‘You cannot eat democracy’

A study of civil society’s role in Zimbabwe from 2008 to 2013

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Abstract:

Throughout the last decade, the people of Zimbabwe have endured a prolonged political conflict, characterized by increased violations of civil, political and socio-economic rights committed by the state towards its citizens. In the aftermath of the escalated violence around the elections in 2008, a power-sharing agreement was reached, and democratic reforms and national reconciliation were said to be introduced. Civil society is often perceived as having an important role in democratization and peace building processes. Well-established theories within the field stipulate a positive relationship between a vibrant civil society and a successful democratization and peace building process. What remains unclear however is the way in which civil society is linked to these processes and what real prospects and challenges they face in positively contributing to peace and democracy.

This thesis investigates civil society’s potential as a democratizing force and peace builder in Zimbabwe. Moving beyond the assumption of civil society is an inherently democratic and peace building agent, the study argues that the civil society contribution in Zimbabwe is limited when seen in relation to the promises suggested by the theoretical assumptions. Without discrediting civil society’s importance in certain areas, it points to factors internal to civil society, as well as external contextual factors that impede its abilities and capacities. Furthermore, the study aims at contributing to developing the theory by pointing out that civil society’s abilities and capacities are dependent on its relation to the state and that its potential as a norm bearer is influenced to a large degree by the contextual political culture in which it operates.

The thesis uses theory on civil society in relation to democratization and peace building as basis for posing the research question. The analysis is then conducted within the framework of a functionalist model, as well as established academic literature that criticizes the overall positive assumption of civil society’s role in a democratization and peace building process. To answer the research question, interviews were conducted with various actors within civil society organizations both in Harare, Zimbabwe and Johannesburg, South Africa. Moreover, literature in form of civil society organizations’ internal reports, news articles, and recent case studies were used to triangulate the data collected during the fieldwork.
Preface:

My heartfelt thank you to all my informants, the first of them Shingie. This thesis would not have been thought of if it wasn’t for you, and not been possible without the assistance of the rest of my ‘Harare crew’. Thank you to Tayioana, Adriana, Teni, and Fungai for picking me up at the airport, letting me stay in your house, partying at HIFA and making me feel at home for the short amount of time that I was there. The fact that you also took time to share your opinions and thoughts on the subject for my thesis was priceless. A big thank you also to the rest of my informants, for giving me time, for explaining me the underlying aspects, and providing me with invaluable insight to the situation.

This study is founded on a genuine belief in the people as drivers of change, and civil society’s potential as a tool for a more democratic and peaceful society. I am impressed with the persistence and courage of civil society actors in Zimbabwe, and believe that they have the potential to improve the current difficulties.

I also want to thank my supervisor, Karin Dokken for believing in me, and providing clarity and direction in a process that can sometimes seem quite messy and chaotic. I have always looked forward to our tutorial sessions, and I know that such a relationship should not be taken for granted.

Throughout the period of writing I have had boundless support from mamma and pappa, Hanna, Solveig, and the crème de la crème at Pecos. Thank you for (at least pretending to) being interested, and allowing me to give you my more or less consistent analysis as the study developed. A special thank you to Ann-Therese for being my expert advisor and a dear friend at the same time. And, finally thank you to the love of my life, Olufemi, for being you.
List of Abbreviations:

ADZT – Artists for a Democratic Zimbabwe Trust
AU - African Union
CBO – Community Based Organizations
CCMT – Center for Conflict Management and Transformation
CISOMM – Civil Society Monitoring Mechanism
CCSF – Church and Civil Society Forum
GIZ – Deutsche Gessellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GPA - Global Political Agreement
GNU – Government of National Unity
JOMIC – Joint Organization for Monitoring of the Implementation of the Constitution
MDC-M – Movement for Democratic Change- Mutambara
MDC-T – Movement for Democratic Change-Tsangirai
MMPZ - Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
NANGO – National Assembly of Non-Governmental Organizations
NCA – National Constitutional Assembly
NPAID – Norwegian People’s Aid
SADC – Southern African Development Community
PF-ZAPU – Patriotic Front-Zimbabwe African People’s Union
POSA – Public Order and Security Act
PVO Act – Private Voluntary Organization Act
WOZA – Women of Zimbabwe Arise
YVN – Young Voices Network
ZEN – Zimbabwe-Europe Network
ZPP – Zimbabwean Peace Project
ZCTU – Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions
ZANU-PF – Zimbabwe African Nationalist Union-Patriotic Front
ZLHR – Zimbabwe Lawyers of Human Rights
ZWLA – Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association
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I am angry

- by Shingie Chimuriwo, Zimbabwean activist (1980-2010)

I am angry! I seethe with anger!
I am upset that I worry more today than I did yesterday.
The same yesterday that promised a better today.
The promise that came from words spoken.
Spoken by men who claim moral high ground and infallibility.
The same high ground they have since fallen from.
Fallen in front of the whole world to see.
The same world, the men are telling that no fall happened.
The happening that even after seeing, the world is mute and refuses to talk about.
I am angry at silence.
I am angry at words that are said because they sound good, but mean nothing.
I am angry at Old Men who are meant to be wise but destroy that illusion for the young!
I am angry about silence that allows Old Men who are not wise to continue to think they are.
I am angry that the old man IS NOT wise.
I am angry at the slow death of my belief and faith in human goodness.
I am angry at the slow dimming of hope.
I seethe at the knowledge that I cannot be associated with any other than the Old Man who has turned out to be unwise.
I am angry.
1 Introduction

This thesis examines civil society as drivers of democratization and peace building in Zimbabwe during the period from 2008 to 2013. Aiming to achieve a grounded understanding of its contribution, various aspects of its role as well as its limitations is investigated.

Recently, an established recognition of civil society as a tool to support democratization and peace building has resulted in a large amount of donor support directed towards the growing number of civil society organizations worldwide (Fischer 2006:2, Carothers 2006). The increased donor support and number of organizations is also true for the case of Zimbabwe during the period from 2008 to 2013 (Chiroro 2013:1). Scholars and policy-makers alike have argued that civil society function as a ‘school of democracy’ through civic engagement and participation (Belloni 2008:185). More recently, civil society has also been recognized in peace building processes, where the argument is that they function as ‘institutionalized peace systems’ in the aftermath of violent conflict (as cited in Belloni 2008:189). Ideally, civil society is said to recreate the societal fabric and bridge gaps between former enemies, as well as increase participation that foster democratic engagement. Nevertheless, there is no shared agreement of how civil society should be defined, and the debate concerning civil society’s role, capacity and legitimacy is on-going (Edwards 2009, Fischer 2006). Furthermore, due to numerous intervening factors that vary with the specific contexts and time periods of the process, there is an inherent difficulty in establishing a causal relationship between civil society and a successful democratization and peace building process. Nonetheless, the international donor community offers massive support for civil society with the aim of supporting democratization and peace building. This warrants a closer investigation of how these concepts are related.

The point of departure for this study is the interest in understanding the civil society’s role as contributors to a process of democratization and peace building. Whereas the overall theoretical assumption stipulates a positive relationship between civil society and a successful democratization and peace building process, scholars point to a need of a clearer understanding of civil society specific role and limitations (Paffenholz and Spurks 2006). By using the case of civil society in Zimbabwe, the following analysis will therefore identify
civil society’s different functions and the various obstacles to their work. This will contribute to an understanding of civil society’s potentials, as well as limitations as democratizers and peace builders.

1.1 Research Question

In an African context, Zimbabwe has a well-developed civil society that in various ways has played an important role in the country’s history after independence. Today, the main issue for a significant part of the civil society in Zimbabwe is the promotion of human rights and good governance, with the prospect of contributing to a process of democratization and peace building. The number of organizations is continuously increasing, and donors are heavily involved with support. The political environment that the organizations operate in however is characterized by restrictions of freedom of assembly and of expression. As a general pattern this is most evident during the campaign period before elections, with the repression reaching new heights with the contested elections in 2008. The following crisis has been defined as a one-sided conflict fought by the Government against the civilian population in The Uppsala Conflict Data Program, and estimated to have caused 253 fatalities at that time\(^1\). In the prolonged crisis, The Southern African Development Community (SADC), which had been long involved in mediating between the parties, managed to negotiate a settlement between the parties. This resulted in a Global Political Agreement (GPA) and the arrangement of Government of National Unity (GNU), introducing a period of power-sharing between the former adversaries\(^2\). The Mugabe-led Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) remained the stronger part of the coalition through its close ties with the Security Sector and the police. As the transitional government came to an end and new elections were to be held on the 31\(\text{st}\) of July 2013, the political environment was again marked by intimidation and harassment of the opposition supporters, as well as civil society organizations (Raftopoulos 2013:1-30). Those who are involved in advocacy for democratization, and vocal human rights defenders have usually been the most targeted actors. Yet, as elections draw closer Amnesty reported that state oppression became more

\(^1\) Uppsala Conflict Data Program, Conflict Encyclopaedia <http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/gpcountry.php?id=173&regionSelect=2-Southern_Africa#> [21.08.2013]
\(^2\) BBC Zimbabwe Profile (23.09.2013) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14113618> [23.08.2013]
arbitrary, making political activists, as well as civil society organizations in general all targets of harassment and politically motivated detentions.

This suggests that civil society is growing and vibrant, but also appears challenged by the overall environment. This analysis aims to understand civil society’s contribution to democratization and peace building, and the research question is therefore twofold, and as follows:

“What role did Zimbabwean civil society play with regards to democratization and peace building in the period from 2008 to 2013? And what were the limitations to their contribution in the same period?”

This chapter sets the stage for the forthcoming analysis by introducing the current debate, and outlining the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Current Debate

There is no unanimous agreement concerning the distinctive character of civil society. According to Michael Bratton this can be explained by the fact that civil society is “a theoretical concept, rather than an empirical one”, and cites Bayart who claims that it “is not necessarily embodied in a single identifiable structure” (Bratton 1994:2). Even though this is an important guard against generalization, scholars nevertheless seek to clarify the terrain and to reach a definition that allows comparison and analysis. Gordon White emphasise the need for a common definition by warning that if not, civil society risks being reduced to a “muddled political slogan” (in Burnell and Calvert 2004:2). It is not within the scope of this thesis to contribute to the debate that concerns the definition of the term itself. A definition that limits the scope to fit the purpose of this study has therefore been derived from Paffenholtz and Spurks’ article “Civil Society, Civic Engagement, and Peacebuilding” (2006). Here they limit the scope to a political context and describes civil society as:

“
A sector of voluntary action within institutional forms that is distinct from those of the state, family and market, keeping in mind that these borders are blurred. It consists of a variety of different and competing

---

Consequently, this excludes organizations, such as sport clubs and choirs, since they do not direct their activities towards the political sphere, even though they are autonomous and interacts with the public sphere. On the other hand, it includes organizations such as legal associations, who states work for a fair judicial system, unions when they are not controlled by the political system, and voluntary organizations that seek a common good through lobbying of the state. Defining civil society in Zimbabwe is a complex issue. Some would operate with a definition that includes segments from within the state and the private sector, others would highlight the role of the war-veterans, and others again point to the church as a crucial actor (informant 13). Whereas all these aspects should be remembered when referring to the function of civil society, I will have to restrict my analysis according to the definition of civil society given above. This study will therefore refer to the pro-democracy and peace building organizations when referring to civil society.

As stated above, civil society is often offered as a guarantee for a successful democratization and peace building process. Their contribution to democratization is by USAID’s Center for Development and Evaluation referred to in three points; the widening of participation, the protection of citizens, and by contributing to/guaranteeing political accountability (Bretton 1994:9-10). With regards to peace building, their involvement in activities ranges from early-warning systems, and the facilitation of dialogue and mediation, to initiatives for reconciliation and conflict management (Fischer 2006:5). In the theory chapter, I present the function model from Paffenholz and Spurks’ article “Civil Society, Civic Engagement and Peace Building” (2006), which is based on Merkel and Lauth’s ‘role model’, as well as Edwards’ ‘function model’. The model combines the approaches from democracy and peace building theory, and has been used as a point of departure for the collection of data.

The functions stipulated in the model are the following: Protection of the citizens, Monitoring for Accountability, Advocacy and Public Communication, Socialization, Building Communities, Intermediation and Facilitation, and Service Delivery. These will be further elaborated on in the theory chapter.

However, the mechanic relationship between civil society and a successful democratization and peace building is questioned widely (Belloni 2008, Fischer 2006, Barnes 2009). The
critique is based on the acknowledgment of civil society’s diverse character, as well as limitations when it comes to representativeness and capacities. The issue of its diverse character is for instance addressed in the book ‘From War to Democracy’, where Robert Belloni argues that the diverse character of civil society can mean that whereas it sometimes promotes peace and democracy, it can also in its nature be divisive and polarizing (2008:190). Other critics claim that civil society as a voice of ‘the people’ is not always the case and thus questions its legitimacy. The widespread use of external funding to build civil society in a post-conflict situation is also said to cause a shift of accountability to foreign donors instead of the local communities. Finally, several scholars point to that civil society’s working environment is contextual, and their impact therefore relies on different factors in each country (Fischer 2006:15-17, Barnes 2009:144, Chiroro 2013:25-29).

1.3 Methods, preparations, and delimitations

This thesis is a case study of civil society’s role in Zimbabwe during the period of Government of National Unity (GNU) from 2008-2013. The analysis will also provide a more nuanced view on civil society that challenges the perception that a vibrant civil society is a saviour of democracy and peace. It relies on a triangulation of methods, which is a common trait of case studies. This includes an analysis of academic literature concerned with civil society in general and about Zimbabwe in particular, data material from different organizations working with civil society in Zimbabwe, as well as interviews with 14 informants from civil society inside and outside Zimbabwe. To answer the research question, the different functions in Paffenholz and Spurk’s model were coded into questions in the interview guide, which provided descriptive data about civil society’s role in Zimbabwe during the GNU-period. In the extension of this, critical factors are presented, and categorized in three groups, named polarization, local embeddedness, and working environment. These derive from the informants’ own consideration of challenges and what they claim are limitations in their everyday work. The analysis contributes to a better understanding of the complex relationship between civil society, democratization and peace building. It also argues that contextual factors that determines civil society’s ability and capacity needs to be considered in the evaluation of civil society ability to play the role as democratizers and peace builders.
As preparations for the study, topics were discussed with various scholars and civil society agents, which gave me a better understanding of the field. Professor Anne Hellum at the Faculty of Law in Oslo, who has been working with the University of Zimbabwe on issues such as democratization, gender, and human rights since 1986, provided me with literature and an overview of the current political situation. Furthermore, Nina Bjerke Tawanda, who is Norwegian People’s Aid’s responsible for southern Africa, invited me to attend a seminar with Okay Machisa from ZimRights, which gave me useful insight to the situation for civil society in Zimbabwe. In addition to the contacts these preparations gave me, I have used my own network with various actors in civil society organizations in Zimbabwe, who were able to put me in contact with organizations both in Harare and Johannesburg. Due to the definition above, the organizations are selected on the criteria that they state pro-democracy and peace building as their main area of work, either on their web-page or in conversations prior to the interviews.

Interviews were conducted during a four weeks fieldwork in Harare and Johannesburg. The information was gathered through semi-structured interviews, allowing for follow-up questions and probing. Some of them were conducted in Harare, whilst the majority of them were carried out via Skype to Harare from Johannesburg, or with civil society actors who were based in Johannesburg. This decision was made based on the tense pre-election situation in Zimbabwe, which caused civil society actors to be reluctant to give interviews in their offices. It was in general difficult to get interviews with civil society actors without being introduced to them by a person whom they already trusted. The timeframe as well as the instability that characterize campaign periods in Zimbabwe also made it difficult to reach smaller Community Based Organizations (CBO) outside Harare. The effects that the selection of informants, the tense security situation, and the limited timeframe may have had on validity and reliability of the data will be further dealt with in the methodological chapter. The fact that it was challenging to get civil society to give interviews, especially in their offices, demonstrates their working environment, and is a finding in itself.

1.4 Contextualization, and motivation

Two case studies on different civil society organisations in Zimbabwe, have especially contributed to this thesis. The first being, a recent article by Professor in Law, Anne Hellum
where she explores the strategies of three civil society organizations and the way they handle the political terrain in Zimbabwe. According to her findings, these civil society organizations have maintained a high level of activity and have had some impact on the political terrain despite “the political party’s intolerance of dissent and lack of respect for social and economic rights” (Hellum et.al. 2013:38). This comprehensive study of activities and strategies gave me access to information that was not covered by my own interviews, and gives the analysis a broader foundation.

The second case study is Shingaïraï Chimuriwo’s master thesis on the civil society organization Woman of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA). Her findings highlight an important segment of civil society in Zimbabwe, which could not be reached in the course of this study due to the security situation around the time of elections in Zimbabwe. WOZA works through activist strategies, and the women involved are continuously in danger of intimidation and arbitrary arrest. Chimuriwo argues that the women groups’ activism mobilizes rural women, and increases participation beyond the urban elite that in other organizations is the most visible group (Chimuriwo 2009).

It has also been written extensively about civil society as a concept and its role and limitations when it comes to democratization and peace building (Bourne 2009, Edwards 2009, Fischer 2006). This study therefore aims to supplement former research on civil society’s role in Zimbabwe. Further, it will add to the academic debate concerning the role of civil society in post-conflict environments in general by exposing certain challenges to the current belief in civil society as a solution to democracy and peace.

### 1.5 Outline of the thesis

This chapter has presented the research question and introduced the general debate, which sets the stage for the forthcoming analysis. The second chapter will give a brief historic framework to provide the reader with the necessary background knowledge to understand what kind of political environment civil society in Zimbabwe operates in. Chapter three presents the theoretical underpinnings that are applied in the analysis. In the first section, the terms civil society, democracy and peace building are placed in a historical, geographical and theoretical context, along with definitions that are given to clarify the terrain. This is then
countered by various points of criticism from the academic literature against the overall positive belief in civil society as bearers of democracy and peace. Following, chapter three then provides the analytical framework for the analysis, based on Paffenholz and Spurk’s ‘function model’. Chapter four addresses the methodology, the issues of validity and reliability, as well as questions concerning the current research situation in Zimbabwe. Chapter five opens the analysis, which will be given in two parts. First, chapter five presents the empirical findings of the different functions civil society has filled during the period of The Government of National Unity (GNU). By applying the functionalist model mentioned above, civil society organizations’ activities will here be mapped and categorized into the various functions. Following, chapter six will introduce three critical factors that are founded in academic literature and on the data material from the empirical analysis. In light of this, chapter six will discuss the implications for the general assumption of support for civil society as a way to democratization and peace. As a whole, the analysis will provide a building block to the role of civil society, as well as contribute to theory-development. The concluding chapter summarizes the findings and implications, and contributes to further understanding of how donor-support can be warranted and improved. It suggests that the positive effect of a vibrant civil society on democratization and peace building processes is not a mechanic one, but rather a possibility that relies on other critical factors to be in place, and that support should be given with this in mind.
2 Background

Zimbabwe has a long and complex history, going back long before the colonial settlement and the fight for independence. A thorough understanding of the current situation can therefore not be fully accounted for within the scope of this thesis. Thus, this chapter provides the background information relevant for the following analysis, and will include a brief account of the political development in Zimbabwe from the time of independence. Beginning in the years where the liberation movement was turned into a political party in, moving on to years of civil unrest and growth of a new opposition, and finally ending with a short assessment of the current political situation within the timeframe of this study. Since the focus of this thesis is the role of civil society, actors included in this chapter will be restricted to those that affect the environment civil society in Zimbabwe operates in.

2.1 Zimbabwe’s Political Turmoil

After a long civil war between Ian Smith’s settler government and the two-headed liberation movement of Joshua Nkomo and Josiah Tongogara, Zimbabwe was declared independent at midnight between the 17th and the 18th of April 1980. In the immediate aftermath, there was great hope for the future amongst Zimbabwe’s citizens, as the appointed Prime Minister Robert Mugabe promised reconciliation and prosperity for the new nation. The early years of independence seemed to live up to the high expectations, and the country became known as the breadbasket of the region, due to its export of wheat. The international community saw Zimbabwe’s as the success story in southern Africa, as independence was characterized by stability and improved living standards for the people. Nonetheless, the success was short lived and prosperity turned into a prolonged political and economic crisis, making the country world famous for all the wrong reasons (Bourne 2011:xvi, 97, Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2011:82, Sachikonye 2002:13).

2.1.1 1981-2000: From Prosperity to Poverty and Repression

One of the reasons for the West’s celebration of Zimbabwe’s post-independence policy was their reconciliation with the former colonizers under Ian Smith’s rule. The reconciliatory practice did not include the opposition against ZANU-PF that formed in Matabeleland. This
was the area of the Ndebele-speaking people, and where the other wing of the liberation movement, the PF-ZAPU, had most of their supporters. It reached new heights in 1983 when Mugabe decided to send in his North Korean trained troupes, The Fifth Brigade, to “wipe out the dissidents”. The massacre, which is referred to as the *Gukurahundi*[^4], had outspoken orders from Mugabe and his ZANU-PF, and was horribly violent. The perpetrators made no distinction between civilian and combatants, and the result was approximately 20,000 dead, 7,000 injured and hundreds of thousands victims of intimidation and political violence (Bourne 2011:107, Dashwood and Pratt 1999:230). Eventually, appeals for peace by the Catholic Churches made the two parties sign a coalition agreement, and end the violence. The Unity Accord in 1987, made the PF-ZAPU leader Nkomo vice-president, while Mugabe remained President. The inclusive government merged the two parties, and a de facto one-party state was created. ZANU-PF’s role as the dominant party involved a high priority to what Mugabe still refers to as policies of ‘national unity’, justifying a repressive and authoritarian character, where there is little tolerance for political opposition. The underlying logic that was presented by ZANU-PF was that the price to pay for peace and stability is the absence of a pluralistic political debate (Raftopoulos 2013:5).

As a consequence of the restricted political space, a united opposition long struggled to form in Zimbabwe. ZANU-PF had made it clear what happens to those who oppose the regime during the Gukurahundi, and by continuously arresting competing political players they managed to create a culture of fear and intimidation. On paper, however, Zimbabwe was a multiparty democracy, allowing for opposition parties to form and holding regular elections (Dashwood and Pratt 1999:232-236, Bourne 2011:96).

In these early years of independence, civil society in Zimbabwe was cooperating with the government in areas of development, which included sharing the ideals and values of the liberation struggle and a socialist ideology. The government also presented itself as supportive of workers’ rights, and was instrumental in creating the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Union (ZCTU), which was essential for emergence of the opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) that formed in the late 1990ties. Throughout the 1980s and some years into the 1990s, civil society mostly consisted of service providing organizations, and organizations that praised government policy. The *Gukurahundi* attack by government in

[^4]: In Chishona *Gukurahundi* means: “The rain that washes away the chaff before the spring rains” (Bourne 2011:107).
Matabeleland did not cause a significant uprising amongst NGOs, apart from the Catholic Church’s call for negotiations and an end to violence. Their reluctance to criticize the regime remained well into the 1990s, keeping them from protesting and focusing on cooperation instead of confrontation. The Private Voluntary Organizations Act (PVO), was introduced to regulate the NGO sector and caused the banning of some grass root organizations. Yet, it was met with little opposition in the beginning. But as the economic situation deteriorated in the late 1990s, and the political environment became increasingly hostile, this gradually changed. A number of advocacy groups and organizations addressing human rights issues and democracy formed, with an increased focus on free and fair elections (Chiroro 2013:8-11, Dorman 2003:847).

There had been no meaningful political opposition party until the year of 1999 when the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was formed. The earlier attempts at forming an opposition party had been done due to disagreements over personalities and not policies, and were not able to mobilize substantial support (Dashwood and Pratt 1999:235). The MDC differed by being founded on a coalition between the labor unions, the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Union, as well as segments from civil society. This gave them already a broadly based foundation from the early onset, and distinguished them from earlier opposition parties. Consequently, the movement was to be the first constellation able to threaten ZANU-PF’s monopoly of power since independence. The challenge it posed to ZANU-PF led to a mobilization among civil society against the ruling party and introduced a protracted period of political conflict (Bourne 2011:127-159). Their campaign was introduced at the first congress in 2000, where Morgan Tsvangirai, the former general secretary in ZCTU, was elected president of the party.

2.1.2 2000-2002: Constitutional Reform and Land Reform

The introduction of Economic Structural Adjustment Programs (ESAP) forced a shift from the government’s original welfare oriented policies towards privatization, leading to decreasing standards of living for the public (Dashwood and Pratt 1999:237). Subsequently, ZANU-PF’s continued political oppression in the late 1990s started to stir the political climate and paved way for increased political participation and opposition amongst the

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population. Parallel with the forming of the MDC, the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) was formed. The NCA grew out of a coalition of over 100 NGOs and community-based organizations (CBO) in Zimbabwe. Forming around the demand for a constitutional reform, they became the most disparate and largest coalition of groups to form around a policy issue in Zimbabwe since independence. The main focus was the illegitimacy of the current constitution, which they claimed was no longer reflecting the will of the people after numerous amendments from ZANU-PF. From 1997 the NCA initiated broad based debates to educate the public about constitutional issues, which proved to serve as arenas for the public to voice their criticism. In 1999 however, government reclaimed the process, and formed their own Constitutional Council, which excluded the NCA from the formal process. They went on to hold independent public hearings, which eventually led to the constitutional referendum in 2000. This constituted an important shift in the way politics had been done since independence. Civil society’s initiative had pushed ZANU-PF to open the floor to the public, which resulted in devastating critique of the regime, and the fact that the government’s drafted constitution eventually was rejected in the referendum legitimized the existence of organizations and ideas outside the political party (Dorman 2003).

At the same time, the MDC was also preparing their first political campaign. Together with the civil society the MDC advocated for a no-vote in the referendum proposing a new constitution. They claimed that the initial process to reach a more democratic constitution had been hijacked by the government and no longer reflected the will of the people. In the run up to the elections, the MDC presented themselves as an alternative political power towards the 2002 presidential elections. The majority’s rejection of the proposed constitution took ZANU-PF by surprise. With the coming parliamentary elections in 2000, and the presidential elections in 2002 in mind, this led to a massive increase in the government’s crackdown on the opposition. The possibility of losing power was unacceptable to the Mugabe-regime, and the party sought new ways of consolidating their support (Bourne 2011:162-164).

The new constitution was also intended to address the legal transfer of land, which had long been a claim by the war veterans from the liberation struggle. They claimed that true independence implied a redistribution of land from the white settlers’ large scale farms to small scale black Zimbabwean farmers. Since the 1990s, occupations of large-scale farms had become more aggressive, and the government was looking for a way to solve the issue. As the constitution was rejected, the war veterans launched a massive increase in violent land
occupations, which forced many white Zimbabweans to leave the country. This led to massive protests by the international community and this became a contested issue also inside Zimbabwe\(^6\) (Murisa and Helliker 2011:113-115). President Mugabe however, bowed to the War Veterans, prolonging the liberation-struggle to the question of land-distribution, saying that the: “power of the people must now be followed by land to the people” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2011:11). The controversial land-redistribution, a continued downturn in the economy, as well as the new political power-struggle, has named the following years; ‘The Crisis’.

2.1.3 2002-2007: The Crisis

The presidential elections in 2002 are important as they mark a peak in repression, and the beginning of a political power-struggle. Moreover, it was also a time of increased involvement of the public in politics. Leading up to the 2000s a vibrant civil society had emerged, which had changed from being largely supportive of the government to increasingly contest the totalitarian tendencies of ZANU-PF. Both ZCTU and the NCA, alongside several other civil society organizations, had been prominent in the forming of the MDC. This made the government dismiss the civil society as merely a fundraising arm for the opposition, and exclude them from the political spectrum (Chiroro 2013:11). According to Dorman (2003), this shift from inclusion to exclusion is what “set the stage for the repressive and coercive politics of 2000 and beyond” (Dorman 2003:845).

In the following years, the rule of law was no longer guaranteed, and civil and political rights were increasingly threatened. One example of the repressive environment is the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), launched in the run-up to the 2002 presidential elections by the government. The new laws severely limited the chances of public assembly and gave the government power to close down independent media. The political climate became increasingly hostile, where MDC was delegitimized as puppets of the west, and portrayed by Mugabe as, “a counter revolutionary Trojan horse contrived and nurtured by the inimical forces that enslaved and oppressed our people yesterday” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2011:15).

\(^6\) The redistribution of land is by some argued to be the most important challenge to the neo-colonial state in Africa under neo-liberalism, whereas others see it as a ‘retreat from a development project’ or signifying the “end of modernity” (as cited in Murisa 2011:114)
The political parties also started to face challenges internally. Due to being a formation of diverse organizations, the MDC had little in common beyond the goal of removing the current regime and decided to split in 2005. The new formation became known as the MDC-M, named after its leader Arthur Mutambara. The original formation was re-named MDC-T after Morgan Tsvangirai. There was also fractionalization within ZANU-PF, and their support in the rural areas was not as strong as it had used to be. In 2000 the government launched a program of land seizure from white farmers, claiming to take back land that belonged to ‘Zimbabweans’, as an attempt to regain rural support. The security forces were also playing an increasingly important role, and boundaries between the government, the military and the police force were blurred (Bourne 2011:160-188).

The economic decline that had started to show during the 1990s was further exacerbated in the wake of the millennium, which led to a situation where the state could no longer provide basic services for its citizens. Unemployment rose, food was becoming scarce in the supermarket, and inflation was galloping. In spite of ZANU-PF’s overall rigged victory, the parliamentary elections in 2005 showed that the party had lost substantial support in urban areas. As a response, the government launched the Operation Murambatsvina, which was said to be a cleanup campaign to ‘restore order’ in urban areas, by cracking down on the informal economy. Bulldozing around 700 000 homes, they left 2.4 million people displaced, consequently reaping international condemnation for the operation’s violation of human rights. The ‘operation’ targeted areas where the opposition was known to have a large support, and meant to teach dissidents a lesson. However, people reacted contrary to the party’s assumption and the Murambatsvina only raised the resistance in urban informal settlement (Bourne 2011:186-197, Bratton and Masunungure 2006).

In 2006/2007, the operation Murambatsvina, as well as the increasing humanitarian crisis, led a coalition of civil society organizations to launch the ‘Save Zimbabwe Campaign’, raising concern for the aggravating situation in the country. The regime responded with an attack during a ‘prayer day’ to pray for the country organized by civil society in collaboration with the church. This led to Tsvangirai being severely beaten by the police and arrested alongside several other opposition players from MDC and civil society. This brought on an

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8 In Chishona meaning “one who refuses dirt”, or more colloquially “Operation Drive Out Rubbish” (Bretton and Masunungure 2006:24).
international outcry, which eventually resulted in the involvement of SADC to mediate between the parties. However, in spite of international attention and SADC’s involvement, repression of civil society further increased in the run up to elections in 2008. In this period human rights violations, such as arbitrary imprisonment and torture were becoming the name of the game when the regime was responding to critique (Raftopoulos 2009:229).

2.2 The Government of National Unity

The election results in 2008 declared the joint opposition, the MDC-T and MDC-M, as winners. Tsvangirai also had won a majority of votes over Mugabe the first round of the presidential elections. ZANU-PF however, was not prepared to give up its power. Whilst going for the second round of the presidential elections they used brute force to show the people what would happen to those who choose to vote for the opposition. During this period state-violence was claimed to have been: “(…) the worst seen since the Gukurahundi” (Raftopoulos 2009:229). Furthermore, Uppsala Conflict Encyclopedia refer to the period around the elections in 2008 as a one-sided conflict of the government against civilians. Due to serious attacks on his supporters, Tsvangirai decided to withdraw from and boycott the second round of the presidential elections, leaving Mugabe to be sworn in as president on the 29th of June 2008.

The illegitimacy of the second round of the presidential elections, international attention, as well as a declining economy, persuaded the parties to agree to negotiations led by SADC in the aftermath of the elections to stabilize the situation. At that time ZANU-PF’s legitimacy had been seriously weakened by hyperinflation, state violence, and state incapacitation. The opposition on the other hand was weakened by the internal fissure that had led to the split in 2005. Despite being the winners of the elections, the opposition agreed to a negotiated settlement where they were subordinate partners to ZANU-PF (Alexander and McGregor 2013:757). Following mediation, the Government of National Unity (GNU) was formed between the two wings of the MDC and the ZANU-PF. The “Global Political Agreement” (GPA), which was set out to introduce democratic reform and a stabilization of the economy, was signed on the 15th of September, and entailed a power sharing agreement in which

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Mugabe served as President and Tsvangirai as executive Prime Minister. The constellation was however, less than harmonious. The MDC formations had accepted to join the inclusive government with a heavy heart, and the GNU was marked by continued mistrust between the parties. ZANU-PF proved its discontent by continuously disrupting reforms laid out by the GPA, and largely kept up the violent repression of those who were seen as MDC supporters. It was also clear that ZANU-PF still held the upper hand, as the judiciary and police functioned increasingly as an arm of the party, and the military stated openly that it would support no other leader than Robert Mugabe (Raftopoulos 2009:231, Bourne 2011:196-208). Security chiefs and ZANU-PF also bluntly refused key reforms, such as human rights education for state institutions and a depoliticizing of the state media (Raftopolous 2013:7).

Civil society’s reaction to MDC’s acceptance of the settlement was reluctant. Some organizations focused on the necessity of settlement to achieve peace, other more radical groups demanded accountability for the violations that had been previously conducted before any agreement could be signed. In many ways, the MDC abandoned the civil society organizations, which historically had been their key allies, and many of the organizations saw it as the MDCs bowing to the pressure of ZANU-PF (Alexander and McGregor 2013:757). The GPA was criticized for being made out of a secretive and flawed process, and for dismissing any substantial role of civil society by allocating the process of drafting a new constitution to parliament. The civil society was also left out of the Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (JOMIC), which was limited to the three main parties to monitor the implementation of the GPA. Moreover, the civil society largely deemed the institutions set that were out by the GPA to promote national healing insufficient and dismissed propositions to prosecute those responsible for political violence as superficial. For a large part of civil society, the GNU remained an illegitimate government as it did not reflect the outcome of the elections. Yet, the GNU would function as the country’s government for almost five years, and eventually civil society had to adapt to their new environment, and develop appropriate responses to it (Bourne 2011:200-218, Chiroro 2013:11-23, Raftopolous 2009:231).

2.2.1 2008-2013: Improved Economy, Continued Repression
The economy and humanitarian situation for the population has improved compared to the period around the 2008 elections. However, most of the democratic reforms envisaged in the GPA has not been implemented, and the increasing politicization of state institutions continues to threaten basic human rights (Informant 10). The new constitution, which was signed into law on the 22nd of May 2013, recognizes the right to personal security, prohibits torture, and guarantees the freedom of assembly and association as well as freedom of expression and of the media. However, the continued withholding of these rights by the state system proves that what has been achieved on paper, is not so easily transferred into reality on the ground (Raftopoulos 2013:intro). ZANU-PF has strengthened its patronage through the control of the natural resources of diamonds and minerals, and legitimacy of the sole commander of the security forces, which is used as an arm of government (Tendi 2013:843). Recent research also suggests that the upsurge of liberation-struggle rhetoric by ZANU-PF, and use of patronage-economies has increased state institutions loyalty as well as the population’s general support (Alexander and McGregor 2013:760).

The increase of state institutions’ loyalty with ZANU-PF has had implications for the civil society’s working environment and sometimes their safety. Whereas the early phase of the GNU saw some reduction in human rights violations, the period before the elections in 2013 saw an increase in the repression of civil society again. This signals that ZANU-PF still has no interest in having a critical civil society as part of the political system. Moreover, recent reports by Amnesty International and Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, show that the country recently has been sliding back into its violent past, and that human rights abuses still are met with impunity10. As SADC and African Union are the guarantors of the GPA, they have been requested to put more pressure on the Zimbabwean government and security forces to end violence and intimidations as the elections are getting closer11. Several civil society organizations are thus heavily involved in lobbying the southern African governments, as well as the African Union’s head quarter in Ethiopia.

During the period of GNU, civil society has had to find an independent role and new responses to the new political structures. Their working environment however, has at the

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<http://www.zimbabweeurope.org/sites/default/files/ZIMBABWE%20GPA%20IMPLEMENTTION.pdf>  
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same time continued to be marked by intimidation and repression. This study explores the role of civil society with regards to democratization and peace building during the GNU-period. The following chapter will introduce the theoretical framework for the forthcoming analysis.
3 Theory

This chapter will give a brief account of the relevant theory concerning civil society’s role in democratization and peace building. First, a short assessment of the historical debate concerning civil society will be provided, as well as an overview of how the concept is perceived in an African context. The first section will also include a clarification and definition of the terms civil society, democratization, and peace building and the relationship between the three. Second, the chapter will present points of criticism deriving from the scholarly debate, which challenges the positive belief in civil society as a guarantee for peace and democracy. Finally, a presentation of a functionalist model will be provided, which in the analysis will be used to map the role played by civil society during the GNU-period in Zimbabwe.

3.1 Definitions and clarifications

The first section aims to clarify the concepts civil society, democratization, and peace building. All three are contested, and there are various conceptualizations of the terms. The definitions are therefore chosen according to the given context and to capture the relevant factors.

3.1.1 Civil Society – a ‘muddled political slogan’

The history of civil society in academic literature can be traced back to when John Locke (1689-1755) first argued that there is a sphere, pre- or un-political, which holds the task of protecting citizens’ rights and property against the state. Further, Tocqueville (1805-1859) saw civil society in relation to democratization, as a school of democracy. In his study of American society, he claimed that a network of civil associations limited state power, and functioned as a barrier to political despotism (Paffenholz and Spurks 2006:4, Wood 1992:84). This ideal view of civil society can be referred to as a liberal view with its roots in an Anglo-American tradition, where civil society is considered as protectors of the individual’s rights against the state (McCandless 2011:7).

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12 As cited in Burnell and Calvert 2004:2.
One of the most important scholars when it comes to further developing the concept of civil society has been Jurgen Habermas. He defined a healthy civil society as one “that is steered by its members through shared meanings”, which enables marginalised minorities to organise and articulate their interests towards the political system (Habermas in Edwards 2009:8-10). The political left has echoed this view, considering civil society as an arena for progressive politics where people are considered equal, and where non-violent ways of conflict resolution is promoted (Paffenholz and Spurks 2006:4).

On the other hand, Karl Marx questioned civil society’s civil character and representativeness, as well as criticized its embedded bourgeois character. He claimed that civil society was just another vehicle for the elite’s domination in society, and should therefore not be considered important for the development of society. The Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci promotes a middle way between the ideal and critical view (Paffelholz&Spurks 2006:4-5, Wood, 1992:83). He argued that civil society is neither a captive of the state nor autonomous, but rather a potential battleground for states and other powerful actors. He therefore argued that civil society is “a reflection of different groups trying to impose their values upon society and the state institutions” (in McCandless 2011:7).

Erin McCandless refers to the discussion as a rights/redistribution dilemma within the current understanding of civil society, which has its roots in the debates between liberalism and Marxism. The rights-perspective is hegemonic in international practice, and focuses on good governance, democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The redistributive-perspective on the other hand, emphasizes justice for the masses and equal access to resources such as land, which I will come back to in the case of Zimbabwe. It is also argued to comply with the rural/urban divide, where urban civil society is detached from the rural population’s grievances, and only represent the ‘bourgeois’ concerns (McCandless 2011:18). As shown in the background chapter, this discussion is highly relevant in Zimbabwe with reference to the pro-democracy and peace building organizations versus the war veterans, who some claim to be the true democratizers through the redistributive land reform program (informant 12).

3.1.2 Civil society in Africa

As the concept of civil society often has been explained through the evolutionary process of state building and democratization in Europe, its relevance of the concept in other places in
the world has been questioned and challenged. Michael Bratton (1994) has argued that the contours of African civil society will also be different from that of the West due to differences in socio-economic development and cultural attributes. Nonetheless, Dwayne Wood (1992), point to the similarities between the emergence of civil society in Europe under hegemonic rule, and the patrimonial nature of the state in many African countries. Furthermore, he finds the evolvement of associational life to be related to the urbanization of society under colonial rule (1992:83).

The Ethiopian scholar Fantu Cheru (2012) argues that the struggle for people power, which in a western context is referred to as civil society, in Africa first emerged through social movements for democracy and had their first expression in the anti-colonial movement. This was followed by the ‘second independence’ in the 1980s where citizens demanded political and economic reform, as well as multiparty democratic system of government. However, whereas these pro-democratic movements initially represented encouraging prospects for democratization, the majority of autocratic leaders have not moved beyond the holding of multiparty elections, and democracy remains a superficial concept. Civil society in Africa has therefore not led to increased participation by the people in politics, and can therefore not be equated to the concept in the West (Cheru 2012). Various Zimbabwean scholars, such as Sam Moyo and Brian Raftopolous argue along these lines, and claim that the “civil societies that have developed in Africa have not been shaped by or responsive to indigenous problems (…)” (as cited in McCandless 2011:11). As Gramsci, they claim that civil society functions like the state, where various interests and motives of powerful groups dominate, which again makes civil society, within the scope of this thesis, a messy terrain of diversity and contradictions. As a consequence, it is questioned whether they can be said to represent the broader public’s concerns or rather functions as a tool for those that are already holders of power (McCandless 2011:12).

Julie Hearn argues that civil society in Africa often is merely a part of a triad relationship together with the state, and donor agencies. They are expected to work in partnership with the government and donors, and are employed as a way of legitimizing various state-donor development strategies. As a result she claims that civil society’s potential for fundamentally challenging the status quo erodes, and that civil society in several African countries is rather applied as an instrument for stabilizing the existing order (Hearn 2001). Civil society in an African context is therefore said to comply with Gramsci’s theory, and reflect the wishes of
either powerful donors or the state (Hearn 2001:44). This is related to the debate on whether civil society has a potential as an arena for the population in general to voice their opinions, and their significance as a progressive force for democratic systems of government, which will be further elaborated on in the following.

Despite the debate regarding the concept of civil society’s relevance in Africa, a diverse pattern of organizations and associations are referring to themselves as civil society actors, and have become an integral part of the political, cultural and societal reality in many African countries today. During a panel discussion at the European Conference on African Studies (July 2013), it was argued that the fact that everybody is talking about it, demonstrates the relevance of civil society in today’s Africa. In other words, there is no smoke without fire. The scholarly debate is now more concerned with the nature of civil society more than its existence, and its potential as a driver of social change. As such, it seems that the existence of civil society in Africa has been established amongst scholars and policy makers.

3.1.3 Democratization and Civil Society

The belief in civil society as keepers of democratic norms has its roots in the establishment of civil society as a democratizing force in Europe in the early 19th century, where “the patrimonial rule was reduced over time with the spread of the notion that political authorities should be held accountable to the public” (Wood 1992:79). This is further amplified by the civil society’s struggle for democratization in Eastern Europe and Latin America in the 1970s and 80s, where civil society was perceived as the “good” force against the “bad” authoritarian state (ibid.). This section will give a definition of the term democratization, and how it relates to the concept of civil society.

The word ‘democracy’ comes from the Greek work *demokratia*, which can be translated as, ‘rule by the people’. In the twentieth century however, Joseph Schumpeter’s liberalist definition of democracy as, ‘the selection of elites in periodic elections’, has gained significant leverage internationally (Rakner et.al. 2007:6). What Huntington (1993) announced as the ‘third wave’ of democracy pointed to the increased number of countries that were defined as liberal democracies from 24 per cent in 1975 till 48 per cent in 1995. Their transition however, was measured according to the liberalist definition, and typically confined to the holding of regular elections. It did not imply movements in direction of what
historically have been the most significant drivers of democratization, namely socio-economic development and a strengthened middle-class (Harriss, Stokke and Törnquist 2004:3-4). Countering the liberalist definition, Beetham points out that, “the institutions instruments of should not be mistaken with their democratic purpose” (as cited in Sokke and Oldfield 2004:128). For Beetham the basics of democracy are: ‘popular control of public affairs on the basis of political equality’ (Törnquist 2006:75). A political system is democratic to the extent that it ensures these principles, and democratization will consequently always be an unfinished process (Stokke and Oldfield 2004:128). In the following analysis, democratization will therefore be defined as: “The continuous process of deepening democratic values, and popular participation”.

Increasing political participation and the safeguarding of democratic values, has long been related to the idea of civil society. As a somewhat indirect effect, Robert Putman has argued that civil society is “the microcosm for the development of democratic norms and practices” (Belloni 2008:185). The theory holds that membership in various organisations teaches citizens to play by democratic rules and socializes them into a notion of democratic norms. Civil society is seen as a school of democracy, as the step-by-step evolution of democratic norms within society will make democracy ‘the only game in town’. The expectation is further that democratic norms spill over from associational life into the political system, which makes citizens demand accountability and civil liberties from the state system.

Civil society is further argued to have a direct effect as a watchdog over democratic practices, holding the state institutions accountable to its citizens. Civil society is thus understood as a mechanism of checks and balances to state power, which will protect citizens from state oppression. This view echoes Tocqueville’s reflections of civil society as a barrier to autocracy, and is viewed by Larry Diamond as an undervalued component of bringing down authoritarian regimes and further consolidating democracy, in the democratization literature (Diamond et.al 1997: introduction). The scholar Célestin Monga further points out that civil society as a watchdog can function as ‘soft-pressure’ to respect democratic principles simply because governments are aware that they are being watched (Monga 1995). This however, presupposes that the government is accountable to its citizens, and that undemocratic practice will have consequences for its position as power-holder.
Civil society as protectors of citizens’ rights refers both to the political and civil rights, as well as the socio-economic rights. Yet, Stokke and Oldfield argue the discourse of democratization is often dominated by political and civil rights, and leaves out the socio-economic aspect because of its more complicated relation to democracy (2004:129). While political and civil rights are seen as an integral part of democracy, socio-economic rights are in a mutual dependency with democracy (Beetham 1999:114). Civil society relies on political and civil rights, such as freedom of speech, of assembly, and of association. These rights are also a prerequisite for democracy, as their absence would render any popular control over government impossible. Socio-economic rights on the other hand, have a more complex relation to democracy, and the two concepts should rather be seen as mutually dependent. Following this, Beetham argues: “The widespread absence of such rights compromises civil and political equality (…) and the long-term viability of democratic institutions themselves” (1999:114). Hence, the promotion of democracy is dependent on the enabling socio-economic conditions for people’s participation.

This section has provided a brief assessment of the concept ‘democratization’, as well as its relation to civil society. The historic connection between the two concepts relies on a perception of civil society as protectors of democratic norms, and an arena for popular participation. Current arguments see civil society as a ‘school of democracy’ and a watchdog over democratic principles. Below, the concept of peace building will be introduced. The concepts of democracy and peace are interlinked, but not necessarily mutually reinforcing. While democracy as an institutionalized political system is associated with peace, a democratization process is often ridden by violent conflict (Jarstad and Sisk 2008:32). As Törnquist point out: “Many people point to war as the historically most important factor behind democratization” (2006:75). Acknowledging this, Jarstad and Sisk’s emphasize the importance of a carefully designed transition, where trust and legitimacy can lay the foundation for peaceful democratization (Sisk 2008:240).

3.1.4 Peace building and Civil Society

Democracy builds on the acceptance of common values, but also a tolerance for conflicting interests. The scholar Dankwart A. Rustow describes democracy as a process of combining “division and cohesion, as well as conflict and consent” (Rustow in Anderson 1999:15). A
successful democratization should therefore entail ways of peacefully managing conflicts of interests.

The term ‘peace building’ has not been part of the political science literature for as long as democratization, and has yet to achieve a state of conceptual precision. Its success is difficult to measure, and depends to a large extent on how you define peace. Johan Galtung introduced a way of measuring peace by distinguishing between positive and negative peace in his essay “Violence, Peace and Peace Research” (1969). Whilst negative peace is achieved when the peace agreement is signed and arms are laid down, positive peace goes beyond the absence of war, and refers to the continued process of reconciliation, and is sometimes expanded to include the fight against social injustice (Galtung 1969:183). Originally, peace building was seen as preventing the relapse into violent conflict within a given time-period after the signing of a peace agreement. This refers to the absence of war, and echoes the negative peace definition. This view is also called a security-oriented view, and is used especially by UN peacekeeping planners (Paffenholz and Spurks 2006:14-16).

In his speech “Agenda for Peace”, in 1992, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali introduced a broader concept of peace building. It defines peace building as conflict-prevention through social and political reconstruction, and distinguishes it from terms such as peacemaking and peacekeeping. It refers to a society-wide reconciliation and state building process, which is applied in a context where a peace agreement has been reached (Jarstad 2008:27). It is a top-down approach, based on the level of state institutions and political elites. An even broader understanding of peace building builds on Johan Galtung definition of positive peace, which emphasises non-elite conflict resolution at a community level, and the eradication of social injustice (Call and Cook 2003:235).

Charles T. Call claims that a too broad definition becomes problematic as a measure for success as it equals peace with the eradication of poverty and inequality, and is therefore not useful as a measurement in actual peace building strategies. This is reflected in Paffenholz and Spurks’ definition in the article “Civil Society, Civic Engagement and Peace Building”, which distinguishes beneficial conditions for development and democracy, from the actual realization of the concepts. Drawing on this separation, peace building is defined as: “Ensuring the absence of state-violence, as well as the presence of social stability that creates
conducive conditions for development and democracy to prosper” (Paffenholz and Spurks 2006:16).

Even though the areas of peace and security traditionally have been considered the raison d’être of states, peace building is becoming increasingly recognized as a complex process that requires the efforts of a wide specter of actors. It is therefore also increasingly clear that civil society has a role to play in securing sustainable peace (Barnes 2009:132).

Their efforts have been recognized in various processes. On a more long-term basis, Ashutosh Varshney talks about civil society, as an “institutionalized peace system” (Varshney in Belloni 2008:189). Along these lines, Timothy Sisk and Christoph Stefens (2005) find that South African social organizations were essential for sustainable peace in the case of transition towards a consolidated democracy after Apartheid. Their mobilization for a peaceful transition contributed to a broader and deeper foundation of moderation within communities. The argument is typically made in the aftermath of ethnic conflict, given that civil society is understood to be crosscutting and therefore has the potential to unite former enemies around common values. This can potentially create interethnic cooperation and new social ties. Further, Catherine Barnes highlights the aspect of conflict transformation, as she point to civil society’s capacity to change people’s attitudes and the behavior that perpetuate conflict. She points to the example of structures such as “peace monitors” in South Africa and Sierra Leone, which have proactively been engaged in preventing violence through resolving local disputes as a pre-emptive measure. Networks of civil society organizations are also reporting emerging crisis and raising public awareness, to hinder those conflicts to spur out of hand (2009:134). The view of civil society as peace builders is congruent with Habermas’ view of civil society as an arena for non-violent conflict transformation, which is also often echoed by the political left.

Secondly, Robert Belloni highlights the importance of civil society’s role in service delivery for the sustainability of peace. In a post-conflict setting, civil society complements and sometimes takes over state institutions’ tasks in terms of service provision. This includes both tangible and non-tangible services, such as food-delivery, health care, trauma healing and demobilization of former combatants. In cases were the state is either unable or unwilling to fulfill its duties, civil society can fill the gap and thereby contribute to economic and political improvements, which is crucial for maintaining peace (Fischer 2006:5, Belloni 2008:185-9).
The section above started out with the relationship between democratization and peace building. Following, the development of the concept ‘peace building’ was given, and related to the concept of civil society. Starting out as a restricted responsibility of the states, peace building increasingly involves the involvement of civil society to ensure a broad foundation. Below, the perception of civil society as democratizers and peace builders will be nuanced by academic literature that highlights the various limitations to civil society’s position.

3.2 Criticism of the theoretical assumption

Paffenholz and Spurks stress the need to investigate the conditions and obstacles that affect civil society’s ability to play a constructive role (2006). According to critics, the actual civil society can be inherently hierarchic, lack a national membership base, and at times include uncivil actors for instance youth militias and informal criminal networks. There are already several contributions within the academic literature that suggest limitations to the effect civil society has on democratization and peace building, and the following section will present some of them (Belloni 2008, Paffenholz and Spurks 2006, McCandless 2011, Barnes 2009, Chiroro 2013).

3.2.1 Lack of Autonomy

The first point refers to the massive increase of external funding, as well as a concentration of civil society in urban areas, which has made scholars claim that civil society has become more accountable to international donors, and their middle class environment, than to those communities they are supposed to serve (Belloni 2008:200). Some argue that commercialization of the sector has led to a top-down approach, compromises the support of grass root initiatives in favor of bigger and more professional organizations (Paffenholz and Spurks 2006:25). In an African context this is often explained by the lack of organic development of civil society, due to colonialism. It is argued that rather than being a response to indigenous challenges, their origin has been a response to outside interests, due to globalization (McCandless 2011:11-12). In an effort to “create” structures of peace building and pro-democratic forces, outside actors have been criticized for undermining local initiatives and imposing their own agendas, often built on one-size-fits-all structures of democratization and peace building. A dependency on foreign donor money also implies that
local civil society actors will gain from a constant ‘bad’ situation, as their income will be reduced if the situation improves. Funding is also said to favor organizations that show matching interests with the international donor society, regardless of whether this represents society at large (Belloni 2008:204). Belloni describes this challenge of real local ownership with an African proverb saying, “the man with his hand is someone else’s pocket will move when he moves” (2008:203). This implies limited autonomy when it comes to the choice of issues that are focused on. The increased funding is also seen to massively increase the number of organizations that are being formed. It is often claimed that the donor-driven civil society leaves local groups in a subordinate position. Therefore, the increasing number of organizations does not necessarily mean an empowerment of the people. As Edwards states: “The number of NGOs is the easiest thing to influence, but also the least important” (as cited in Paffenholz and Spurks 2006:26).

3.2.2 The Importance of Context

Another aspect that scholars point to is the importance of an enabling working environment, which concerns both the relation to the political system and the socio-economic situation of a country. For civil society to contribute to democratization and peace building, they need to be able and allowed to do their work. McCandless follows this, arguing that the choice and strategies of civil society has much to do with the context they are working in. She further refers to the “political opportunity structure”, which is the feature of the political system that decides civil society’s abilities and capacities (2011:13). In the forthcoming analysis of the case of Zimbabwe, these aspects will be of vital importance to understand the workings and limitations of civil society.

When it comes to the relationship between state and civil society, the balance between cooperation and cooption is crucial. Even though civil society is dependent on a relationship with the state that allows for cooperation, it is also important to keep a healthy distance to maintain their role as a watchdog. This can be challenging. On the one hand, lack of cooperation can lead to a situation of mutual mistrust and difficult working environment for civil society, and sometimes cause the state to turn to oppressive means and intimidation. On the other hand, there is a potential that a too close relationship between civil society and the state might lead to civil society being used as an instrument by the state system, and the distinction between government and civil society becomes blurred. Such a civil society is less
likely to criticize any wrongdoing of the government, and can therefore not function as a watchdog, holding the state accountability to the people (Barnes 2009:144).

In countries affected by violent conflict, post-conflict characteristics of society challenge the evolvement of locally driven civil society. The interpersonal trust and cooperation that is required for collective action and cooperation to take place is often damaged. Because society is likely to suffer from polarization in a post-conflict situation, a consequence is often that civil society itself reflects and incorporates the same divisions, and therefore deepens divisions rather than bridging them. Collective action initiatives are difficult without relying on external funding due to the economic situation, where people have little or no income. The difficult economic situation can further make it difficult to mobilize the general population, if people spend their days making sure there is food on the table tomorrow (Belloni 2008:183-193, Chiroro 2013:25-29).

3.3 Analytical framework

This section will present Paffenholz and Spurks’ functionalist model, based on Merkel and Lauth’s (1998) function model and Edward’s (2004) role model. The first paragraphs will clarify how this model differs from previous approaches to the relationship between the civil society, democratization and peace building. Further, a presentation of the model will be provided, as well as an elaboration on the various functions and their connection to democratization and peace building processes.

3.3.1 The functionalist model

The conventional actor-oriented approach to civil society mainly describes what civil society is in relation to other actors in society. This approach has primarily been concerned with the debate regarding what actors that belong to civil society, varying between more or less inclusive definitions. Several scholars point to this approach’s limitations when trying to identify the objectives of different actors. This also implies that it makes it difficult to understand civil society influence on democratization and peace building (Paffenholz and Spurks 2006:7, Kasfir 2004:120). In order to investigate the impact of civil society, a functionalist approach is argued to be more useful than the actor-oriented approach. The functionalist model seeks to provide a theoretical framework, which can give insight to the
complexity of the role that civil society plays in various contexts. In their presentation of the model, Paffenholz and Spurks introduce seven functions that are understood as important aspects of civil society’s role in democratization and peace building. Below, the seven functions constituting the model will be described.

The first function listed is the protection of citizens, which is based on Locke’s perception of a pre- or un-political sphere that protects the rights and property of citizens against the state. According to this view, the state is seen as the coercive and hierarchic actor, whilst civil society stands for freedom and participation (White 1994:7). The protection function is often assisted by outside civil society organizations that support local organizations. This is done either directly, through accompaniment, or through interaction with outside actors who function as a watchdog for local organizations’ security (Paffenholz and Spurks 2006:27).

Second, monitoring and accountability is relevant both in relation to democratization and peace building processes. For instance, it entails the monitoring of elections, the investigation of human rights abuses, and the creation of early warning systems of conflict. It is a precondition for the function of protection, and closely linked to the advocacy and public communication function (Paffenholz and Spurks 2006:28).

Third, the advocacy and public communication involves lobbying, placing people’s issues on the agenda, and raising the awareness of topics considered relevant for enhancing democracy and peace (Paffenholz and Spurks 2006:29). This is in lines with Habermas’ emphasis on civil society as a tool to articulate the peoples’ needs and channel their interests (Edwards 2009:9).

Fourth, the socialization function sees civil society as a school of democracy. Citizens learn to play by democratic rules, develop tolerance for other opinions and together find solutions based on compromise. This can involve dialogue projects, reconciliation initiatives, and educational programs to promote attitude change (Paffenholz and Spurks 2006:30).

Fifth, civil society is building communities by creating common platforms for engagement, which is thought to strengthen social cohesion and building bridges between different communities and ethnic groups. The promotion of joint initiatives between adversary groups
is thought to ‘institutionalize peace’ by creating beneficial cooperation between former enemies (Paffenholz and Spurks 2006:31).

Sixth, the *intermediation and facilitation between citizens and state* contributes to balancing the power of the state by empowering civil organisations and institutions. In a peace building context the facilitation can also take place between different groups that have been part of a conflict. In immediate post-war situations, this includes facilitating initiatives between armed groups and civilians or development agencies to ensure the delivery of aid (ibid).

Lastly, civil society often plays a big role in *service delivery*, such as health-services, shelter and education where the state is unwilling or unable to provide for its own citizens. Within the democratization, and peace building discourse however, this is not seen as a role for civil society, as it is seen as an economic task of the state (Paffenholz and Spurks 2006:13, 31-33).

The seven points given by the function model, will serve as an analytical framework in the first chapter of the analysis. According to the functions, I will map out civil society in Zimbabwe’s work during the period from 2008 till 2013. Prior to this, I will give an account of the methods used during the study, as well as reflections on various challenges and limits to the study.
4 Methods

This chapter will provide information concerning the research design, as well as the research process itself. First, the case study as method will be addressed with an emphasis on its ability to examine causal mechanisms that are implied by theory (Bennett and George 2005). Related to this, the aspects of external and internal validity, together with operationalization and reliability will be discussed. Secondly, I will discuss the practical and ethical challenges that were encountered during the course of fieldwork, and how this may have influenced the findings. Finally, an assessment of the secondary literature that was used will be provided to familiarize the reader with the various sources for the analysis.

4.1 Case study

The case study has before been referred to as the study of a single unit (N=1), and considered to have little value when it comes to generalizing, and testing of hypothesis (Lijphart 1975:160). Over the last decade however, several scholars have argued against this view and called for a formalizing of ‘case study’ as a method (Bennett and Elman 2006:455-456). One of them is John Gerring who claims that, “each case may provide a single observation or multiple (within case) observations” (Gerring 2007:19). Furthermore, George and Bennett open up the possibility of case study as a source of generalizable knowledge. They define the case study approach as, “the detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode, to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events” (2005:5). This allows for case studies to be used as a method for theoretical generalization, and a way of theory developing.

Along these lines, George and Bennett argue that case studies have an advantage when seeking to test the causal mechanisms implied by theory. This is attributed to the detailed exploration of contextual and intervening variables in case studies, whereas statistical studies rather “omit all contextual factors except those codified in the variables selected for measurement” (2005:21). Qualitative research assumes that the social world is complex, and examines the cause and effect of social phenomenon through a lens of mechanisms and capacities (Bennett and Elman 2006:457). According to theory presented above, there is an
expectation of civil society as a mechanism to enhance a successful democratization and peace building process. However, the understanding of how civil society may and may not have the expected positive effect on democratization and peace building is limited. A case study of civil society’s role during the GNU-period in Zimbabwe, will contribute to the understanding of what potential and challenges civil society may hold in such processes.

4.1.1 Selection of case

This study is an example of a single-case study that is selected on the dependent variable, with the intention of investigating the mechanisms implied by theory. In statistical studies, selection on the dependent variable is considered as bias, and will cause systematic error in the findings. In case studies on the other hand, this is done with the intention of accumulating knowledge about a certain phenomenon to challenge and further develop an existing theory (George and Bennett 205:23). It is not the intention of this thesis to dismiss the established literature on the field regarding civil society’s contribution to democracy and peace. Rather, the aim is to contribute to the understanding of how these factors relates to each other. Furthermore, the purpose is to examine certain limitations that should be taken into consideration when asserting the effect of civil society on the process of democratization and peace building. For the purpose of this study, the selection of informants and literature has been guided by the theory, and will therefore be limited to organizations that define themselves as pro-democracy and peace building organizations.

The tense security situation at the time the fieldwork was scheduled, made interviews with some of the most prominent professional organizations problematic. For instance, organizations, such as the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), and the Zimbabwe National Students’ Union (ZINASU) are some of the organizations that have been most vocal against the regime from the period after 2000, and therefore these suffered severe intimidation. I was therefore discouraged from using them as informants as I was doing research in a period where state officials most likely would be paying close attention to their activity. Some would also argue that actors such as war veterans should be considered part of civil society in Zimbabwe (informant 12). However, the scope of this thesis defines civil society as ‘non-violent and autonomous actors’ (see the introduction chapter). The war veterans were therefore left out of the study, as they are closely linked to ZANU-PF, and known to use violent practices.
4.1.2 External and Internal Validity

Validity is divided into the concepts of external and internal validity. External validity concerns whether the sample that is used in a study can be considered representative for the population as a whole (Gerring 2007:217). This is typically an advantage in statistical studies, which draw upon a randomly selected sample from a diverse population, and therefore are better suited to make general assumptions about a phenomenon. Case studies on the other hand, are claimed to be superior with regards to internal validity. By focusing on the thorough investigation of a few cases, case studies aim to uncover or refine theory about a particular causal mechanism or phenomenon. The case study approach is therefore able to make general assumptions only to “well-defined types or subtypes of cases with a high degree of explanatory richness”, but do not seek to generalize to the population as a whole (George&Bennett 2005:30-31).

Where general theories about a diverse set of cases identify relevant variables and might suggest a causal relationship, case studies are often conducted to refine concepts and investigate the causal mechanisms (George&Bennett 2005:19-20). Furthermore, since case studies rely on a detailed description of the cases studied, they can more easily ensure that the indicators that are chosen are the best measure of the theoretical concepts in a given context, and thus “measure what they set out to measure” (Bollen 1989:184). Gerring argues that this is because the case study approach allows us to “(…) peer into the box of causality to locate the intermediate factors (…)” (Gerring 2007:45). In other words, through a closer examination, it is easier to meaningfully capture the ideas contained in the corresponding concepts (Adcock and Collier 2001:530). The case study of civil society in Zimbabwe will have value as a useful tool in examining the relationship between the civil society, and the process of democratization and peace building. Due to the natural differences between cases where civil society is said to have an effect on democratization and peace building, important caution must be ensured with regards to the study’s external validity. The contextual differences between cases of civil society in various countries implies that what is found in the case of civil society in Zimbabwe, not necessarily can be applied to the population of civil society as a whole.
4.1.3 Operationalization and reliability; applying theoretical concepts to the field.

A sound operationalization of the relevant theoretical concepts implies that you ‘speak the same language as your informants’. According to Adcock and Collier, “(the) operationalization moves from the systematized concept to indicators” (2001:530). The study of civil society in Zimbabwe will have civil society’s role in a process of democratization and peace building as a systematized concept. The indicators are the different functions, which are derived from Paffenholz and Spurk’s function model. Together with secondary literature about civil society in Zimbabwe, data that was compiled during my fieldwork will together with secondary literature about civil society in Zimbabwe provide data to the various indicators.

As stated above, the validity of a study is concerned with the coherence between the indicators that are chosen and the theoretical concepts that the researcher wants to measure (George and Bennett 2005:19). While this is referred to as systematic error, the concept of reliability involves random error (Adcock&Collier 2001:531). The reliability of the data that is collected concerns whether the information you are provided with can be trusted. The reliability of a study is increased if replication of the study leads to the same result. For practical reasons it is neither always possible nor feasible to replicate the exact same research within social studies. However, one can increase the replicability of the study by providing the reader with as much details as possible about the research methods (George and Bennett 2005:106). This enables the reader to interpret the findings in the light of the research methods, and assess whether diverging findings are a consequence of the choices made in designing the research. This chapter, along with the attached interview guide and keeping of transcribed interviews with the author, aims to make the conclusion as reliable as possible.

4.2 Interview as Research Method

This study includes four weeks of fieldwork in Harare and Johannesburg in May 2013. Whereas the interviews conducted in Harare were done in person, most of the interviews with civil society actors in Zimbabwe were done via Skype because of the informants’ security situation. Being in Harare nevertheless provided me with valuable information from informal conversations and gave me an overview of the actors that it would be beneficial to talk to. In
Johannesburg I was also able to meet Zimbabwean civil society organizations based in Johannesburg. These were situated in Johannesburg both due to their security situation and because Johannesburg is an important regional city for lobbying various political actors.

4.2.1 Security situation

The election period in Zimbabwe can hardly be described as a war-like situation. Nevertheless, the tense security situation and the increasing lack of respect for human rights make it critical to assert certain security measures when conducting interviews with civil society actors in Zimbabwe. The state’s continuous oppression of all critical voices makes discussions about democracy and peace loaded with fear. Civil society has therefore become reluctant to speak freely about their work, and about the current situation. The volatile situation of arbitrary arrests and intimidation also causes a low level of trust within society.

The numbers of people who report back to ZANU-PF about people that are voicing criticism against the party is commonly said to be around one out of five within civil society (informant 1). Civil society’s is not a protected space, and vigilance is always considered necessary, as I will come back to in the analysis. When arranging interviews, I therefore relied on people who already enjoyed a certain level of trust within the different organizations, and thus could introduce me to other relevant informants. Contact was often established in the way of the snowballing effect, where one informant leads you to the next.

The campaign period in Zimbabwe is also when the regime’s rhetoric against ‘western powers’ is at its most tense. Civil society is often accused of being part of a neo-colonialist effort by the west, which aims to remove power from the Zimbabwean population to foreign powers, such as Britain and the United States (informant 2). Being seen with a ‘Western’ visitor in your office is therefore considered unwise if you want to stay under the radar and avoid attracting unnecessary attention. On the other hand, an established assumption regarding civil society’s security in oppressive regimes holds that contact with the international community often can provide protection against intimidation and attacks, since it sends a signal to the oppressors that the outside is watching (Harbitz, email correspondence 02.09.2013). With this in mind, the interviews were conducted on the informants’ own terms and premises. Accordingly, the two interviews that were conducted in Harare took place in the informants’ private home, or while driving, on the request of the informants themselves.

In addition, civil society organizations and activists that are based outside Zimbabwe, in
Johannesburg, London and Brussels were included as informants. Since they are not based in Harare, they could speak more freely, and had a good overview of the work that is being done, as well as the challenges that civil society organizations meet inside the country. Despite limitations regarding the ability to travel within Zimbabwe, and the caution that was taken when conducting interviews, I consider my data to be sufficient for the purpose of this study.

**4.2.2 Embeddedness**

Research that is conducted in conflict areas has an inherent dilemma of proximity versus distance\(^\text{13}\). Whereas distance has the obvious disadvantage of being limited to secondary sources, proximity can create an embeddedness, which may threaten the neutrality of the researcher. However, the awareness of pitfalls may in itself ensure caution, and thereby increase the validity of the findings.

Local embeddedness can be described as familiarity and closeness to the conflict and informants. This could be a problem if the informants control what picture the researcher is shown, and therefore ends up with a biased view. ‘Snowballing’ with more than one point of departure can prevent this. By having various informants from different parts of the environment, you increase the representativeness and make use of your network in a suitable way. On the other hand, closeness and familiarity also means that you have prior knowledge and contacts that may help you get access in a challenging environment where you normally would not be able to enter. In that sense, proximity when used appropriately can only be of advantage to the researcher (Roundtable discussion, ECAS 2013).

My engagement with, and friendship with actors within civil society in Zimbabwe through organizations in Norway, is an example of embeddedness. To counter this, I relied on multiple points of departure for ‘snowballing’, and made sure that my informants came from different networks within civil society. Since civil society actors in Zimbabwe generally are reluctant to provide information to ‘outsiders’, it was important with regards to trust that I had a familiarity with the situation and people within civil society. I therefore regard the

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\(^{13}\) This was debated at the ECAS conference in Lisbon in June 2013, as part of a panel discussion on the challenges of doing fieldwork in conflict areas. Where researchers such as Morten Bøls (Nupi), Maria Eriksson Baaz (NAI, Uppsala), and Timothy Raeymaekers (Zurich University) were present.
embeddedness as an advantage more than an obstacle in this situation, and argue that its potential bias was countered by methodological triangulation.

4.2.3 Semi-structured interviews

The interviews were designed as semi-structured interviews, which often ended up in loose discussions covering the certain topics. Descriptive questions were used as an entry point before the more critical questions were asked. Even though it was difficult to achieve the level of trust for the informants to agree to an interview, I was often surprised by the openness and willingness when we were finally ‘at the table’. Most informants proved prepared to talk about both the nature of civil society in Zimbabwe and their work, as well as to reflect upon the limitations to their role and their various challenges.

During the interviews it was often necessary to establish a common definition of various terms that were relevant for the conversation. Since most of the informants were experienced with the field, they were also often familiar with the concepts and discussions that revolve around the terms. It was nevertheless important to establish a common understanding of the concept of civil society at the beginning of interviews to ensure the internal validity of the resulting data from the various informants’ replies. Some informants had strong opinions on who should be included and excluded when talking about civil society. It was sometimes therefore important to spend some time discussion this issue before moving to on to further questions. Even though the various informants did not always agree on who should be included and excluded by the term, however, for the most part they agreed to the theoretical limitations to the definition, and the scope of this study.

4.3 Additional sources

The theoretical foundation of the study is based on selected parts of the academic debate concerning the nexus between civil society, democratization and peace building. The following case study of civil society in Zimbabwe is conducted on the basis of data material that was gathered for the purpose of this study. The data consist of interviews with various informants from Zimbabwean civil society organization, as well as various sources of secondary literature. This includes other case studies covering different civil society organizations in Zimbabwe, and internal reports and discussions with the German
International Cooperation (GIZ) in Harare and Norwegian People’s Aid’s (NPAid) office in Johannesburg. The secondary literature gave me valuable information about a wider range of organizations than those I was able to interview myself.

Information about various organizations’ own work that is found on their webpages, proved as a good supplement and entry point into discussions about their work and results. Some of the organizations distribute online newsletters, which contributed as valuable insight to their day-to-day work. However, to depend exclusively on the sources that are offered by the organizations themselves would be sufficient to ensure a holistic representation of the situation. It was therefore crucial to supplement this with the academic literature, as well as reports and interviews from external agencies, such as GIZ and NPAid. Relying on other documents in addition to one’s own data increases the quality of the findings, and thus the reliability of the study.

This chapter has provided information about the research design, the process of preparation and the conducting of the fieldwork. First, a brief account of the case study as research design, as well as relevant concepts and definitions were provided. Secondly, the interview as research method was presented, discussing various challenges that were encountered during the course of fieldwork. Finally, the additional sources that the study has drawn upon were presented, providing an inclusive account of the data material. Combined, these sections allow the following analysis to be evaluated on the basis of the methods of the study.

14 Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and Norwegian People’s Aid (NPAid).
Civil Society in Zimbabwe – A Functionalist Approach.

The National Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (NANGO) estimated in 2012 that around 4 000 organizations were operating in Zimbabwe. Among these, 1 038 have been registered under the government’s Private Voluntary Organization (PVO) Act since 2008 (Chiroro 2013:3). As there are numerous civil society organizations existing in Zimbabwe today, the below analysis should not be read as an exhaustive evaluation of the role of civil society in Zimbabwe. It does, however, contribute as a building block to further research and lays a foundation for the continued discussion about civil society’s role in building peace and promoting democracy.

Civil society is a contested term in Zimbabwe. Since 1997, organizations that are advocating for human rights and the restriction of state power, are generally understood to be aligned with the opposition parties. The same organizations are those often referred to as ‘civil society’. On the other hand, some scholars are including actors such as The Zimbabwe Liberation War Veterans’ Association and the ZANU-PF’s youth militias (Chiroro 2013:118). As this study defines civil society as autonomous and nonviolent, this analysis excludes the latter, and focuses on the part that remain non-violent and outside the control of the state. This study also excludes institutions such as the church and the labor movement from the term civil society. This is not to say that these institutions are not important players in society, and sometimes also in the political debate. However, according to informants, the pro-democracy and peace building organizations have dominated civil society’s discourse throughout the GNU period, with an emphasis on human rights and good governance (informant 1, 3, and 13). This warrants an examination of these actors’ actual contribution.

5.1 The Function model:

As stipulated in the theoretical chapter discussing the relationship between civil society, peace and democracy, the analysis will take place within the framework of a functionalist model. The different functions will be treated subsequently according to the model laid out in
the theory chapter, and reflects the information provided by the various informants, along with previous relevant case studies and academic analyses from the period.

5.1.1 Protection

The protection function refers to civil society’s role as protectors of citizens’ rights against the state and other holders of power. It addresses the function of local as well as external organizations as guardians of their members and ordinary citizens when the state is unable or unwilling to do so. This function was mapped out by questions to the informants about their work, as well as data compiled from former case studies. The way civil society in Zimbabwe and their international partner organizations are protecting the citizens is mainly done through litigation and through exposing human rights violations committed by state agencies.

One of the bigger civil society organizations concerned with human rights in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), which is a membership organization for professional lawyers and was initiated as a response to the abuse of power by the ruling party. Their mission is to “protect and defend human rights through a sustainable program of litigation, unique legal support services, education and strengthened participation by key stakeholders” (as cited in Hellum et.al. 2013:12). Along with its focus on defending the freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, ZLHR also takes on cases of protection of social and economic rights, such as the right to education and housing (Hellum et.al.2013:13). ZLHR stands out as one of the most professional organizations. It has had an important impact as defenders of both prominent and more anonymous individuals, often members of civil society that are targeted for their work, but also victims of unlawful detention who are ordinary citizens15.

Another human rights association is the Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA). This organization was first formed to fight for better working conditions for female lawyers, but has later developed into a lobby organization for legal reform and the realization of women’s rights in general. ZWLA works both with other civil society organizations, and government institutions to achieve better legal conditions for women. They primarily address the domestic sphere and assist women with concerns such as, divorce, gender violence, and inheritance (Hellum et.al.2013:13).

15 “About Zimbabwe Lawyers of Human Rights”
In addition to these professional organizations, The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (Zimbabwe HR NGO Forum) and The Zimbabwean Human Rights Association (ZimRights) are organizations that also offer legal aid, and litigate against the state in cases of human rights violations. The Zimbabwe HR NGO Forum has also sent appeals to the regional body of African Commission on Human Rights, where they requested that regional actors put pressure on the government of Zimbabwe\(^\text{16}\) (Informant 3). While the majority of cases tried in court by civil society has been lost, a case fought by Zimnbabwe HR NGO Forum, on behalf of nine victims political violence was referred to by the Zimbabwean scholar Sachikonye as a symbolic case concerning the protection of human rights in Zimbabwe. The case was won in the High Court of Zimbabwe, and at the SADC Tribunal in January 2011\(^\text{17}\). The case concerned nine victims of torture and political violence, suing the Government of Zimbabwe for not respecting fundamental human rights. After the government did not comply with the verdict, the case was taken to the SADC Tribunal, which upheld the High Court’s ruling and condemned the Zimbabwean Government to pay damages to the nine victims (Sachikonye 2011:107).

One of the informants however, pointed to the consequences of the legal battle, and argued that this preoccupied civil society and meant that they had has less time for what he called ‘real issues’. He further claimed that: “(…) the government is doing this tactically; it is a strategy to keep civil society busy and away from monitoring” (informant 9). Civil society’s litigation against the state in case of oppression is crucial for those that are targeted, a constant preoccupation with litigation on the behalf of own members can potentially lead to a constrained capacity to deal with issues that more directly concerns the general population.

The function model also incorporates the influence external organizations can have as protectors of ‘inside’ actors. This can be done either directly through companionship or indirectly through making the state aware that the international community is watching. International civil society organizations such as Amnesty International and other smaller organizations that are working with Zimbabwean civil society are able to operate more freely


\(^{17}\) Zimbabwesituation.com (15.01.2011) ”Landmark SADC torture ruling” <http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/jan16_2011.html> [02.01.2014]
than those that are inside Zimbabwe. They use this liberty to expose and follow up on human rights violations committed in Zimbabwe. Through close relationships they function as allies that can put the human rights situation in Zimbabwe on the agenda through lobbying their own governments, as well as regional and international actors. One example is the international network that the organization ‘Women of Zimbabwe Arise’ (WOZA) mobilizes in occasions where their members are detained by the police after public demonstrations. In Chimuriwo’s (2009) case study of WOZA activists, she describes how this international network is alerted (Chimuriwo 2009). As a result of this alert system, numerous allied lawyers and activists locally turn up in court, and the international partners contribute by contacting the police stations to express their concerns regarding the recent arrest. The below statement shows how this may work in practice:

“After not getting through to the Harare Central Police Station numbers, I successfully reached the Harare CIS number (…). I was passed on by the woman answering the phone to a more senior officer and expressed concern over the arrest of Arthur Mutambara and the members of WOZA in Harare for exercising their rights in a democracy. He was perplexed that someone from Australia knew about this and wanted to know how I had their phone number. Well, at least one more policeman in Harare is now aware that the events in Zimbabwe are reaching the outside world. I imagine he may mention this to (his) colleagues” (Chimuriwo 2009:74).

According to Paffenholz and Spurk’s assessment of the protection function, international attention is understood to provide ensure the safety of citizens that are targeted by state oppression by raising the awareness both internationally and internally. Heightening the profile of before unknown individuals is argued to increase the costs of the oppressor when violating their rights. The above example shows how the mobilization of WOZA’s network contributes to keeping the focus on Zimbabwe in the outside world.

5.1.2 Monitoring and accountability

Accountability can refer to various areas and levels of the state system. According to the theory, civil society is expected to monitor politicians and state officials’ political decisions with the aim of overseeing that the actions are within democratic norms and practices. This role is often referred to as a ‘watchdog’ function, and was examined by asking informants about the various mechanisms civil society has formed to oversee political processes, and the access they get.
Chiroro argues that civil society has been highly visible as a monitoring body in the period after 2008, especially with regards to the GPA, and the constitutional process leading up to the 2013 election. As the main political parties excluded the civil society from the monitoring of the GPA, civil society has instead formed their own monitoring mechanism. The Civil Society Monitoring Mechanism (CISOMM) was a collection of local civil society organizations that reported instances of violence and misconduct of the GPA parties. She claims that this must be seen as one of the most pragmatic responses civil society has had to the Inclusive Government (IG) as it served as an: “opportunity for local organizations to play a watchdog role (…)” (Chiroro 2013:131-2). Due to limited access to the political system, the affect must nevertheless be seen as limited. This will be further elaborated on in the next section, which concerns limitations to civil society’s role.

Another monitoring mechanism was set up with regards to the constitutional reform process. This was launched as an Independent Constitution Monitoring Project (ZZZICOMP) in 2010 by; The Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP), the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), and the ZLHR. Their goal was to monitor the Constitutional Select Committee (COPAC) with regards to their transparency, inclusiveness, accountability and the confidence they had amongst ordinary people in the process. This contributed to revealing shortages to the COPAC process, and exposed incidents of violence that took place during meetings in local communities (Chiroro 2013:133).

In spite of these efforts, one of the informants called civil society a “toothless watchdog”, referring to the lack of impact it has had on the political system (informant 7). Another informant from an external NGO also pointed to the struggle civil society has had in separating their own agenda from what is the MDCs’ agenda, due to close ties and common background. She argued that this has made the monitoring difficult, and claimed that: “The watchdog principle had not been fully cemented before ‘their friends’ got into government” (informant 1).

The examples are coherent with what the function model sets out as civil society’s role in a democratizing process. However, as I will elaborate on in the following chapter, the success depends on their effect on the political system, in other words, whether the monitoring has any actual results, or if they are left outside screaming.
5.1.3 Advocating and Public Communication

Advocacy is the articulation of people’s need towards the state system, and is seen as vital both in democratization, as well as in a peace building perspective (Paffenholz and Spurks 2006:29). The communication work refers to people’s knowledge about channels and how to utilize them, thus access to the system. This function was mapped out by looking at what activities organizations carry out with this as an objective.

The organizations that are working with public communication to a large extent work to raise awareness of people’s rights and expose human right violations that are committed by the state to the general public. During the period from 2008 several organizations have formed with the mandate of providing communities with information about the political transition, and opportunities for participation in the national processes (informant 4). One example is the CISOMM, which was discussed above, which in addition to the monitoring, had as objective to inform the general public about the constitutional process leading up to the referendum.

Other organizations work to raise awareness and inform the public about the general state of power-abuse by the government. For instance, the ZLHR distribute a free weekly ‘Legal Monitor’ with information to the public about the current human rights situation in the country. Similarly, Zimbabwe HR NGO Forum has as part of their mandate to document human rights violations conducted by the government. This has been done since their formation in 1998, when it addressed the heavy-handedness by the regime in response to the food riots. The documentation still goes on through the release of the ‘Monthly Political Violence Report’, along with an extended work within legal aid and lobbying, and the organization today has an observer status with the ‘African Commission on Human and People’s Rights’. According to the organization’s informant the organization’s collection of information and documentation is envisaged to serve as proof in a future transitional justice process (informant 6).

“We are saying we want the members or the society to have an account of what really happened. (In) A society, and a state that is shrouded in secrecy. (…) Because society is slowly starting to ask the truth, in terms of what happened to them. People think that research is important for the academics and the policy makers, but I think also that in the future, it will actually become the

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Along the same lines, the ZPP holds a database of raw information when it comes to conflict around the country, and consider this as the basis for transitional justice in Zimbabwe (CCSF 2012:11). The information is provided through what they call ‘peace monitors’. These are based in each constituency, and observe violent conflict in their communities on a daily basis. The organization then collects the reports and posts a ‘monthly monitoring report’ on their website (informant 11). Further, ZimRights has made a movie about the violence in 2008, which they are using as an appeal for transitional justice mechanisms to take place Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum held a conference the same year where they set out what they called “non-negotiable minimum demands for a transitional justice process” (Church and Civil Society Forum, internal report by GIZ 2013:12). According to Zimbabwe Europe Network (ZEN), one of civil society’s main achievements has been to thoroughly document human rights violations happening in Zimbabwe to the international community. This has further been made known through partnerships with outside organizations, and contributed to keeping the issue on their agenda (informant 10).

One of the most vocal organizations during the period since 2008 has been Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (Crisis). Crisis is an umbrella organization that consists of over 350 civil society organizations, ranging from community-based organizations (CBOs) till large organizations such as the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA). Based both in Harare and Johannesburg, they advocate at both a national, regional and international level. Whereas their office in Johannesburg is especially pointed towards the African Union (AU), South African Development Community (SADC), and the government of South Africa (SA), their office in Harare also lobbies the national government. Through a step-by-step approach with the GPA as a roadmap to democratization, they advocate the various bodies for attention on different issues that are what they call ‘sticky’. One example being the issue of security reform, which they demanded should take place prior to any election, and thus was put forward both locally and regionally as crucial to ensure free and fair elections (Informant 4).

Their office in Johannesburg is one of many organizations that operate outside Zimbabwe to advocate for political change and democratization in Zimbabwe. Both diaspora networks and ‘solidarity’ groups are lobbying national governments, SADC, the AU and various UN
institutions. For instance, the Zimbabwe Europe Network (ZEN) is based in Brussels, and works to influence the policy-making of The European Union, as well as certain European countries. Through NANGO, Zimbabwe HR NGO Forum, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, and CC, they are able to provide European governments with first-hand information about the situation (informant 10). However, as stated above, civil society can come across as toothless due to the lack of results the demands put forward has on government policies. The lack of realization of security reform prior to elections, voiced by internal as well as external actors, is another example of this. Chapter six will elaborate on the implications this has for civil society’s contribution to the democratization process.

Despite that the demands put forward by civil society seems to have little effect on the overall situation of the state’s rapport with its citizens, one of the informants argues that the ‘system of civil society’ gives citizens in Zimbabwe a feeling of having representatives that voice their interests (informant 7). Another informant underscores this by stressing civil society’s importance in a state where the ruling party ‘wants to control everything’, and argues that: “The work of civil society definitely has made sure that you have an independent voice, you had an alternative voice. So I think in that way civil society could be said to containing the state.” (informant 3).

This argument holds that the mere existence of civil society, by contributing to pluralism, lays certain limitations on an authoritarian state’s repressive actions. However, because there is no way of controlling whether the state would act differently if civil society was not there, it is difficult to evaluate the actual effect through this assumption.

5.1.4 Socialization

The function of socialization entails that the democratic culture in civil society will foster democratic norms amongst the public, which will lead to a demand of democratic culture within the political system. The organizations to work as a school of democracy, they should practice what they preach. This function was examined by asking questions about internal practices of democracy, as well as how they foster participation, and act as people’s representatives.
Interviews with various organizations indicate that most organizations have elected decision-makers. For instance, the Young Voices Network (YVN) holds an annual general meeting where the members select the board. For instance, the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition elects their top leadership at an annual general meeting, with rules that are set in a constitution of the organization (informant 4). The openness of the organizations vary, since some are professional organizations with the prerequisite of belonging to a certain profession (i.e. lawyer), while others are open for any members as long as they follow the rules of the organizations.

“There are two types of civil society in Zimbabwe, you have professionals who come together to offer a service. And those are like the ZLHR, ZIM HR NGO, ZWLA, those are very limited in terms of access of joining. Although their services are offered to everyone. Then you do have membership-based org, such as ZimRights and NCA, which anyone who subscribes to the views of the org is free to join. And then you look at the trade union movement, as long as you are a worker and you are in the right industry you can join (informant 3).”

Thus, activist organizations, such as Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) often have no prerequisites to members of their organization, which is understood as an ‘easy requirement’ by a woman in Chimuriwo’s study: “They told us that as long as you are a woman with breasts you are welcome”, (as quoted in Chimuriwo 2009),

In several of the other organizations institutions, such as elections, as well as democratic norms of openness, at first glance seem to be met. Most organizations receive necessary funding from external actors. These generally come with requirements of democratic practices within organizations as a prerequisite for resources. However, below the surface there seems to be a muddier picture. Several of the informants talked about hierarchic structures within civil society, which they referred to as a ‘founder’s syndrome’. They explained this as a practice where the organizations become like the founders’ own property, with little room for democratic practices, much like Mugabe’s relationship with Zimbabwe, where there is no letting go (informant 8). Others mentioned dominant figures, and a hierarchic structure where “the leader would never boil the tea himself” (informant 1), as an example of the authoritarian attitude amongst many leaders. For civil society to foster democratic norms and practices there needs to be a coherent democratic culture within civil society itself. It seems that the theory’s assumption that democratic norms within civil society will have a spillover effect on the political system, also can work the other way around.

Hence, the authoritarian political culture sets the norms and practices for civil society and creates hierarchic structures within the organizations.

Concerning representativeness, some informants were hesitant, while others claimed they had a clear mandate from local communities and grass root organizations. Generally, the analysts who had worked with civil society more on general terms, and not as part of one specific organization, were the most reluctant with regards to civil society as a ‘voice of the people’. Those that were unenthusiastic about the coherence between the needs of the people and civil society’s priorities, explained it by what they termed a commercialisation of the sector, due to donor money: “They say what needs to be said to donors to get the pay check. Civil society is in a comfortable situation because the situation is bad” (Informant 1). Furthermore, one of the informants who had been engaged in various organizations, and now is the leader of a youth network, claimed that: “It (civil society) is not a bottom-up uprising. Civil society is made up of upper and middle class, (…) the lower classes are in Community Based Organizations, but they are hardly funded and (have) got small resources” (Informant 2).

This is also argued in Chiroro’s assessment of civil society during the GNU period, as she claims that they are acting more like consulting companies for the “north”, than as representatives for their local constituencies (Chiroro 2013:130). If civil society remains as a sphere for middle class employment, there is a risk that they become alienated from the general populous, which in Zimbabwe at the moment are well below the middle class standard. As I will elaborate on in chapter 6, such a civil society is also less able to mobilize and foster participation, since their focus is more with the agencies that pay for their consultancy services, and less with the people.

5.1.5 Building Communities

Civil society is thought to create platforms for engagement and bridge cleavages. Uniting adversaries in joint struggles for a peaceful society is theorized to mend the social fabric, and work as a preemptive strike against renewed violence. Whether this is the case in Zimbabwe, was examined through questions about organizations’ day-to-day work, and ability to bring people from different groups together. An important indicator is whether the activities were carried out with representatives from both adversity groups.
Organizations such as CCTM reported having a broad approach to conflict, and listed issues such as land and education as normal sources of clashes. They further claimed that conflict often spurred due to lack of resources, which has its roots in policy issues. CCTM therefore addresses local issues through bringing adversaries together in dialogue circles and conflict mediation training within communities. The conflict mediation is then adopted by the local authorities as ways to deal with conflict, instead of confrontation that can involve violence.

Another example is the Artists for Democracy in Zimbabwe Trust (ADZT), who engages in ‘community conversations’ through theatre plays with tailor-made questions to generate debate on a particular topic (CCSF 2012:11, GIZ internal report). The Young Voices Network trains peace committees in local communities that act as an early warning system, recording violence and trying to facilitate dialogue between adversaries before the conflict spurs out of hand (informant 2). Another approach is seen in the work of Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ). Through monitoring and analysis of the news, they document the frequent use of ‘hate speech’, arguing that it has “become endemic to the Zimbabwean mainstream media”20. The dialogue circles and peace committees echoes the model’s view of civil society as an institutionalized peace system, where mechanisms is put in place to hinder and manage potentially violent conflicts.

Chimuriwo argues that WOZA brings women from different ages and backgrounds together through the experience of common resistance. She argues that her findings indicate that as the activist face intimidation, arrests, and beatings, the women build resistance networks that result in support and alliances within communities. The networks also have an effect beyond the activism. Through community projects, the women organize activities to raise funds both for themselves and for their common projects. It also emphasizes how mentorship by elder women plays an important role as support for younger women and encourages their activism (2009:86-89). This is in lines with Paffenholz and Spurks’ assumption of civil society as a tool of achieving social cohesion in post-conflict environments. However, the analytical framework developed by Paffenholz and Spurks (2006) talks about networks built between former adversaries. The example of WOZA shows crosscutting activities across cleavages that are not considered the main conflict cleavage, which means that new ties that are formed

do not directly address social cohesion between former adversaries. It can contribute to a more broad based opposition, but has limitations with regards to peace building.

The lack of organizations with members from both sides of the conflict was by several of the informants explained by the lack of trust. As Robert Belloni argues in his assessment of civil society’s role in post-conflict environments, trust is often of scarce quantity in post-conflict settings (2008:200). According to one of the informants the lack of trust, both within civil society and in general amongst the population, is one of civil society’s biggest challenges in Zimbabwe. When asked to explain this, the informant pointed to ZANU-PF’s infiltration of the organizations. There is a constant fear of reporting to the regime, which affects the organizations’ openness to include individuals from adversary groups (informant 9). It is therefore common that organizations run background-checks on their new employees (ibid.). “Civil society is infiltrated by spies that report back to the regime for money, and do what they can to create chaos and delay processes” (Informant 1).

Since the ruling party treats civil society like opponents, they are also perceived as such in society. As shown by the next function (intermediation and facilitation), this makes it hard for civil society to build bridges, and forces an apolitical stance if they are to be perceived as neutral. The suspiciousness within civil society itself also makes it a homogeneous arena without many cross cutting cleavages with regards to the main political conflict. However, the above shows that there are many examples of organizations addressing the multiple issues that potentially breed conflict, without touching upon the national political power-struggle. This, and many of the dialogue initiatives, should be considered important in a broad definition of peace building that seeks preemptive strikes against renewed violence. To evaluate the efficiency of these mechanisms requires a closer examination to evaluate their actual output. There is always a danger of one-size-fits-all solutions with tools that are implemented from above, and their actual potential will rely on the degree of ownership they have within the communities.

5.1.6 Intermediation and facilitation

Civil society is expected to make the state engage in dialogue and cooperation as a link between the state and its citizens. Whether civil society in Zimbabwe fills this function was
investigated through questioning the organizations about their engagement with the political system.

Civil society is required to maneuver a difficult terrain between confrontation and cooptation. Whereas it is important to voice criticism, it is also crucial to cooperate on certain issues. Despite the in general hostile relationship between the ZANU-PF loyalists and civil society in Zimbabwe, some organizations report that there are politicians from ZANU-PF that: “are willing to lend an ear” (informant 4). However, this seems to be mostly on a parliamentary level, and to vary a lot from constituency to constituency (informant 9). The CCTM is an example of an organization that has fought to be perceived as apolitical to be able to conduct their work. By disclaiming democratization as an objective for their work, and defining their activities strictly within the concept of conflict transformation and mediation, they are able to facilitate cooperation between former adversaries. The informant told about cooperation with local authorities when conducting trainings in conflict mediation for traditional leaders (informant 8). They have also introduced advocacy platforms that are meant to facilitate a discussion of particular policies between citizens and policy-makers (informant 8).

There is a tendency of more political organizations’ advocacy-work, to affect the more neutral organizations that work with peace building. Even for the organizations that do not wish to be affiliated with the opposition, it is difficult to work in rural areas without being labeled as part of MDC, as promoting democracy is equated with protest against ZANU-PF. When asked about the role of the civil society as promoters of democracy, and how they were perceived by the populous, one of the informants said: “Labeling your work with ‘democracy’ is not the wisest thing to do” (informant 8).

During the period under the GNU however, organizations such as ZPP report of good inroads to some of the institutions that were set up as a result of the Inclusive Government (IG). The informant talks about cooperation with institutions such as the Organ of National Healing and JOMIC as fruitful, but is concerned over the fact that the organizations will be shut down with the end of the GNU. He points to the Human Rights Commission of Zimbabwe as a possibility for continuation of the cooperation. Following this, he argues that there is a need for civil society to ‘clean up its image’, and work from the inside out in cooperation with government and other state institutions (informant 11).
The necessity of keeping a low profile is understandable with regards to working conditions and security. However, it is unfortunate if the possibility to operate as a mediator between state and citizens means that civil society must compromise on its role as advocates of human rights. As shown by the quote below, civil society in Zimbabwe today has been able to shed light on the wrongdoings of the state, and has functioned as a security net for citizens who put themselves at risk by opposing the ruling party.

“I think they generally, they have kept people aware of the challenges, they have always exposed the excesses of the state. (...) Especially when people are arrested and tortured for freely expressing their views. And I think that their role, if you look at org like the counseling services unit, who have been able to treat victims of torture and org violence. That has shown the society, that I can stand up to the state, and if I get into trouble I will have a lawyer by my side, and I will be treated. And that has sustained the activism within the society generally (informant 3).”

The role as mediator and facilitator between state and civil society requires a certain level of cooperation between the two. However, if this implies that civil society must compromise on its autonomy and its right to speak out against wrongdoings by the state against citizens, it can be unfortunate for its position as protectors of the citizens.

5.1.7 Service delivery

In Paffenholz and Spurks’ model, the function of service delivery refers to the provision of basic services, such as health care, education and food. This is not envisaged to be a vital role for civil society to play with regards to democratization and peace building, but is rather seen as an entry point to be able to carry out other functions (2006:34-36). This was mapped out by questions on whether citizens are reliant on civil society for services provision in Zimbabwe. Even though my case study addresses pro-democracy and peace building organizations, and thus excludes more aid-driven NGOs, service delivery is sometimes used as an entry point for information provision, and is therefore of some relevance.

Some of the informants argue that whereas civil society before 2000 was mostly associated with service provision, more basic services are now provided by state agencies: “Even though, a lot of people in the dryer parts of the country depend on food aid from NGOs, health and education is still mainly provided by the state institutions (Infomant 1).

There seems to be common agreement that the economic situation has improved as a result of the GNU, which also means that public schools and hospitals that were closed in 2008 are
now up and running again (informant 10). However, other informants point to the fact that there is still a humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe, and understand civil society as possible ‘social capital’ to help the new government resolve this (informant 6). As Paffenholz and Spurks article hypothesizes, service delivery is sometimes used as an entry point for other functions. One of the informants exemplified this by pointing to the food that often is offered together with pamphlets of information. The statement below touches on how the socio-economic situation clearly must be taken into consideration: “When you have an empty stomach, and something is not mentioning food, you do not read” (informant 9).

A larger segment of the organizations within the scope of my thesis refer to non-tangible services as part of their work. Several organizations are involved in victim support and legal aid. For instance, the ZLHR and ZimRights act as a stand by force for political opponents, activists and civil society workers in general when they are arrested (informant 6). This is closely related to their function as protectors, even though it is support given when the harm has already been done, and the protection function related to a more overall aim to protect citizens from the violation to take place. Provider of non-tangible services is one of the most prominent functions that civil society holds in the Zimbabwe of today. Especially when it comes to victims of political violence, the relevant ministries have shown little interest and/or capability to address the issue, leaving civil society with a heavy responsibility. This also includes psychosocial and medical support. The prolonged ‘low-scale’ conflict, has led to a culture of violence, and several of the organizations that I interviewed point to the need to build peaceful structures to handle conflict in local communities. As several of the informants emphasized, peace building needs to address deep-rooted conflict patterns, and should not be limited to the national power struggle between different political ideologies (informant 2 and 8). This is an important part of the organizations’ peace building work, and points to the complexity of deeply entrenched conflicts.

### 5.2 Summary

In this chapter, a functionalist model was employed as a theoretical framework for the analysis. This section will give a brief summary of the different functions, before introducing the second part of the analysis.
Zimbabwe is a hostile environment for pro-democracy and peace building organizations, where arbitrary arrests and intimidation of political opponents is the state’s common response to critique. Thus, an important segment of civil society in Zimbabwe functions as legal representatives of activists, human rights defenders and political opposition, who are facing repression. The unsafe working environment, which will be further elaborated on below, has made civil society’s function as *protectors* (function one) vital as the judicial system is politicized, and does not protect the rule of law. Professional legal associations as well as organizations with attached legal expertise seek to protect citizens where the state is unwilling to do so. There is also a significant group of organizations outside Zimbabwe that are attached to civil society actors inside. These are providing protection by making human rights violations known to the international community. They also let the state know that they are being watched, and have made direct contact with the police when activists in their network have been detained unlawfully. This is argued to make a concrete difference in some instances, as it provides a protection for those that are known internationally against ‘disappearing’, which is systematically known to be a result of activism (Chimuriwo 2009:74).

Their *monitoring of accountability* (function two) has during the GNU period mainly revolved around the constitutional process and the upcoming election. To ensure free and fair election has been one of civil society’s main focus areas. This has involved the establishment of mechanisms, such as the CISOMM and the ZZZICOMP, with the objective of overseeing the GPA and the Constitutional Process, make sure that they complied with democratic practices, and point to instances where they failed to do so. Both mechanisms are alliances of various organizations and had the effect of unifying civil society, and have been pointed to as a pragmatic response to the exclusive practice of the GPA agreement (Chiroro 2013). However, according to internal civil society actors, both their lack of access, and sometimes-close ties to MDC officials (lack of autonomy) have limited its success as a watchdog in this process (informant 1 and 13).

With reference to *advocacy and public communication* (function three), civil society is working to raise awareness about the state’s human rights violations, lobby different actors to put pressure on the Zimbabwean government, and provide channels for the general public to voice their opinions. An important part of the advocacy work is directed towards the international community, and with a special emphasis on regional actors, such as the AU and SADC. A significant number of organizations also work towards a Transitional Justice
process, and have collected documentation on the violations throughout the period that they envisage will be used in a forthcoming ‘Truth and Reconciliation’ processes. The CISOMM, mentioned above, have also in this respect been important, as it provided local communities with information about the political transition process. In a state where your voice has little value if you disagree with the main political party, civil society is claimed by informants (informant 3 and 7) to be important just because it adds a plurality by its mere existence. ZEN also points to the thorough documentation of human rights violations as one of the most important roles of civil society in Zimbabwe today. Both because it makes reconciliation possible and since it keeps something that the state has no interest in keeping in the national memory. However, various informants stress the lack of consequences, as it is left up to the state to follow up the demands put forward by civil society.

Organizations seem to be less successful when it comes to fostering democratic practices through what is referred to as the *socialization function* (function four). Even though most organizations seems to have electoral practices in place, shallow democratic practices where reported from both actors within various organizations as well as external analysts (informant 1 and 8). They referred to the founders’ syndrome, which was explained by authoritarianism amongst many leaders in civil society organizations. This implies that authoritarianism is contagious in society, and that the assumed effect of democratic practices within civil society to spill over on the political system, in this case is inverted. This will be further discussed in chapter six, with regards to the implication for civil society’s contribution to democratization. Informants also spoke of the commercialization of the sector and claimed that, due to a dependency on donor money, organizations were not voicing the actual needs of the people, but rather mirrored what donors (often in the north) wanted to support (informant 1, 2 and 13).

Civil society is said to institutionalize peace in a post-conflict environment (Varshney in Belloni 2008:189). Paffenholz and Spurks refer to this function as *building communities* (function five), and emphasize civil society’s role as bridge builders. In Zimbabwe, there is a multitude of different peace building organizations that list a number of activities where bringing adversaries together is one of the goals. This is by many seen as one of civil society’s main functions, as the state institutions have been politicized and lack the necessary trust to function as mechanisms of reconciliation (Belloni 2008:189). Donor supported activities such as dialogue circles, conflict mediation for community leaders, and advocacy
platforms adversaries are widespread, and have in some places introduced new ways to handle conflict in local communities (informant 8). However, informants pointed to the lack of trust as a challenge when talking about creating platforms where adversaries come together and form new ties (informant 1 and 2).

When it comes to *intermediation and facilitation* (function six), the state’s reluctance to engage with its political opponents makes it difficult for those organizations that voice a critical stance towards government to have any meaningful cooperation. Those organizations that do manage such cooperation, often report of this being at a local level, and that they are restricted to issues that are not considered relevant for the national party-political power-struggle (informant 8).

*Service delivery* (function seven) in terms of basic aid, such as food and shelter, is not part of the mandate for organizations within the scope of this study. However, some of the information work relies on food supplies as an entry point in times of hunger. Another aspect is the non-tangible services, such as psychosocial support for victims of political violence. As these violations more often than not is conducted by state agencies, citizens can often not turn to the state for help. This therefore makes up a significant part of civil society’s work, and is closely linked to their function as protectors.

The following chapter will present three critical factors that derived from issues presented as challenges by the informants, and based on former research on civil society in general and the case of Zimbabwe in particular. These critical factors suggest important aspects that can contribute in developing the theoretical assumption that were presented in chapter three. The chapter suggest a less mechanic relationship between the concept of civil society and a successful democratization and peace building process, and invite precaution to the general assumption of civil society as ‘a school of democracy and an institutionalized peace systems’ (Belloni 2008:189).
6 Developing The Theoretical Framework

The above chapter provided empirical evidence of civil society’s function in Zimbabwe during the period from 2008-2013. This was done within the analytical framework of Paffenholz and Spurks’s functionalist model, which was first presented in the theoretical chapter. In the same article, Paffenholz and Spurks also highlight the need to investigate possible obstacles that might hinder civil society in playing a constructive role in democratization and peace building. As they argue, “answers to these questions need to come from detailed in-depth case study research” (2006:34).

Whereas the functionalist model provides insight in terms of explaining the various aspects of civil society’s role with regards to democratization and peace building, the three limitations presented below suggest critical factors that need to be taken into consideration for a thorough assessment of their contribution. The factors are derived from the case study of civil society in Zimbabwe during the period of the GNU, and should be considered as important aspects for donors and scholars to consider when evaluating civil society’s ability to contribute in a democratization and peace building process.

6.1 Critical factors

The factors build on what civil society actors talked about as obstacles to their work, which are summarized into three different critical factors and presented as; polarization, local embeddedness, and working environment. This will contribute to developing the theoretical framework, suggesting a more complex picture of civil society’s contributions and limitations.

6.1.1 Polarization

‘Do not upset a Big Man’

The polarization in Zimbabwe is first and foremost characterized by the cleavage between those that are in favor of the government and those that are not. Several of the informants

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argued that every aspect of social life is to a certain degree *politicized* in Zimbabwe, and that civil society is struggling to act as a neutral player (informant 1, 2, and 13).

Many of the informants argued that the difficulties that they are facing when trying to carry out their work, are due to them being considered as political opponents. Because the pro-democracy part of civil society to a significant degree was created by the same referendum movement that eventually evolved into the opposition party MDC, there has been a close link between the two. Parts of civil society have remained aligned with the MDC, while others have tried to create a more neutral ground for themselves (informant 1).

“Because of that there has been a huge link between civil society and a political party, which then has affected the legitimacy of both (...) And currently since they’ve been in power, the main struggle has been separating their agenda from what MDC’s agenda” (informant 1).

To name civil society as part of the opposition has been useful for ZANU-PF, as a way of dismissing their voice as representatives for the people. They name them as part of the external influence that is threatening Zimbabwe’s independence, and thus justifies their repression as a way to protect Zimbabwe’s sovereignty. By treating political party opponents and civil society actors as one and the same, the state dismisses any neutral role of civil society. Civil society has been deemed as part of the external enemy that ZANU-PF uses in its rhetoric to maintain control.

“What sustains a society in fear is the presence of an external enemy. And civil society at some point has also become the enemy, and it is easy for the government to bracket them with the Western forces, to say that they are supported by the Western enemy. And it is them who are bringing about all this challenges to the country” (informant 2).

The assumption of alignment is sometimes justified, since the most vocal civil society organizations to a large extent are anti-ZANU-PF. The enmity towards ZANU-PF makes cooperation difficult, and the access to the political system remains closed, since the party has a strong organizational structure and controls most political institutions. This limited space makes civil society’s work somewhat superficial, and they are often left on the outside of political processes. One of the informants point to the monitoring of the constitutional process as an example of this, where civil society only reported the insufficiencies that were already well covered by the MDC themselves. Therefore, it cannot be argued that civil society made a difference with regards to revealing ‘democratic deficits’ (informant 13). To be a watchdog one is dependent on access to shed light on issues that would otherwise be left in the dark. The lack of access and cooperation between the civil society and the government...
limits the civil society’s chances of having any actual impact on how politics is played, and leaves them screaming on the outside. The polarized relationship between civil society and the state hinders access and influence. With reference to the functionalist model, their role as monitors of accountability, and possibilities for mediation and facilitation, must therefore be seen as limited by the polarized political context.

Zimbabwean civil society reflects and incorporates the deep division between ZANU-PF and the opposition, which is also palpable in society in general. Several of the informants reported that their organization has little or no joint activities between adversaries (informants 2 and 8). This can be explained by lack of trust within Zimbabwean society in general, as a result of the prolonged conflict. In addition, a lack of trust within civil society itself restricts openness internally due to infiltration by ZANU-PF loyalists, who are said to be reporting back to the party (informant 1).

“(…) They are afraid of people who are reporting back to ZANU-PF. (…) People get extra income from that and civil society is especially targeted. And those people are also destructive, that’s a strong word, but they do whatever they can to create chaos, and delay processes, in order to keep civil society confused or in disagreement” (informant 1).

The organizations that are advocating for democracy are therefore difficult to picture as ‘bridge builders’ between adversaries, and an incompatibility between democracy and peace occurs. The organizations that are most vocal in their demands for democratization are very much formed along the line of the main political cleavage and often seen as aligned with opposition parties. Peace building organizations reported that they tried not to be seen as allies of these organizations to be able to carry out activities. The polarization of society thus makes peace building organizations point to the need to remain apolitical, which often involves avoiding applying term democracy in their work. Some of the informants within this field said that they also chose to downplay their political commitment to democracy, because they see the term as being taken as a synonym for opposition both within the political system and in society in general. They instead used words such as, ‘community conversations’ and ‘dialogue circles’, as a way to avoid being taken as part of the critics against ZANU-PF that the word ‘democratization’ normally is associated with (informant 8). However, the actual activities of these organizations show a practical approach with democracy as a tool to manage conflict in a peaceful manner, and their function as mediators and facilitators is upheld by a pragmatic approach to the political context.
With regards to cross cutting organizations, one informant points out that despite the general picture, there are still exceptions: “I would say that there are other organizations that do manage to maintain their neutrality, and within those organizations there can be supporters of either party” (informant 1). Nevertheless, this shows that the political context civil society operates in has important consequences for its role, and should be taken into consideration when evaluating their potential as democratizers and peace builders.

6.1.2 Local Embeddedness

‘You cannot eat democracy’

Despite an annual growth in the general economy during the GNU-period, regular citizens are still struggling with unemployment and fighting a situation that is defined as a humanitarian crisis by the World Health Organization. The economy seems to have consequences for civil society’s autonomy, as the lack of local resources makes them reliant on external donors, and thus committed to comply with their respective preferences. This can affect their legitimacy as representatives of the people if their work reflects priorities made by donors, before considering the needs of the general population.

Informants who have been working in both local organizations, and external aid agencies pointed this to as a main challenge. After many countries broke their bilateral agreement with Zimbabwe as a consequence of the disputed land reforms and increasingly repressive political environment, a massive amount of funding has started coming into the country through the civil society sector. Due to the dire economic situation internally, civil society has thus become one of the few places where you can be decently paid (informant 1). The statement below gives a telling picture of the situation:

“For people in their twenties who are in school, social work is seen as a carrier way, because if you get into work with an NGO, your salary is higher than those of the doctors or engineer or something like that. Besides from that of a politician, because then you know you will get money from elsewhere. So that has become a career (informant 1)”.

The dependency on external funding for civil society organizations, has also led to a disproportionate representation of the most vocal pro-democracy organizations on behalf of smaller Community Based Organizations (CBO), as the latter are struggling to be heard

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22 Statement often heard in political discussions in Zimbabwe.
It has also led to a more specialized civil society, which one of the informants claimed was an unfortunate development when it comes to civil society’s potential for putting effective pressure on the government:

“(…) I will critique Zimbabwean civil society in terms that there is a tendency of domination by the specialized groups in terms of the discourse of what is happening in Zimbabwe. And that weakens the civil society in terms of its ability to creating pressure, on particularly the stronger arm of the GNU, which is Zanu (ZANU-PF). Because I think you can influence them more if you come with a critical mass, and the politicians feel that you can potentially impact on their fault. As long as it is an elite debate on what can and cannot be done, I think Zanu is happy with that kind of engagement. But they tend to be more jittery when they are engaging with “people-organizations”, like WOZA, which are grass root org based organizations, and with membership. Because they know that those org have greater impact beyond their offices, and beyond taking cases to court, and issuing press releases and meeting in international forums” (informant 3).

According to one of the informants, the professionalization confines civil society to middle class communities and makes it difficult to see them as representative for the general public:

“Civil society are like the upper and middle class, you don’t really find the lower classes. (…) They claim to represent the people, but in fact they only represent themselves sometimes” (informant 2).

If civil society mainly consists of a professional middle class, their role as advocators of the general population’s interests must be questioned. Examining the main focus of these organizations, suggests a picture of their representativeness. While civil society in Zimbabwe is talking about ‘good governance’ and human rights, they are quieter on the issue of land rights, which is considered of vital importance by the general population, and seen as the main tool for democratization (informant 13). Whereas the general public are concerned about whether they have food, electricity, and housing, these are not what stood out as the most prominent issues for civil society during the GNU period. This is not to say that the general public is not concerned with democratization, but as the introduction quote states: “You cannot eat democracy”. Informants also pointed to a ‘fatigue’ amongst the public with regards to demands for democracy, because they are not satisfied with the GNU arrangement, which was claimed to be a as a democratizing (informant 1 and 13). The general sentiment was well captured by one of the informants when asked what democracy means: “Democracy is like a invisibility-cloak, everybody is talking about it, but nobody is actually seeing it” (informant 2). This suggests that the demand for ‘democratization’ remains blurry, and is not broken down into demands for chances that would improve the general public’s everyday life. It can also be seen as an echo of the donor’s prioritizing of issues that correspond to their mandate, and not necessarily what is of local relevance. As a consequence, informants report,
“(…) because you (the civil society organizations) need the money you are carrying out activities that are not necessarily needed by the local population” (informant 15).

One of the informants claimed this had consequences for civil society’s ability to mobilize amongst the general public. He explained the dominance of civil society arguing that, “the ones with money in Harare are often (members of) civil society, because you cannot go to someone who is trying to fend for his family to come join a march” (informant 9). In lines with this, another informant described how the economic situation has made people less engaged in civil society organizations role as a watch dog with regards to the political system claiming that, “(…) people have, as the economy shrunk, ended up prioritizing feeding the families opposed to engaging in your civic duty to try to old the state accountable” (informant 3).

Processes of democratization have historically been promoted and fought for by the middle class. These are often the ones who have the capacity and ability to stand against the power-holders. However, the domination of political and civil rights over socio-economic right in the fight for democracy in Zimbabwe excludes a large segment of the population. Whereas local relevance and the situation on the ground dictate one thing, donor requirements and the middle class’ priorities dictate another. Hence, there is a lack of local embeddedness, which reflects itself in a lack of autonomy for civil society. There is a risk that if civil society becomes alienated from the populous, the demands that are put forward cannot be seen as ‘the voice of the people’. As a result, their legitimacy is weakened, and ZANU-PF’s claim that they are tools of western interests in the country is strengthened.

### 6.1.3 Working Environment

‘If you have been bitten by a snake, you will be afraid of a rope’

Civil society is a risky business in Zimbabwe. Even though the violence was at its peak around elections in 2008, the period from 2008-2013 has continued to see significant repression of civil society, as well as persecution of human rights activists. Scholars claim that there has been no decline in political violence, but rather an upsurge in low-intensity political retribution, and a continuation of intimidation, arrests and torture (Sachikonye 2011:105, Chiroro 2013:135-136). The commitment to peace that Mugabe has voiced in

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24 African proverb heard on BBC’s ‘Focus on Africa’ [17.01.2014].
several speeches during this period has been paralleled with the security forces increasing violent harassment of opponents. The outspoken peace commitment should therefore be looked at with scepticism. Throughout the period, organizations such as Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum have continued to show that the peace remains fragile and that civil society remains under a constant threat as ‘enemies of the state’ (informant 6).

One pertinent example of the repressive environment civil society operates in is the violence that followed the constitutional process. The ‘Operation Chimumumu’, which literally means ‘be quiet and don’t express views on the constitution’, was organized by a triangle of state agencies, the youth militia and war veterans (Sachikonye 2011:106). The violence did especially target women who were politically active. This has been widely documented by organizations such as, ZHR NGO Forum and Crisis Coalition, which revealed the perpetrators as a combination of ZANU-PF affiliated, the police, and war veterans (Sachikonye 2011:77). It had the intended consequences of frightening the public, and demonstrates a close relationship between ZANU-PF and the security forces. The arrest of several human rights activists as well as other civil society members incites fear, and makes civil society to be perceived as an unsafe sphere. The function of civil society as protectors comes with the condition that the rule of law is respected. In a system that has a politicized judiciary, civil society is only able to act as protectors of citizens as far as the government allow them to.

Considering the restrictions to the freedom of assembly, association, and speech, as well as continued harassment and intimidation, it is difficult to expect civil society to carry out what is postulated in the theory. Their contribution to democratization and peace is severely curbed by an authoritarian state, which is not the least interested in a critical civil society. Especially the organizations that label their work with democracy and human rights, struggle to carry out their day-to-day work because they constantly have to protect their space, and more literally their members from persecution and arbitrary arrests (informant 2). During an informal conversation on fieldwork in Harare, a woman talked of the many who used to work in civil society, but who left the country to work either in South Africa, or in other international organizations elsewhere. She then added: “It is not only a brain drain, but the brains that are left are too afraid” (informal conversation, Harare 2.5.2013). This speaks well

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for the current situation, and can partly be explained by the violence in 2008, which has ignited people with a fear that makes it almost irrelevant whether the threats are carried out or not. If they are told that they’re not wanted, and they believe that they are in danger doing the things they do, that is what matters, not if the threat is real or not. If a threat is perceived as real, it is real.

Engaging in civil society in Zimbabwe has been proven to potentially have fatal consequences, and it cannot be expected of the masses to risk their lives. However, the feeling of danger that stems from the heavy repression in 2008 has also lead to a certain paranoia with regards to risk involved in civil society engagement (informant 13). There is therefore a combination of real risk as well as the fear-factor, which leads to self-censorship and difficulties with regards to mass-mobilization.

The above critical factors should invite precaution to the enthusiasm of the potential civil society holds in a process of democratization and peace building. Below, the theoretical assumption of civil society’s contribution to democratization and peace building, which were presented in the theoretical chapter, will be examined in light of the critical factors. This aims to better understand civil society’s potentials and limitations, which again warrants a well-designed support by the donor community.

6.2 Civil Society, Democratization and Peace Building - Theory Revisited

Historically, civil society is seen as protectors of citizens’ rights against the state, and said to function as a school of democracy by socialization of democratic norms (Wood 1992:84). Habermas (1992) further developed the concept, and stressed civil society’s role as a tool for marginalized groups to voice their concerns towards the state system, which has also become the view of the political left (Paffenholz and Spurks 2006:4). The liberal view of civil society as right bearers and advocates of non-violence has made a number of donor agencies argue that support for civil society will contribute to democratization and peace building in the respective countries. Scholars such as Gramsci on the other hand, have sought to modify the ideal picture of civil society as bearers of democracy and peace, and claim that civil society is just another battleground of different interests held by the elite rather than ‘the people’ (in
Hearn 2001). Along these lines, Julie Hearn points out that civil society’s dependency on donor funding can end up compromising their autonomy and thereby damage its potential as a voice of the people (2001).

The debate between Liberalism and Marxism concerning civil society’s role as democratizers and peace builders has been termed a rights/redistribution dilemma by McCandless (2011), and is highly relevant in a Zimbabwean context. The ‘rights-perspective’ coincides with an urban-based civil society, and would in a Marxist view represent the bourgeois concern, and elite domination. The organizations within the scope of my thesis would to a large degree correspond to the rights-perspective, where members of the middle-class, to a large degree focus on democracy through a ‘human rights’ –perspective, and are less able to communicate the socio-economic implications of democracy. The ‘redistributive-perspective’ relates to a focus on the rural parts of the population, and the ‘democratization’ of land. This view has been advocated by mainly the war-veterans, who according to the definition of civil society that has been applied, falls outside the scope of this study.

The factors that were presented in the first section of this chapter are in line with the academic criticism of civil society that was presented in chapter three. The polarization between civil society and state institutions in Zimbabwe shows the relevance of the argument made by Belloni (2008) that civil society is likely to incorporate the already existing political cleavages. The findings also give reason to uphold the critic of a civil society that risk becoming more accountable to external donors than to a national member base. Furthermore, the relevance of civil society’s working environment agrees with McCandless (2011) argument of a ‘political opportunity structure’ deciding civil society’s abilities and capacities. The case of Zimbabwe also shows that democratization is not always compatible with peace building. There are inherent difficulties in managing a peaceful transition to democracy, as referred to in the theory chapter. Whereas ‘democracy’ as an institutionalized political system is correlated with peace, ‘democratization’ often entails conflict. The situation in Zimbabwe exemplifies this well, and points to important aspects of a transition process. The following section will elaborate on how the above critical factors affects civil society’s role in Zimbabwe relates to the theoretical assumption of civil society’s importance with regards to democratization and peace building.
6.2.1 Democratization and Civil Society

Democratization was in chapter three defined as: “The continuous process of deepening democratic values and popular participation” (chapter 3). According to the theoretical assumptions, a vibrant civil society’s will promote democratic norms and practices, as well as voice the needs and demands of the general public into the political system.

While the empirical findings in chapter five shows that civil society fills important functions in the struggle for democratization in Zimbabwe, the findings also point to important limitations. As stated in the introduction, this suggests that the belief in civil society as democratizers should not be seen as a mechanic one, but rather as a function that is dependent on critical contextual aspects.

The theoretical assumption is that civil society has a direct democratizing effect as a control mechanism, and protect citizens from state oppression. Further, their role as watchdog means that they are overseeing state institutions’ practices, aiming to contribute to the state’s accountability towards its citizens. In light of the analysis, this should be considered as highly dependent on the state’s willingness and acceptance of a critical civil society. Civil society organizations in Zimbabwe, working as guardians of democratic norms, find themselves brutally curtailed. The difficult working environment limits civil society’s access to the political system, and thus its ability to play its role as a watchdog. Its ability to influence the state’s respect for democratic norms is hampered by mutual mistrust and lack of cooperation. The lack of political will with regards to allowing civil society to function as a control mechanism for democratic principles, therefore makes their contribution to democratization one that is carried out in opposition to state institutions rather than in collaboration. As shown above, the government in Zimbabwe does little to protect civil liberties. Individual freedoms such as the freedom of expression, of assembly and of speech are severely constrained. The organizations that voice democratic demands are deemed ‘enemies of the state’, and are in a constant ‘cat-and-mouse’ game with state institutions. Their contribution with regards to democratization can therefore be expressed as an indirect effect through the continuous battle against authoritarian rule, and an incessant demand of political space to voice their opinions. However, despite the unfavourable conditions civil society continuous ‘battle’ for space results in political pluralism, which is an important feature of a democratic society.
Despite the constrained environment however, there are also parts of civil society that are able to carry out their work without significant interference from the state. The examples of collaboration between state institutions and civil society are especially found within the area of service provision and local conflict management. Here, their ability to carry out their work is made possible by a neutral role with regards to the political power struggle. Their contribution with regards to democratization can thus be debated, and as their work requires an apolitical attitude, they are not to be considered watchdogs. However, their thorough documentation of human rights violations gives a voice to victims of political oppression that to a large degree are kept in the shadows by the government.

The authoritarian nature of the state and the unsafe environment makes civil society’s role as protectors one of the most important functions. In lines with Locke’s presumption of civil society as the bearers of freedom against the coercive nature of the state, civil society in Zimbabwe are crucial as legal defenders of citizens against state oppression. The unsafe working environment has made this highly necessary, but has also according to informants taken up extensive resources that compromise their engagements in other areas. The fact that numerous organizations find themselves in court for long periods of time hamper their day-to-day work, and was seen by one of the informants (9) as a strategic plan from government to ‘keep them away’ from monitoring the government’s and other state institutions’ activities. Furthermore, the litigation is mainly concerned with the human rights that involve freedom of speech and assembly, and to a lesser extent with socio-economic rights. Whereas freedom of speech and assembly are issues that concern civil society actors themselves and prominent opposition players, the issues of socio-economic rights involves a much larger segment of the general population of Zimbabwe. This can result in an alienation of the general public, which questions civil society’s representativeness for the general population.

Civil society’s representativeness relates to the lack of local embeddedness, which was referred to in the first part of chapter six. A lack of local embeddedness suggests a democratic deficit in terms of civil society as a ‘voice of the people’. Several informants referred to a commercialization of the sector, due to civil society’s heavy reliance on foreign donors, and the occasional inconsistency between donors’ requirements and local needs. During the period from 2008 till 2013 several of the informants claimed that civil society had become a top-down structure. While grass-root organizations are being formed in rural areas to respond to various needs, they often struggle to survive as an organization as the issues they target are
more often socio-economic issues than the issues typically funded by donors. The dependency on donor funding has made it important for organizations to conform their work to what donors have as their mandate, sometimes regardless of local needs. This is not compatible with the theoretical assumption of civil society as a tool for democratization. According to Habermas, civil society is an instrument for citizens to put their different concerns on the political agenda (Paffenholz and Spurks 2006:4). Because the pro-democracy organizations in Zimbabwe to a large extent are made up of a resourceful middle class, there is a risk of the ordinary citizens feeling as alienated from them as they do from the political elite. Moreover, Habermas referred to a healthy civil society as one “that is steered by its members through shared meanings” (Habermas in Edwards 2009:8). A too heavy-handed control from external donors can compromise the organizations’ own control, and thus the ability to reflect the ‘shared meanings’ of their constituencies. Furthermore, the fact that prominent civil society organizations is made up of mostly middle class people, gives relevance to Marx’s criticism of civil society as a tool for bourgeois dominance (Kumar 1993:379). This has been pointed out before by Erin McCandless as the rights/redistribution dilemma, where the values of good governance and democracy stand against a focus on justice for the masses and equal access to resources. Issues of ‘good governance’ are mainly advocated by urban civil society, and are argued to be detached from the rural population’s grievances for redistribution, especially with regards to land (2011:18). It is along these lines that Sam Moyo and Brian Raftopolous argue that civil society in Africa (here: Zimbabwe) have not been shaped by or responsive to indigenous problems (McCandless 2011:11). This is not to question the people of Zimbabwe’s authentic quest for a more democratic country, good governance and human rights, which are the issues that seem to appeal best to the donor community. However, civil society has not been able to tie these issues to the more pressing concerns of the population that concern the socio-economic issues. As a consequence, the term ‘democracy’ appears to be a theoretical concept rather than a thorough practice for ‘people power’. The general sentiment was well captured by one of the informants, as he compared democracy to an invisibility-cloak (see above) (informant 2). That the term ‘democracy’ appears as a hollow concept among the population might be explained by civil society’s lack of local embeddedness, which fails to tie democratization to what are the population’s main concerns.

Another aspect is the theoretical assumption of civil society as a school of democracy. Putman’s argument of civil society as “a microcosm for the development of democratic
norms and practices” (as cited in Belloni 2008:185), holds that the democratic practices internally in organizations will become the norm in society and eventually have a spillover effect into the political system. On the contrary, examples in chapter five suggests that the opposite can also occur, with the authoritarian practice within the political system is setting the norm in civil society organizations. What informants referred to as ‘founders syndrome’, as well as hierarchic structures with little room for cooperation, implies that what is true on paper not necessarily defines the general practice. The internal authoritarian practices, which limits civil society’s role as a school of democracy, suggest that civil society’s working environment in Zimbabwe is heavily influenced by the deeply entrenched authoritarian political culture in general. This suggests that the expected affect of civil society as a school of democracy, will not appear automatically, and perhaps it has been overlooked how structures in society affects the nature of civil society in their respective countries.

Above, civil society’s role in a democratization process was summarized as promoting democratic norms and practices, as well as voicing the needs and demands of the general public into the political system. This section has argued that the critical factors that were introduced above seem to lay certain limitations for civil society to achieve its full potential with regards to democratization. The following section will examine how the critical factors, according to the findings, have influenced civil society’s role as peace builders.

6.2.2 Peace building and Civil Society

Peace building was above defined as ensuring “the absence of state-violence, as well as the presence of social stability that creates conducive conditions for development and democracy to prosper”. The theoretical assumption of civil society in peace building is that they foster social cohesion, enable cooperation, and contribute with services where the state is unable or unwilling.

There are numerous civil society organizations in Zimbabwe that define their work as peace building. The activities vary from engaging people as peace monitors to the gathering of documentation about conflict-prone areas, as well as the facilitation of dialogue between adversaries. However, as conflict in Zimbabwe often has involved state institutions as one of the violent parties, a call for peace which also points to accountability can imply sever consequences for powerful actors within the political system. Therefore, whereas
accountability of responsible actors is highlighted by some of the organizations, several of them are primarily focusing on dialogue and conflict-transformation. In the extension of this, some peace building organizations can be seen to downplay their critical stance towards the regime to be able to carry out their work.

The findings show that civil society organizations that report of work such as dialogue circles’ and ‘conflict transformation’ within local communities claimed that it was necessary for them to remain apolitical and not aligned to the opposition. They also explained how this made them reluctant to use terms as democratization. In chapter three, one of the descriptions of democracy is a ‘process of combining division and cohesion, as well as conflict and consent’ (Rustow in Anderson 1999:15). Several of the organizations were carrying out work that contributes to a more democratic and thus peaceful way for local communities to resolve conflict. However, they did not highlight a vocal commitment to democracy. Hence, the polarized political environment in which democracy has become loaded with politics, in theory compromises the connection between peace and democracy, while in practice the peace building activities go hand in hand with ‘small-scale-democratization’.

The polarized environment also limits the realization of the theoretical assumptions that see civil society as a crosscutting body that will ‘recreate the social fabric’ after conflict. While the theory seems to expect civil society to be a blank sheet, the case of Zimbabwe is an example of the opposite, and should invite precaution to the general belief. According to this study, civil society’s ability to bring ‘former opponents’ together is dependent on whether it is considered to be a neutral actor. Informants refer to a deep polarization throughout society as one of the main reasons for limited crosscutting activities within civil society. This is in line with Belloni’s argument of polarization as one of the trademarks of post-conflict societies (2008:188), and should not be underestimated when it comes to civil society’s ability to foster social cohesion. In Zimbabwe, if an organization that focus on the reconciliatory aspects of peace building and call for accountability of former atrocities, it implies criticism of ZANU-PF and its affiliated state institutions. These organizations have little appeal to both sides of the conflict, as the main cleavage that divides society is your support for or against ZANU-PF. On the other hand, those that remain apolitical and thus have made a stance to remain neutral are the ones that are able to bring former adversaries together, even though this is mostly reported to happen in local communities rather than on a national level.
The hostile working environment where civil society is being considered enemies of the state, further makes organizations reluctant to function as a space where new ties are formed. The fact that ZANU-PF is known to pay individuals to report back from activities within civil society creates a general lack of trust, and new members are met with skepticism rather than openness. As long as civil society organizations feel threatened by former adversaries, the theoretical assumption of civil society as a ground for former enemies to ‘unite around common values’ is unlikely. What kind of working environment civil society is functioning in is therefore critical for its role as a crosscutting and reconciliatory body, and thus to function as peace builders.

The need for civil society in a peace building process is further underlined in theory by its contribution to service delivery. This is said to lay the economic and political foundation for a state to rebuild after conflict, and thereby maintain peace. The case of civil society in Zimbabwe underscores this assumption at the same time as it highlights certain aspects that are given less attention in the theoretical framework. In lines with the analytical framework, the ‘traditional’ services, such as education, health and food has not been a focus in this study. However, non-tangible services, such as support for victims of political violence and trauma healing in the aftermath of violent conflict are emphasized by informants as important sides of civil society work. This is explained by the hostile working environment and continued low-scale conflict, where the state is both unable and unwilling to offer support to victims of political violence. In addition to the legal protection that is provided for critics of the regime by the pro-bono legal organizations, the provision of these services are especially important for activists. However, the fact that state institutions also are known to clamp down on whole communities that they consider to be aligned to the opposition makes the provision of trauma-healing and psychological support important for large segments of the population. The provision of these non-tangible services is an aspect where, contrary to the lack of local embeddedness that was pointed to above, civil society responds directly to a need that is of vital relevance to the citizens.

This section invites precaution to the belief that successful democratization and peace building mechanically follow where there is a vibrant civil society. According to the theoretical assumption civil society is expected to contribute to a successful democratization and peace building process. Civil society in Zimbabwe however, is characterized by the
polarization that exists in society in general, lacks to a certain degree the local embeddedness that is necessary to foster democratic participation, and works in an overall unsafe environment, which challenges their ability fulfill their objectives.

Because the factors presented above not are general for the universe of civil society in different situations and within other timeframes, the findings are not generalizable. Nevertheless, the analysis builds on criticism from established academic literature that through different studies have shown various weaknesses in the theoretical assumption of civil society as democratizers and peace builders. In lines with George and Bennett’s argument that case studies are beneficial as a way of theory-development, this examination of civil society in Zimbabwe in the period from 2008-2013 can thus be seen as a building block. It adds to the general investigation of the blurry concept civil society, and provides insight to its contribution in democratization and peace building processes. The following concluding chapter summarizes the main findings, gives an account of recent research done on the situation in Zimbabwe, and points to areas of future research that can further the understanding of civil society’s role and limitations.
7 Conclusion

“Beware of simple civil society enthusiasm”
(Paffenholz and Spurks 2006).

This chapter will sum up the main findings of the study, and give an account of what implications this has for the development of the current theoretical framework. Subsequently, it will consider to what extent the choice of theory enabled the analysis, and how the findings can contribute to theory-developing. Then, it will give an account of recent research about the situation in Zimbabwe, and suggest how future research can add to the understanding of civil society’s role. Finally, some concluding remarks considering the implications of this study will be given.

As stated in the introduction, the theoretical assumption suggests that there is a positive relationship between a vibrant civil society, and a successful democratization and peace building process. The belief in civil society has further led to a massive amount of donor support for the sector, and a discourse of enthusiasm for civil society as saviours of democracy and peace. However, according to Paffenholz and Spurks there is a need of in-depth case studies to analyse civil society’s potential as well as limitations to further understand its role in the process, and better warrant support.

With this in mind, the research question for this study has been: “What role did Zimbabwean civil society play with regards to democratization and peace building in the period from 2008 to 2013? And what were the limitations to their contribution in the same period?”

To answer the question, civil society’s role in Zimbabwe has been mapped out by using Paffenholz and Spurks’ function model, and has been further investigated on the basis of academic literature, as well as the study’s empirical data, which offers a more critical stance towards civil society’s potential. The findings are based on an empirical study of selected parts within civil society in Zimbabwe, as well as the assessment of secondary literature on the subject. Through interviews during a fieldwork in May 2013, a collection of data was
gathered from a variety of organizations, both external and internal actors, as well as scholars with relation to Zimbabwean civil society. The research reveals both victories and limitations of their ability and capacity to influence the process of democratization and peace building. It thus offers a building block to the understanding of potentials as well as pitfalls. This should be taken into consideration both in academic debates, as well as within donor communities, when assessing civil society’s role, and offering support with regards to democratization and peace building processes. The following sections will highlight the main findings, and give an account of what they imply for the already established theoretical assumptions.

### 7.1 Main findings

This study agrees with the theoretical assumption of civil society’s potential to fill important roles with regards to democratization and peace building. However, it suggests precaution to the belief in a mechanic relationship between support for civil society on one hand, and successful democratization and peace building on the other. The empirical findings show that the role of civil society, hereunder their ability and capacity to influence the process, is limited by the Zimbabwean political situation. Whereas this might seem apparent and come as no surprise, the theoretical expectations of civil society’s role with regards to democratization and peace building do not seem to take this into account. Hence, it is important to show that civil society does not exist in a vacuum, and to point to the various aspects that should be taken into account. Civil society is also part of a complex structure of interests, which is not always compatible with the view that civil society represents the voice of the people.

The mapping of civil society’s function, presented in chapter five, shows a multifaceted picture of civil society’s role. In Zimbabwe civil society is well developed, and an important support for the people who continuously fight for a more democratic and peaceful society. Civil society organizations do serve as protectors of citizens’ rights when faced with state persecution, to some extent provides an independent voice in a politicized state, and contributes to transforming the current conflict pattern. The persistence of civil society is visible for anyone who peaks into the current situation in Zimbabwe. In Chimuriwo’s study, which is from a particularly violent period in 2008/9, the women talk about living conditions in Zimbabwe with words like *tough, painful* and *death-like*, but still believe their activism can
improve the situation (2009:81). This commitment is also found in several other organizations, especially within the human rights organizations that continuously demand their freedom of expression and assembly.

However, as I show in chapter six, there are critical factors that limit their ability and capacity. A deeply polarized society, a lack of local embeddedness, and an unsafe working environment, all stand as barriers for civil society to fully accomplish what is expected according to the theoretical assumption. These three constructed factors are based on former research and what the informants say are common challenges they face in their work. The factors are thus used to analyse civil society’s role as democratizers and peace builders, and point to important aspects that should be taken into consideration when aiming to understand its potentials and limitations.

First, the theoretical assumption of civil society as a reuniting body, recreating the social fabric in the aftermath of conflict has in Zimbabwe shown to be limited by a deeply polarized society. Civil society is severely affected by the main political cleavage. This to some extent has its natural explanation in a close alignment with the MDC since the party’s evolvement, and parts of civil society’s vocal criticism of government. When civil society took on the role as a watchdog and advocators of democratic principles, it was done in the same breath as support for the opposition. This has had the effect of making ZANU-PF dismiss them as ‘the opposition’s puppies’ and disregarding their position in the political sphere. This has affected not only the civil society organizations that were aligned with the opposition, but civil society as a whole. Even if there are organizations that want to be considered as apolitical organizations, they are continuously faced with accusations of being ‘Western puppets’, and aligned with the opposition parties as a way for government to dismiss their demands. Because they are not seen as neutral players, it is difficult for civil society to act as a crosscutting body between the opposing parties. Civil society also appears to the general public as if they have chosen sides in the political power-struggle, and therefore fails to appeal to the population as a whole. While, some of the organizations embrace this affiliation and demand ‘democratization’ as a synonym for ‘regime change’, other organizations choose to downplay their outspoken commitment to ‘democracy’ to be able to carry out their various peace-building activities. This illustrates how the most vocal of organizations easily set an agenda that affects civil society as a whole, and how the state’s perception of civil society heavily influences their potential as neutral players.
Polarization further affects civil society’s role as facilitators of cooperation between the state and its citizens. While theory stipulates civil society to act as intermediaries between the state and its citizens, Zimbabwean civil society is severely hindered by its unfavourable relationship with the government. Cooperation requires government’s willingness and acceptance, which until now has proved limited. Some successful examples of local governance cooperation with civil society organizations were reported to take place, however it was mainly restricted to locally confined conflict transformation and required a strictly apolitical stance by the organization. Cooperation on a national level appears limited, and reserved to engagement with the MDC part of government. Hence, civil society is still too closely linked to the name of the opposition to be able, both with regards to the general population and the state institutions, to perform their role as bridge builders and facilitators. This speaks to the general difficulty for civil society to find a fine balance between criticism and engagement to allow for cooperation but not co-option.

Secondly, I argue that the potential civil society has to function as a ‘voice of the people’ is hampered by a commercialization and a lack of local embeddedness with the general public. Whereas theory claims that civil society is a tool for ‘the people’ to voice concerns, the most vocal civil society in Zimbabwe is made up of middle class professionals, who is not representative of the average Zimbabwean. The civil society within the scope of this thesis is heavily dependent on the international donor community. Their demand for democracy often revolves around mainly political rights, and often fails to take into account the socio-economic aspect. In a situation where most Zimbabweans cannot rely on food-security and the unemployment rate is worrying, democracy needs to appear as a favoured way towards raised living standards. The priority of political rights to a certain degree can be explained by the lack of autonomy that civil society enjoys vis-à-vis the donor community. Whereas the bigger organizations have extensive funding from donors, CBOs founded by local communities to address socio-economic issues, are struggling to tap into the massive support because of less professional organizational structures. Support is more easily given to trained professionals, with well-developed organizations. Outside donors can thereby undermine local initiatives. This is not to say that the call for ‘good governance’ and ‘political freedoms’ are not grievances that are felt amongst the general Zimbabwean population. However, the fact that CBOs are said to form around primarily socio-economic issues, should place socio-economic issues higher at the agenda of the donor community and thus the bigger
organizations’ priorities. This calls for attention to the top-down structure of support. If the donor’s agenda decides where local organizations place their focus, civil society risks loosing its constituency as the people’s representatives. One could argue that ‘good governance’ and ‘democracy’ are the prerequisites of increased living standards. However, there is a danger of these terms losing their meaning when they are not linked to socio-economic improvements that influences people’s everyday life.

Third, the study shows that civil society’s working environment has a crucial impact on their capacity, as well as their internal structures. The continuous human rights violations by state institutions, has affected civil society’s general capacity, as litigation has become a frequent activity, and is often very time consuming. The capacity civil society organizations use in court is a necessity to protect its own members, as well as critical activists that are targeted by the government. However, it also means that they are kept from performing other tasks that are set out by their mandates. This can further add to the alienation from ‘the people’. Moreover, internal practices of organizations are shown to be heavily influenced by the political culture that makes up civil society’s working environment. The deeply entrenched authoritarian political culture in Zimbabwe spills over into civil society, and limits their role as a school of democracy. Contrary to the expected assumption of civil society as democratic norm makers, I find that there is a reverse spill-over effect from the authoritarian political system to internal practices in civil society organizations. The theoretical assumption of civil society’s democratizing effect on the political system effect presupposes an internal democratic practise in the various organizations. On the contrary, Zimbabwean civil society actors report of authoritarian practises within several organizations, referred to by the informants as the ‘founder’s syndrome’. This is explained as a situation where one strong leader refuses democratic practices within, including a democratic turn-over of the leadership position. Hence, a theoretical commitment to democracy does not necessarily transform into democratic practise. In the case of Zimbabwe, a call for democratization sometimes seems to be more about a general criticism of government than a call for democratic participation by the people.

The challenging working environment also has security implications for individuals who engage in civil society organizations. Zimbabwe is still a repressive and authoritarian political system. The memory of the violent 2008 elections, as well as the continued prosecution and general intimidation of civil society has left a culture of fear. This affects
civil society’s ability to mobilize the general population, as there is a security risk associated with civil society engagement. During the GNU-period, the fear has proved to be an efficient way to repress civil society without actually having to carry out the same violent clamp down as in the period leading up to the elections in 2008. As stated earlier, in addition to the brain-drain that has hampered civil society, the ‘brains that are left’ are sometimes too afraid to raise their voice. The clamp-down on civil society has led a number of actors to either downplay their criticism or to leave the country for safety. It has also made whole organizations look for ways to operate without being considered as a threat to government, which in practice implies to stop criticizing them. This is an understandable approach with regards to safety, and also to enable a constructive cooperation with state institutions. However, a return to the position civil society held in the early years of independence, supporting government policies and often keeping quiet about human right abuses, will have serious implications for civil society’s role as a watch-dog and protectors of citizens against the state.

On a general note, it is important to state that this study can only conclude for the case of civil society in Zimbabwean and is confined to the organizations within the scope of this thesis. However, implications of this study invite precaution to the general belief that the mere existence of civil society, and general support to pro-democracy and peace building organizations, mechanically make the process of democratization and peace building a success. Hence, the case study of civil society in Zimbabwe supports the conclusion in Paffenholz and Spurks article that civil society needs to be guided by expected results rather than good intentions. Understanding the current role of civil society, including their limitations, is the first step in this direction.

7.2 The Choice of Theory

This study has demonstrated how theory on civil society in relation to democratization and peace building, can be used to evaluate civil society’s role and limitations within a given case. I started out with an assessment of different scholars’ contribution to research on civil society in relation to democratization and peace building. This allowed for a broad perspective of what role civil society is supposed to play, as well as criticism to the general assumption towards their potential. This provided a foundation for my analysis of their role
and limitation in Zimbabwe. However, I found the general theory to be limited with regards to a structural framework for the investigation of civil society’s actual contributions and obstacles.

As a basis for my analysis, I therefore applied Paffenholz and Spurks’ functionalist model as an instrument to better understand civil society’s role in democratization and peace building processes. This allowed for a systematized evaluation of various aspects of civil society’s role. While the authors show that the functionalist model contributes to a better understanding of civil society’s role, I find that an analytical framework for the potential limitations to civil society’s contribution also is necessary. I therefore suggest three factors that are based on established research, as well as my own data material. I further argue that these factors can be used in an evaluation of civil society’s contribution to democratization and peace building.

The findings can to some extent be used to draw contingent generalizations, and thereby develop the theory. Such generalizations can be made towards cases that are characterized by the factors that are pointed out as limitations to civil society’s contribution to democratization and peace building. This suggests that civil society organizations that operate in polarized societies are not necessarily able to fulfil their role as peace builders in cases where they are not perceived as a neutral actor. Moreover, this study shows how civil society’s dependency on donor support can lead to a commercialization which compromises their role as a ‘voice of the people’. Finally, it can be assumed that civil society’s working environment has implications for its internal structures, as well as its overall capacity to carry out their work.

### 7.3 Present and Future Research

In the latest number of The Southern African Journal (2013), different scholars, from a variety of disciplines examine issues of politics, patronage and violence in Zimbabwe. Aiming to open up some of the conventional Africanist views on the nature of political developments, they argue against the general weakness of the African state and emphasize the importance of liberation-struggles’ legacies (Alexander and McGregor 2013:749). Alexander and McGregor argue that to understand the current development, it is necessary to examine the historic development of ZANU-PF’s state making, as well as the political culture
amongst civil servants (2013:751). Above, I argue that the political culture of authoritarian practices within the political system, influences civil society’s internal practices and to a certain extent undermines an internal democratic culture. Future research on Zimbabwean civil society can therefore be well informed by insight into political culture. The collection of articles presented in the journal also investigates the close link between ZANU-PF and the security forces, and emphasize the legacy the liberation struggle plays in legitimates ZANU-PF’s authority (Tendi 2013). Drawing on this, it would be interesting to further explore ZANU-PF’s legitimating role as liberators, and what this implies for the legitimacy of agents (such as civil society) that oppose their authoritarian rule. In a context where the authoritarian party also has the legacy as liberators, it can be hypothesized that it would demand more of civil society to mobilize support against them, than in a case without this historical heritage.

Civil society is a blurry and complex concept. This study has defined civil society narrowly due to a limited scope and time frame. Future research could explore the role of other parts, or a broader defined civil society. It would also be interesting to address the opposing understandings of democratization in Zimbabwe, referred to above as the rights/redistribution dilemma by McCandless in her research on social movements (2011). The opposing views regarding whether democratization is about redistribution of resources, or political rights would add to the understanding of how people consider the pro-democracy part of civil society within the scope of this thesis.

Moreover, future research should examine the recipient side of this field, namely the different segments of the population that civil society refers to as their target groups. Is there a coherence, or lack thereof between the population’s main concerns and civil society’s focus? The top-down approach that was referred to above, suggests that projects primarily fit with the current ‘trend’ in donor communities and to a lesser extent are founded on basic needs in society. A more thorough examination of who civil society is representing, and what parts of the populations that remains ‘voiceless’ would contribute to a better understanding of civil society’s potential as a representatives for the people.

7.4 Concluding Remarks
Even though the above analysis points to limitations to civil society’s contribution, the findings do not imply that civil society should be ignored in a process of democratization and peace building. On the contrary, civil society can be a vital component of success, which makes it even more important to understand the pitfalls and challenges to warrant the best possible support. Both democratization and peace building processes require the participation of the people, which should be the core of civil society’s raison d’être.

While the GPA laid out important democratic reforms and steps to build peace for the period from 2008 to 2013, the actual implementation and scope of the measures taken have been widely criticized. Throughout the period, a large segment of civil society in Zimbabwe has been vocal in their criticism against the government, demanding the realization of democratization and significant measures to build peace. However, the continuous repressive nature of the state, as well as civil society’s internal challenges, implies that civil society needs to find a balance between cooperation and cooption towards the state. At the same time, it is crucial for its legitimacy as a ‘voice of the people’ that its mandate is well founded among the population.
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Appendix:

Interview guide

Can you describe your day-to-day work in your organization?
What is the main focus for civil society organizations in Zimbabwe today?
How do you view the different roles of civil society in Zimbabwe today?

Is civil society able to balance and control state power in any way? (2,3)
How is your organization making an impact on a state-level? (6)
Who is your organization for? Who is part of civil society? (3,4,5)
Would it be ok for anyone to join your org? (5)
Are civil society organizations free and open organizations? (5)
How are decisions made within the organization(s)? (4)
Are you engaging with the current government, if yes, how? (2,3) /Are civil society organizations engaging with the current regime?
How is your organization making an impact on a grass root-level? (6) /Are civil society organizations making an impact on grass root-level?
Does your organization in any way provide any health, education or other service to the people of Zimbabwe? (1,7)

What are the main obstacles to your work? What are the main obstacles to their work?
How does your organization/civil society organizations contribute to democratization?
How is your organization working to build peace?
Is there agreement between the organizations of the way forward?
List of informants:

Number 1 – representative from GIZ in Zimbabwe, (US)
Number 2 – representative from young voices network, (ZW)
Number 3 – activist, currently working in Amnesty International, London (ZW)
Number 4 – representative/leader for Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, (ZW)
Number 5 – representative from Action Support Network, Zimbabwe Solidarity, (SA)
Number 6 – representative from Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, (ZW)
Number 7 – former student activist in Zimbabwe, currently working with NPAid regional office in Johannesburg, (ZW)
Number 8 - representative/leader of CCTM, (ZW)
Number 9 – former soldier in Zimbabwe, now activist/film maker, currently living in asylum in Johannesburg, (ZW)
Number 10 – coordinator of Zimbabwe Europe Network (ZEN), (NO)
Number 11 - Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP)
Number 12 - Bella Matambanadzo, journalist and writer, former participant within the women’s movement in Zimbabwe (ZW)
Number 13 – Eldridge Adolfo, researcher at Nordic African Institute (SW)
Number 14 – Amnesty activist, visiting Amnesty Norway (ZW)