

Number	Date	Organization	Function	Field of work
24	12-12-2018	Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution	Higher management	Constitutional accountability
25	14-12-2018	Development Action Campaign	Higher management	Community development
26	08-01-2019	Open Secrets	Researcher	Private sector corruption
27	09-01-2019	Right2Know	Higher management	Access to information
28	18-01-2019	Ndifuna Ukwazi	Researcher	Land and housing
29	22-01-2019	My Vote Counts	Higher management	Electoral accountability
30	23-01-2019	Sonke Gender Justice	Higher management	Community development (gender equality)

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