The Millennium Development Goals and Communication for Development: A study of Malawi and Zambia

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Declaration

I, Tapiwa Gomo (Student Number: 586391), declare that this thesis is my own original and unassisted work. Where other authors' work has been used, it has been fully acknowledged. This thesis is being submitted in the fulfilment of the requirements of the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities, Media Studies, at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination, or to any other university.

Signed

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Tapiwa Gomo

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Abstract

The year 2000 witnessed a significant convergence of global policy positions. These positions range from the neoliberal regime which gained traction in the mid-1990s, participatory development models of the 1980s, and the technocratic approach to development of the late 1990s. Despite their ideological differences, these policy positions found co-existence in the (MDGs) and have framed how poverty is globally understood and how it should be addressed, including the use of communication especially the media to promote or fast track poverty reduction projects.

This thesis is a critical analysis of the extent to which the United Nations (UN) Communication for Development strategy of 2007 has been used in Kamaila Village in Zambia and Mwandama Village in Malawi to implement MDG-related projects. The two villages were chosen because they have been exposed to different models of poverty reduction activities. The Mwandama Village project is part of the Millennium Village Project where a holistic approach is applied to address poverty, while the Kamaila Village is a beneficiary of a water project which is considered to be important to kick-start village-driven poverty reduction activities.

Even though the two villages have been used as units of analysis, the main goal of this study was to examine the two policy documents as texts – the MDG and the UN Communication for strategy – how the discourse and narratives that inform them and their relationship with power, shape social practices and behaviour at national and village level. The study also sought to establish how language operates within the context of power relations by applying theories of global governance, knowledge and power, hegemony, participatory and media communication. The methodology used to gather data consists of a critical discourse analysis on the policy documents and qualitative interviews with different respondents from the villagers, the UN system, NGOs, media and governments. Through a combination of these theoretical frameworks and methodologies, this study has shown that the narratives and discourses that inform the MDGs are influenced by western actors who use the power of money to pursue their neoliberal interests under the guise of reducing poverty. The link between political power, the poverty reduction ideas and interests of elite actors saturates and remotely controls available policy spaces for participation with external knowledge and rules, starting from the UN system down to the villages thereby enabling neoliberal ideas to control the flow of knowledge and the construction of discourses.

Despite attempts to harness local modes of social communication to transmit the neoliberal notions of poverty in the villages, individual villagers have discursively devised ways of maintaining their own ‘traditional’ ways of life. This highlights that poverty reduction discussions must not be too obsessed with controlling or changing people’s minds and behaviour but seek to understand the grassroots’ lifestyles as a baseline for informed intervention. Ignoring this baseline knowledge is one of the many reasons development has failed dismally since the 1950s because it is driven by capital interests from the top to bottom with less or no intentions to address poverty.

In addition, the ability of media messages to influence practices and behaviour remains a contested arena. But as this study established, the strength of messages to alter social practices has its limitations because behaviour is a manifestation of several factors such as environment, context, biology, genealogy and culture, some of which are not linked to communication. However, communication within the context of the villagers is part of their way of exchanging or transmitting ideas and knowledge in producing and reproducing their culture and not to eliminate it. This thesis makes scholarly contribution through the use of a critical approach to international policy formulation, and participation within a globalised world. While several studies have analysed the link between communication and poverty reduction privileging the neoliberal construction of these themes, this study has demonstrated that the grassroots are not unthinking; they have a well-being, cultural context and communication ecology which needs to be understood first and respected. These findings expose the tensions between the neoliberal interests-driven elite view of poverty and the local way of viewing well-being.

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ACRONYMS

AIDS:	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AU:	African Union
BRICS:	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CBO:	Community-based Organisations
DAC:	Development Assistance Committee
FAO:	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FNDP:	Fifth National Development Plan (Zambia)
HDR:	Human Development Report
HIPC:	Highly Indebted Poor Countries
HIV:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDG:	International Development Goals
IDS:	International Development Strategy
IMF:	International Monetary Fund
MDGs:	Millennium Development Goals
MGDS:	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MPRS:	Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy
MVP:	Millennium Village Project
NEPAD:	New Economic Partnership for African Development
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRSP:	Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper
SADC:	Southern African Development Community
SAP:	Structural Adjustment Programme
SNDP:	Sixth National Development Plan (Zambia)
UN:	United Nations
UNDAF:	United Nations Development Framework
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSG:	United Nations Secretary General
WTO:	World Trade Organisation
WWI:	World War One
WWII:	World War Two
ZARD:	Zambia Association for Research and Development

DEDICATION:

To my late mother, Dadirai,

My late sister Kudzanai

and my son

Michael Tapiwanashe Gomo.

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Chapter One: Introduction and organisation of the study

1.1 Background

In September 2000, 189 countries unanimously adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and pledged to reach a number of targets that would improve people's lives by 2015; a declaration that has been praised as the world's biggest poverty[1] reduction project. The MDGs project has enjoyed the backing of development professionals and major finance institutions such as the World Bank, IMF and other bilateral aid agencies[2] (Easterly, 2007; 2008). Critics such as Amin (2006), Escobar (1995) and others have raised concern over global policies such as the MDGs, for their prescriptive and top-down nature and their inability to take on board the views of ordinary people in their formulation, despite the promise to embrace and strengthen participation.

This study aims to critically analyse the discourses and narratives that frame both the poverty reduction and participation approaches in the two United Nations system texts: the UN Communication for development strategy and the MDGs, with a specific interest in examining the function of the former as an enabler of the latter. It is a study of policies as texts, messages and ideas and their relationship with social power and practices through examining how words shape worldviews (Freire and Macedo, 1987). The study also examines participatory opportunities and moments for different actors, mainly focusing on Malawi and Zambia governments and villagers, and their role in the policy formulation and implementation of MDG-related projects, including identifying which actors have access to or participated in which policy spaces across the cross-section of policy hierarchy of the global system, and with what level of influence.

The interest to undertake this study derives from the UN Secretary General's (UNSG) report of 2010 which recommended that to achieve the MDG targets requires strengthening communication for development in order to expedite their localisation. Localisation of the

[1] The researcher is aware of the ideological baggage associated with the word poverty. When used outside the conventional discourse, it refers to lack of what is needed to achieve a desired well-being by individuals and communities.
[2] The United States, the European Union, Canada, Norway and others made promises of substantial aid increases at Monterrey in 2002, a result doubtlessly influenced by the MDG negotiations two years earlier (Clemence, Kenny and Moss (2004).

MDGs suggests an interesting and important policy shift which is the baseline of this inquiry, especially to establish whose ideas shape the discourses at global, national and local level. Various studies led by Chambers (1983;1997) and Edwards and Gaventa (2001), that have attempted to analyse the relationship between international development policies in relation to participation have looked at this link as a given, without paying particular attention to how interests embedded in such policies have implications on the mode of participation at different policy levels. This study assumes that actors hold positions, opinions and interests and also belong to constituencies. These positions and interests shape policies, ideas and therefore exercise agency (power). This assumption makes this study one of communication messages, ideas and social relations. The field of sociology has extensively offered important insights into the relations between power and social communication (cf. Gerber and Linda, 2010) but it is critical theorists such as Cox (1987) who offer provocative insights into the link between ideas, interests and global policies. The latter insights have stimulated interest in pursuing this study, especially to examine how communication is used to translate the ideas in the MDGs. The recommendation by the UNSG report places communication at the heart of achieving the MDGs. In a way, this revives the long standing debates on media-reception theories and the cause-effect relations between ideas, communication and hegemony. Therefore, my interests in this study transcended debates on media effects as raised in Gerbner (1983), Levy and Gurevitch (1993) and others. This study thus brings to the fore Cox's (1987) argument that global frameworks such as the MDGs are outcomes of ideas which are neither neutral nor candid to the poverty reduction cause since they are designed to pursue specific interests.

In undertaking this research, I have also taken into account that the link between communication, participation and their integration into global policies has not been adequately explored in the field of communication and media studies. This study attempts to bring these concepts together and to examine the effect of communication on behaviour, without taking development ideas as given. Within the field of media studies, the relation between knowledge and behaviours resonates with media-effects theories which have oscillated between three narratives, namely the alternative, significant and minimal media effects theories (Katz, 1980, 1987; Schramm & Roberts, 1971). Despite their variations, these three have their origins in Lasswell (1930, 1935) who popularised the magic bullet theory, which assumed a significant effect of the media messages on the target audience. Shannon and Weaver (1949) developed the agenda-setting theory, drawing from Lasswell's magic bullet theory which emphasised the power of media messages to transform society. The rise of modernisation meant that mass media were enlisted as a key socialising agent to the modernisation cultural orientation (Katz, 1960), as did other less assuming theories in the 1950s and 1960s. The UNSG's recommendation to apply communication to expedite the implementation of the MDGs resonates with the first category of theories where messages are assumed to have the power to alter behaviour (cf. Katz, 2001; Neuman and Guggenheim, 2011).

Focus on media effects alone is not sufficient to respond to the discussion on the cause-effect relationship between media effects and behaviour change, because limiting the analysis to media has always assumed media and communication to be neutral, thus free from interests. To secure a solid theoretical grounding for analysing the link between the UN Communication for Development strategy and the MDGs, this study draws from several critical theorists such as Cox (1987), Foucault (2003), and Escobar (1995), who have extensively brought to the fore the link between discourse and power. This study relies on Foucault's (2003) and Lukes' (1974; 2015) definitions of power as a multi-dimensional social factor. All three dimensions of power postulated by Lukes (1974) are applied in this study. The first dimension noted by Lukes (1974) is that power is a behavioural characteristic which gives one social group or individual the power to influence decision-making and choices against the wishes or interests of the other in a context considered participatory. The second dimension refers to the extent to which the power group or individual consciously or unconsciously prescribes participatory parameters. The third dimension refers to how the powerful set the agenda to transform the powerless in such a way that the powerless are forced to behave like the powerful.

Unlike Lukes, who has understood power as the capacity of an individual or group to impose their will on those seen as powerless, Foucault (1980) has conceived power as not being owned but as something that manifest itself in a particular way, more as strategy than a permanent possession. In Foucault's understanding, power is recursive, fluid and dynamic which makes it employable and exercisable through different social networks. He places the individual at the center of power and as vehicle of power and not an object of its application (Foucault,1980). Foucault's view of power present two dimensions that are relevant to the analysis of the MDGs, participation and the role of communication in poverty reduction. The first dimension is that power is everywhere and it operates through a social network of relations of the entire society than between the developed and the developing societies. The second dimension is that individuals are therefore not powerless or objects of its exercise or application but are the agents of power who act and exercise it.

Once communication is connected to power, or is in the service of a dominant discourse, several authors (Cox, 1987; Foucault, 2003; Escobar, 1995), have cautioned, this convergence advances the interests of hegemonic forces, with communication functioning to sustain a cultural environment that perpetuates the dominant social order. Drawing on empirical insights, an interpretive analysis is used to assess the impact of discourse on participation in MDGs projects in selected villages of Malawi and Zambia. Through this approach, this study unpacks the encapsulated assumptions that when fostered through an appropriate communication strategy, community participation and empowerment have the effect of fast-tracking poverty reduction in the selected villages of the two countries.

In order to effectively examine the proposed role of the UN Communication for development strategy in expediting the MDGs, this study situates analysis within theories of global governance, largely paying attention to the UN system as an arena of discourse production, where interests manifest into ideas and form narratives which are disseminated through textual devices. The study draws on global governance theorists such as Rosenau (1999), Foucault (2003) on discourse production, Cox (1997) on his critical analysis of the link between actors (including institutions), ideas and materials interests. It also draws from insights on media effects theorists such as Hall (1982), Gerbner (1983), and Levy and Gurevitch (1993). The convergence of these theories is almost adequate to provide a credible context to analyse the discourse and narratives that frame the MDGs and the UN communication for development strategy. This study relies on Cox (1997), mainly for his critical theory, and also draws from Freire's (1994) ideas to unpack how the villagers defined their lifestyles. The researcher is aware of the recent contributions made by several scholars in the field of communication for development such as Hemer and Tufte (2005), Malikhao (2004), Servaes and Malikhao (2004), Obregon and Waisbord (2012), Morris (2001), Mefalopulos (2009), Adams (1999, 2015) and many others who have paid particular attention to specialized areas. This study also takes into account that available literature on communication for development from some of these authors hardly challenge or explore ideas outside conventional development; or analyse communication for development in a broader global framework such as the MDGs. They have invested much of their time and resources in narrow or specialised areas such as public health, emergencies and cultural practices (cf. Singhal and Rogers, 2004, 1999; Tufte, 2001; Bauman, 1999).

The concept of participation, in its different variations, and as a global value in poverty reduction, has acquired dominant currency in conventional development. An extensive range of research has paid attention to the different levels of participation and their implications for intended outcomes (cf. Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1944). There is however, little research on the link between communication and the different variations of participation, with existing research ranging from communication for community integration (Salmon & Neff, 1989), participation for integration (Vedlitz & Veblen, 1980), and the use of media for participation (Smith, 1986). These are only differentiated by purpose, not by model, as they each resonate with the democratic participatory model (Friedland & McLeod, 1998). Community integration into government structures provides spaces for participation, but media and interpersonal communication have been used to provide the knowledge or incentives to access participatory opportunities provided by the structure.

The nexus between the UN communication for development and the MDGs is yet to be studied in greater detail. Extant literature consists of specialized studies mainly in the areas of health, agriculture and human rights but does not link to a broader framework as proposed in the UNSG's recommendation. Thus, available literature has numerous loose ends, specifically regarding whether lack of development can be directly attributed to lack of participation, knowledge or communication. These co-relations are betrayed by how poverty is defined in economic terms and not from epistemological or participatory perspectives. In addition, the context in which the UNSG makes his recommendations raises key theoretical concerns regarding the integration of a horizontal model to facilitate a vertical global policy framework, given the historical tensions where the latter is seen as dragging the former to advance the interests of the global elites. Although the scenario is not in favour of the former, the argument put across in this study is that Malawi, Zambia and other developing countries can escape both poverty and domination if they retain their local understanding of well-being to which communication is inherently part of.

While the use of communication to advance development ideas might have a much longer history, this study traces this relationship from the post Second World War era, where development gained prominence as part of the very old catch-up models purportedly to bring forward those left behind by modernisation (Escobar, 1995; Rogers, 1962). Existing literature Rogers, 1999; Servaes and Malikhao, 2006; Mefalopulos, 2003; 2006; 2008; Waisbord, 2000; Hemer and Tufte, 2005) and many others, has focused on the role of communication in poverty reduction, but a lot more needs to done on the effects of ideas on communication at the grassroots. Most of the extant literature tends to focus more on the effects of institutionally-driven poverty reduction ideas instead of attempting to understand how local ideas on the same interact with local communication practices. Although not deliberate, such academic negligence is partially responsible for the unquestioned marriage between communication and modernisation development models, which have paved an unquestioned role of communication at the service of conventional development. Such literature has mainly focused on improving the effectiveness of communication in transmitting ideas, as opposed to analysing the ideas behind the poverty discourse. Most of such research has drawn from the post- Second World War era, where development theories were characterized by policy shifts, while communication for development remained static, making it a supporting act to the top-down modernization theory in the 1960s. Development theories have transitioned from the dependency theory in the 1970s, the alternative models in the 1980s and the Structural Adjustment Programmes in the 1990s, to the MDGs (Servaes, 2010). With this dynamism occurring in the field of development studies, communication for development has remained a tool for transmitting knowledge, a practice that is drawn from Quebral (1970) who equates poverty with ignorance, and consequently justifying a vertical transfer of ideas to those considered poor (cf. Quebral, 1973; Singhal and Rogers, 1999). Quebral's early conceptualisation resembles Lasswell's (1930) magic bullet theory, which prioritizes the efficiency and power of the message to change minds and worldviews. Shannon and Weaver's (1949) agenda-setting theory also built on Lasswell's (1930).

The United States and other western donors embraced the Information and Communication (ICT) for Development agenda in the 1990s, largely informed by the assumptions contained in these theories (Amoah, 2104). This was part of the bigger picture aimed at enhancing participatory spaces, liberalisation and shifting economic growth activities from government to the private sector through the ICT agenda. However, as with most communication models, the ICT agenda fell victim to the interests of global elites raising the question of the strength of ideas over channels (ibid). In Foucault (2003) and Cox (1981, 1987), the message is an embodiment of ideas and interests, while in Giddens (1984) communication is a socialising agent which can maintain or change existing values in society. These concoctions of theories and models in the field of communication for development, remain stagnantly grounded on Rogers' (1960) vertical diffusion of innovation model and somewhat reference Freire's (1994) dialogic pedagogy ideas (cf. Tufte and Mefalopulos, 2009) despite several theoretical advances in other fields of study such as behaviour sciences and social marketing (Kotler and Lee, 2008). It is also worth highlighting that the notion of diffusion has also evolved from Rogers' 1960 model to represent attempts to spread ideas with the aim of influencing actions within a social group. According to Rogers (1995), diffusion refers to three processes: repetition of ideas from the sender and the receiver; opposition where ideas are interpreted polysemically by the receiver according to their different context, and adaptation, where receivers reconcile the ideas according to their context. In Gustav Le Bon (1897), diffusion is an outcome of social collective behaviour with little room for difference. The theorization of diffusion model is necessary to explain the tensions between the UN Communication for development strategy's desire to bring the poor on board and the poor people's ability to either adopt, adapt or reject the proposed ideas, all of which must be viewed as both logical and natural.

A critical discourse analysis of the MDGs and how they set the development agenda, imposing a worldview, and the way actors are allocated roles, helps to explain these tensions. A narrative and interpretive analysis compliments the critical discourse analysis by assessing the differences in meanings of words and concepts when used within the global policy frameworks and at village level, including how the two worlds are forced to converge into a single discourse. The forced convergence of these two worlds lays the foundation for concluding that the current poverty, as understood by the UN system, is an outcome of power but is also a basis for creating a new discourse, through the reformulation of identity and repositioning of communication for development. The manifestation of interests into global policies is summarized in Cox (1987), Hemer and Tufte (2005) and others as an unholy alliance that sustains neoliberalism[3]. The main source of concern arising from these authors is that communication ends up being fashioned along the old magic bullet model of Lasswel (1930), of who says what to whom, with what effect/intentions, especially when those considered poor are at the receiving end of an interest-laden international development policy such as the MDG, without raising fears of co-option of the poor into the global mainstream (cf. Foucault, 1979; Cox, 1987; Cohen, 1994; Freire, 1994).

Providing further nuance to the varying views on the impact of communication on behaviour, especially where participatory approaches are linked to globalised frameworks such as the

[3] Neoliberalism is based on several reforms which include governance reforms, community-ownership of projects, open and competitive environment, results and goal-oriented planning, people-driven initiatives, market enterprise and decentralisation among others.

MDGs, this study contends that the transmission of ideas and messages has to be analysed within a context of power given that such ideas can potentially create identities. In the mainstream literature, the impact of communication is defined in two ways; the instrumental and intrinsic. On the one hand, the instrumental view focuses on delivering an improved well-being, empowerment and participation within the economic growth model through communication structures and processes (Panos, 2007). On the other hand, the intrinsic view considers information and knowledge as central enablers to achieving the above indicators as people are assumed to be empowered to take advantage of available resources to improve their lives (FAO, 2010). It is for these reasons that conventional development deploys communication to reduce marginalisation as a means to empower citizens to participate in public debates (UNDP, 2009). However, the view promoted in this study is that the impact of communication must be seen as resulting in people transitioning from poor to a better state of life, according to their choices and aspirations using locally available or externally acquired resources. This is central to this study considering that poverty reduction models, including the people-oriented approach (Pieterse, 2009), have historically been understood through the discourse of the economic growth model, a discourse which has hindered Sen's (1989) proposal for alternative ideas on poverty in his capabilities theory. Sen's proposal can be linked to communication as it prioritises communities through their own participation outside the economic growth model. His views find support in Koinyan (1991) and Mefalopulos (2008) who propose that well-being must mean the progression of individuals and the unfolding realisation of their capabilities, enabling them to improve their conditions of living by utilising locally available resources (Koinyan, 1991). Mefalopulos has always insisted that development should focus on participation as a two-way communication process which "constitutes the necessary elements if we are to avoid the mistakes of the past" (2008, p. xii). In Mefalopulos' view, communication and participation are connected to Sen's (1989) human capabilities approach. In both Mefalopulos and Sen's perspectives, participation does not only empower individuals to identify, define, analyse and proffer solutions to their own problems in a context where they have control over their environment, but it also gives them the power to decide. The process of defining well-being is left in the hands of individuals (Freedman, 1985) and not development institutions.

1.2 Aim of the study

This study examines the use of the UN Communication for Development strategy which the UN Secretary General (SG) has considered key to achieving MDGs. The UN communication for Development strategy is a policy document adopted in 2007 following recommendations from the 10th UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development report entitled "*Achieving the Millennium Development Goals*" (2007). The adoption and integration of the strategy was necessitated by the observation that the slow progress in achieving the MDGs was due to lack of localisation of the goals, especially at grassroots levels. The strategy is framed on the premise that achieving the eight MDGs requires "communication systems and processes that enable dialogue and allow communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns, and participate in the decisions that relate to their development" (2007, p.8). Therefore, to achieve these would require that Communication for Development principles and methodologies be included at all stages of the development process and to allocate resources for that purpose. This inquiry is couched within a critical analysis of the discourses and narratives that frame the MDGs, including the implications these have on both policies and practice in Kamaila Village in Zambia and Mwandama Village in Malawi.

To achieve this aim, this study undertakes a critical discourse analysis of the MDGs Resolution, and the national plans of Malawi and Zambia. It complements the critical discourse analysis with a narrative analysis of the Mwandama Millennium village project and the Kamaila Villages in Malawi and Zambia respectively to unpack the discourses and narratives that inform the implementation of the UN's Communication for Development strategy. As a product of the UN system – a global governance institution, the MDG framework encapsulates certain assumptions about development and these have implications for the communication tools used in implementing them, especially in the villages under study.

Another set of units of analysis are the villages in Malawi (Mwandama) and Zambia (Kamaila). The Millennium Villages Project (MVP) is a ten-year experimental project which was conceptualized by the Earth Institute at Columbia University but implemented by the Millennium Promise Project in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with the goal of eradicating poverty to meet the MDGs. The MVP was tested in Kenya and Ethiopia in 2005, before it was launched in 2006 to reach nearly 500, 000 people across ten countries, including Malawi (The Earth Institute and the Millennium Promise, 2010). The central focus of the MVP is to demonstrate and promote an integrated approach to community-level poverty reduction in translating the MDGs into grassroots deliverables. The MVP concept suggests that when communities have "access to clean water and sanitation as well as other essential infrastructure such as education, food production, basic health care, and by focusing on environmental sustainability"[4], their living conditions will be enhanced in a sustainable manner. A detailed discussion on the MVP is provided in Chapter 2. It suffices to say here, that it is proposed as locally-led by the villagers and the host governments and supported by the Earth Institute at Columbia University, Millennium Promise, and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), including several other partners (ibid). It is premised on the assumption that using different communication tools can lead to participation and empowerment. This study used the two villages as units of analysis because they have been part of the MDGs project activities, including communication for participation. Mwandama Village in Malawi is one of the 14 village sites across ten countries[5] in Africa under the MDG Village initiative, whereas Kamaila Village in Zambia is not part of the Millennium Villages but has been exposed to a number of MDGs-related projects, (MDG report, 2010) and communication for development activities (Bwalya et al., 2004).

The researcher's objective in grounding analysis in these villages was to examine the link between the discourses that frame the MDGs as a policy document[6] and its implications on practices in the villages. It also sought to draw attention to the relationship between policy positions and the villagers' understanding of both poverty and participation and how these are mediated at village level. Document analysis focuses on Malawi and Zambia national plans covering the period 2011 to 2015 when the UN system adopted and recommended integration of the Communication for Development strategy in the implementation of the MDG framework (XI UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development, 2009: p. 5). In adapting the two pronged methodological approach, the study established a theoretical foundation for providing a re-read or reformulation of the role of communication in fostering well-being for marginalised individuals and communities in Malawi and Zambia.

1.3 Research problem

'Participation' has become a buzzword in the field of development (Cornwall and Brock, 2005). Arnstein (1969) in the paper, "*Ladder of Citizen Participation*", identifies and analyses eight types of participation which include citizen control, delegated power, partnership, placation,

[4] http://www.millennium-project.org/millennium/overview.html (accessed on 30 June 2012)

[5] Koraro, Ethiopia; Bonsaaso, Ghana; Dertu and Sauri, Kenya; Gumulira and Mwandama, Malawi; Tiby and Toya, Mali; Ikaram and Pampaida, Nigeria; Mayange, Rwanda; Potou, Senegal; Mbola, Tanzania; Ruhiira, Uganda.

6 The MDGs resolution, Poverty Reduction Strategic Papers, Millennium Villages, Malawi and Zambia national MDGs' plans from 2011 to 2015 for Malawi (Malawi Millennium Development plan for 2011 to 2015) and Zambia (Sixth National Development 2011 to 2015).

consultation, informing, therapy and manipulation. She does her critical analysis within the topological ladder of power. These types of participation invoke a myriad of questions about how participation itself is operationalised within UN poverty reduction frameworks such as the MDGs when considering issues of power or lack thereof especially in the context painted by Arnstein (ibid) of the poor and the rich. Notwithstanding variations, the common goal of the different types of participation is for those who represent power to drag those considered poor closer to institutions or programmes purportedly designed to reduce poverty.

Such a context where dominant power dictates on the poor, questions the possibility of poverty reduction being an outcome of empowerment in a context where local power is neither acknowledged nor supported but seen as a barrier to inclusion. The main argument advanced by various scholars for the link between participation, democracy and development, tends to seek the legitimizing government's choice of policies and actions than addressing the needs of the poor through participation. Perhaps it is for this reason that recent studies (Penderis, 2012; Cleaver, 2001; Cornwall, 2002; Mohan and Hickey, 2004) have advanced the view that participation in its current conceptualization is ambiguous, vulnerable to power and interests and therefore not adequate to achieve the empowerment needed to improve well-being. In making this claim, these authors concur that participation marginalizes individuals from their contextual grounding and their identities as it operates from an externally driven and pre-conceived policy position. This pre-conceived position is space where the discourse of people-centred approaches is located. The discourse creates an assumption that that when people are at that centre, they become capable of assuming the freedom to manage themselves, author their own future and improve their lives (Sen, 1999). Based on these assumptions, the general idea and practice has been that to participate is to be at the centre where individuals can influence policy formulation and development initiatives.

The dichotomisation between the rich and the poor is a characterisation of power through texts, language and policies. If texts can make so much difference, then whose language guides action and participation, and defines what participation means, asked Chambers (2004). The controversial debates on naming, othering and labelling theories are well known (cf. Gordon, 1990; Mountz, 2016; Adam, 1978), including how these are deeply embedded in social and political power and their resultant social differentiation and stratification (cf. Pock, 1996). While the push for participation dominates development thinking today, it is problematic as it draws from loose assumptions that those outside programmes and projects are poor and the closer they are to these the faster they are developed. It is the same stand point assumed by the UNSG's recommendation that when the grassroots move to the centre, the movement does not only give voice to the voiceless but also allows the policy-makers a better insight into the grassroots conditions and facilitates the transformation needed to address poverty. This became the mainstream approach in the 1980s where "tapping into local knowledge and enabling beneficiaries of development efforts to participate in all stages of the (development) process" became the mantra (Penderis, 2012, p.2). Participation became known as a tool for addressing inequality, social transformation and a new way of addressing poverty (Chambers, 1977). Thus, the failure to acknowledge the existence of local realities is part of the problem.

The UNSG's recommendation focuses on the people-centered development approach which gained momentum in the 1980s. This approach is not only pre-occupied with placing individuals at the center but also re-allocates them the identity of citizenship whose roles are limited to holding governments accountable as a benchmark for empowered participation. Ultimately, the net effects of this social relocation of individuals is not their empowerment. Rather, they become exposed to the dominant transformation agenda which is part of the pre-existing economic, social and political structures (Hoff and Stiglitz, 2001). Among the mainstream scholars, Penderis (1996) highlights that the major problem lies in that the dominant participatory approaches consider participation as a means to achieve development goals as opposed to viewing participation as an outcome of voluntary consciousness to one's aspirations and a response to realities. Despite parochial emphasis on participatory development, between the 1980s and first decade of the 21st century, poverty continued to increase and the gap between the rich and the poor continued to widen (see Heller and Evans, 2010). Rahnema (1992) has added his voice to the growing concerns that in its current format, participation is nothing but a coercive and manipulative tool to achieve the objectives of the dominant power than empowering the poor. He describes it as co-option of the South, through governmental forces into the dominant socio-cultural structures of power and control disguised as democracy, poverty reduction and empowerment.

The concept of participation as presented in the MDGs presents two major challenges. The first is that development cannot be an outcome of internal dynamics. Further it fails to take into account that the configuration of a local individual as a reflexive subject also includes local practice, knowledge and voluntary interaction. Viewed from the eyes of those internally involved in the making of that individual, these practices are both constituted and constitute the productive individual expression of the self and community. The individuals targeted by development projects and other social inclusion activities by development institutions, is seen in this approach as occupying the position of constituting themselves by reproducing and adjusting their identities. The second problem is that in the eyes of those imposing development on others, development is seen as non-existent unless it conforms to the norms, practices and social reality of those imposing development (Mbembe, 2001).

Notwithstanding these challenges, the three key themes: poverty reduction – communication for development, and participation – embody the notion of change or an improved well-being. These themes grew in prominence from the post- Second World War period, mainly influenced by what seems to be the desire to improve the lives of those seen as poor or lagging behind and to help them improve their standard of living. In spite of the huge financial and technical investments into poverty reduction projects, two key factors continue to predominate poverty reduction thinking. First, is that poverty in its current conceptualisation in conventional development continues to deepen and secondly, in spite of various global policy shifts on poverty reduction, it continues to be defined by economic factors, including in the MDGs, which gives no room for alternative views. The multi-dimensional nature of well-being or poverty has been largely neglected, with poverty defined and understood from the West or centre of power than from local realities. Consequently, criticism of the economic income as a measure of poverty has also grown exponentially, largely from post-development scholarship which has continuously challenged the way in which conventional development has commodified human life. In addition, efforts to empower poor people, which have tended to be associated with increasing their income, are yet to achieve tangible results in terms of the promised sustainable development. This study sought to establish the relevance of these conventional development ideas to the local context of the villages, largely considering that Malawi and Zambia have been recipients of development aid for over five decades, and yet they have remained poor (Dossani, 2012; Africa Development Bank, 2013). In spite of these investments and several policy shifts, possibilities of leading a successful participatory approach unimpeded by neoliberal interests has remained elusive.

Currently, international global governance institutions continue to advocate for participatory development, with communication playing the role of a catalyst. Community and individual participation remain relevant for all their merits, mainly allowing space for individuals and communities to define their well-being within their own contexts. However, the possibilities of communities defining their development, as this study will reveal, continue to be constrained by interests of the elites who drive and sponsor ideas in the governance structures. This raises a question regarding how UN Communication for development configures participation as a means to achieving the goals of a global policy such as the MDGs in Malawi and Zambia. It also raises an interesting question, when considering the political complexities in the UN system, of how a horizontal approach can co-exist with a vertical model. In addition to how discourses use words and language to mediate and reconcile these tensions, the study also sought to examine how dominant narratives and discourses define poverty and prescribe courses of action. The goal is to reveal whose power and interests define and decide these courses of action, and with what intentions and consequences (cf. Foucault, 1979; Cox, 1981; 1983; 1987; Mills, 2011; Raz, 1986).

This study considers the concerns raised by Cooke and Kothari (2001), Servaes (2010), and Pieterse (2000), that the link between capital interests and global policies raises pertinent questions on the possibilities of achieving an autonomous participatory model (Hendriks, 2008). The notion of localisation of MDGs proposed by the UNSG encapsulates a lack of awareness of either the villagers' development needs or the knowledge required to effectively implement the MDGs (cf. Pagliani, 2007; Vinding, 2006). Such a theorisation of poverty has historically been used as justification for a persuasive diffusion model by transmitting knowledge to the unknowing and under-developed communities. Two assumptions are made in the way communication for development is conceptualised. First is that poverty is seen as lack of knowledge. The second assumption is that the people of Kamaila and Mwandama Villages are poor because they lack a certain type of knowledge. These assumptions raise two critical questions or concerns. First, is the way the global community, backed by international donors, views other societies' poverty outside the western block. Second, premised on this ideological view of the 'other', to what extent is the UN system willing to recognise that societies and communities are different and must be treated likewise?

Findings in chapters six, seven and eight shed more light on the importance of taking into account local knowledge as a local means of assessing well-being. Findings in these chapters challenge the UN assessment of poverty especially that by the year 2010, over 300 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa had doubled the level of poverty compared to two decades before the MDGs were adopted. Such an assessment is based on economic income than local factors. The need for challenging these statements arises from the realisation that by poverty, the UN system is making reference to economic income and not to the grassroots' assessment of their well-being. The UN system also notes that due to lack of participation, over 70% and 90% of the population in Zambia and in Malawi respectively, were living on less than one dollar a day in 2010 (World Bank, 2010). Despite the fact that it is antiquated, the UN system continues to use the dollar-a-day as an indicator of poverty. As later discussions will reveal, the dollar-a-day started being used following labour relations issues during the industrialisation period, and it is therefore irrelevant to both the current global context in general, and to the two villages in particular. According to Rowntree (1901), a labour economist scholar who developed Booth's (1887) ideas, the dollar-a-day made sense in western economies where labour wages were calculated on the basis of measurable production earnings and general cost of living, variables which do not apply in the villages in Malawi and Zambia. In addition, the value of a dollar differs within each country and context, and hence cannot be used as a generalised measure. This study also seeks to establish that contentment and gratification are not only limited to financial income, but to other factors as well. Based on this flawed theoretical base of understanding well-being, the UN system continues to link participation to economic activities and production, on the assumption that improved participation will trigger increased production which will in turn lead to increased income. The extent to which the UN system is willing to invest in its firm belief in participation without succumbing to neoliberalism remains a key question.

What is apparent already is that using economic statistics to justify an external mode of participation is structurally flawed, especially if there is no emphasis on understanding different local realities. The subtexts of these statistics ring alarm bells on increasingly growing poverty where communication is needed to rescue the situation. Participatory model within such a discourse of economic statistics becomes questionable and impossible. However, on their part, governments in Malawi and Zambia have complied with the MDGs planning processes and have developed their national plans in line with the UN system's requirements, without questioning the validity and relevance of imposed norms of planning. Malawi developed the Poverty Reduction Strategy (MPRS) between 2001 and 2005, which paved the way for the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) of 2006 -2011. During the course of this study, Malawi was implementing its 2011 to 2015 strategy. Similarly, Zambia was also in its Sixth National Development Plan (SNDP) 2011–2015, a successor to the Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP), which "aims to actualise the aspirations of the Vision 2030 of becoming a prosperous middle-income nation by 2030" (The Sixth National Development Plan, 2011, p. 1). The power of the neoliberal hegemony is evidenced by how Malawi and Zambia have placed more emphasis on economic growth in the national plans, even when their situational analysis shows little or no relationship between growth and poverty reduction. Participation is reduced to benefitting from trickle down aspects of economic growth.

The UN system's proposal to promote participation, in reality undermines local knowledge as it seeks individual, community and state involvement in pursuing a type of well-being that is foreign to the targeted audience. However, a detailed analysis of these two worlds helps to shed light on the challenges in co-opting local discourses into a dominant one. By suggesting that participation and communication have to be part of the global discourses, the UN system is setting a context that not only impedes alternative policy spaces but takes away individuals and villages' decision-making with regards to well-being. What is supposed to be inclusion becomes exclusion as processes shift from a locally-based discourse of well-being to eventually manifesting in a form of marginalisation which has historically replicated itself in the structures of economic and political power (Hulme, 2009).

Recent policy documents, have yet to indicate a departure from their marriage to conventional development projects despite advocacy by several scholars who have built on Freire (1994) and Rodney's (1981) ideas that escaping the trap of neoliberalism depends on local discourses in which social communication plays a part. In proposing this route, these authors were concerned that the flow of knowledge from the centre of power to the periphery, especially when aligned to economic interests, would be skewed in favour of the centre and at the expense of the periphery. Although undertaking an assessment of individual and community participation is one of the main focuses of this study, assessment of the extent to which views of ordinary people are included in international development policy is given particular attention. Existing policy documents on communication for development and participation largely have the objective of co-opting those seen as poor into structures of power by promising to amplify their views but within the same decision-making structures. Among these is the *Bellagio Statement on the role of Communication* in meeting the MDGs (2004), *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* (2005), the *Rome Consensus* (2006), and several other initiatives. Both the *Bellagio* and the *Paris Declarations* are concerned with processes and structural integration of communication for development, and the *Rome Consensus* (2006) provides the knowledge frames and the working definition.

Literature on Communication for development abounds with examples of seemingly successful initiatives, but instead of enhancing freedom, emancipatory participation and autonomy, communication activities' link to institutional project goals has tended to defy the promise of communication as "a social process based on dialogue using a broad range of tools and methods... and about seeking change at different levels including listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change" (*The Rome Consensus*, 2006). Initiatives such as the Rome Consensus come on the heels of the people-centred development models of the 1980s which failed to gain ground because of similar reasons. The 10th UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development Monitoring Report (2007) however, takes a sideswipe by blaming insufficient platforms and mechanisms for communication for development as part of the reasons why developing societies cannot escape poverty (ibid, p.4).

Due to its lack of academic independence or freedom from control/influence of development organisations, communication has remained locked within top-down models purportedly to facilitate horizontal dialogue. The establishment of radio programmes under the World Bank funding in both Malawi and Zambia as part of *Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* (2005) and the *Rome Consensus* (2006) are examples of the inclusionary use of communication to transfer knowledge (cf. Rogers, 1986). It is noted that the UNSG is proposing a model where knowledge is transmitted from institutions to the grassroots, another scenario which contradicts the view that dialogic communication is a priority. Historically, the UN system has demonstrated a lack of suitable structures for listening to the grassroots. Critiques of the UN system as a global governance institution have argued that the endogenous character of global development solutions is a veiled replica of Westernisation, by imposing western culture and systems on developing countries (Serves, 1995; Alexander and Kessler 2003; Bullard 2003). Nonetheless, scholars of participatory development are hopeful that the concept can be salvaged from the trenches of neoliberalism, by firstly understanding local culture as a basis for formulating relevant response (Cooke and Kothari, 2001).

1.4 Research question

The central research question of this study is: To what extent does communication for development facilitate poverty reduction within the framework of the MDGs in Malawi and Zambia? In order to address this broad question and unpack other intricate issues around the use of communication for development in implementing the MDGs at country and village level, the following sub-questions are explored:

1. What is the global governance context in which the MDGs are formulated, adopted and implemented?
2. How were the MDG and the UN Communication for Development strategy conceptualised?
3. What narratives and discourses frame the MDG and the UN Communication for Development Strategy?
4. What are the implications of the Communication for Development strategy on participatory approaches to Malawi and Zambia's poverty reduction strategies and practices in the villages?

Question 1 takes into account that the MDG as a global policy becomes the source of ideas being transmitted through the UN Communication for development strategy. It also considers global, national and local policy spaces and opportunities for participation.

1.5 Rationale

This study contributes to and revitalises the stagnating body of critical scholarship in the field of communication for development in general. Despite a proliferation of university training courses and demand for experts in the field of communication for development, mainstream literature, especially recent scholarly publications, is yet to adequately approach communication for development from a critical perspectives. This is largely because most of the available studies are either donor-driven or commissioned by organisations with pre-set programme goals. That focus has diverted attention on the importance of understanding the role of communication for development at local level and has reduced it to a tool for poverty reduction by development institutions. Crucial to this inquiry and existing literature in this field of study is the assumption that communication for development can only exist to advance and expedite institutional policies towards broader global and national goals. The UNSG's recommendation to integrate communication for development into MDG projects suggests that the transmission of messages to targeted audience has the direct effect of transforming behaviour. The primary objective in the UNSG's recommendation is not to acknowledge the relevance of local knowledge to addressing local problems. The notion in this assumption resonates with the two-step flow sub-theories which have attempted, though not adequately, to shed more light on the importance of local context as a basis for reasoning and reading of messages. Lack of interest in understanding grassroots context has perpetually rendered communities goalless, thoughtless and passive receivers of knowledge and aid, despite the concept of the UN communication for development strategy acknowledging that the power of locals to address poverty lies in their culture.

An assumption being conveyed by the UNSG's recommendation is that integration of communication and participation into the MDGs projects is paramount, with communication positioned as a necessary condition needed to reduce poverty. The link between the MDGs and bringing individuals in Malawi and Zambia into its projects is a function of and is mediated by communication. The assumption established by this narrative is that individuals are unaware of their poverty hence the need to acquire such knowledge through the media and other forms of communication before they can solve it through participatory approaches. Applying communication for development to improve message delivery of institutional goals continues to constrain research in this area, as most of the recent studies focus more on the efficiency of message delivery (cf. Mefalopulos, 2003, 2006, 2008; Serves & Malakai, 2006; Hemmer & Tufted, 2005). For most of these authors, addressing poverty assumes different forms of configurations, one of which is social mobilisation, through different forms of media calling on citizens to participate in projects. Development projects are seen as the only available and acceptable infrastructure for participation and integration, and anything outside that is either void or poverty. These interpretations have inevitably foregrounded and justified the persuasion and diffusion models. As this study seeks to achieve, there is need to provide a re-read of communication for development theories in Africa. By bringing to the fore the role of communication for development detached from global and national institutional policies and structures but linked to and defined by local aspirations to improve wellbeing, the study attempts to provide new thinking on communication for development theory.

This study takes off from the UNSG's concern that a few years before the 2015 deadline, the MDGs would not be achieved "as improvements in the lives of the poor have been unacceptably slow" (MDG Report 2010, p. 1). This realisation suggests the need for new ideas on understanding poverty reduction from a different dimension, the role of communication within local context and how the two combine in participation. Save for the few available grey publications (cf. Hulme, 2009; Scott 2010; Easterly 2005; UN Round Table reports), there is very little or no academic literature on the MDG framework or on how global policies connect with the concept of communication for development at that higher level of policy discussion.

Due to the dearth of research challenging the global governance regime and the accompanying critical analysis on the MDG framework, conventional development ideas have thrived unchallenged, and have come to represent the truth and accepted as common sense despite them being part of the global poverty problem (cf. Smith, 2007; Moyo, 2009; Easterly, 2005; Escobar, 1995; Esteva, 1987; 1992; Rahnema, 1991). By the time of finalising this study, the UN system had called for another UN General Assembly in September 2015, to adopt a new 15-year global poverty reduction agenda called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) – a follow up to the MDGs. The process of deciding the SDGs, somewhat mirrors that of the MDGs. The only main difference is that this time, the UNSG put together a panel of heads of states representative of all continents (Sachs, 2012). The content and language of the SDGs mirror that of the MDGs with the overarching key message being to eradicate "poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development."[7] The 'We' discourse which conveys a sense of global collectivity and participatory approaches is emphasised in, "all countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan. We resolve to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet. We are determined to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path."[8]

Analysing how the UN system frames poverty and its manifestation into a message can advance the notion that though it is difficult to apply communication independent of ideas and interests, communication can also be used to reshape, reproduce and re-disseminate local discourses. Africa's historical relationship with the West, particularly related to the latter's economic interests in Africa, is enough foundation to raise questions on the narratives and discourses that frame both poverty reduction and participatory practice. The ultimate objective is to explore possibilities for reformulating and rethinking communication for development approaches which are appropriate to facilitate participation within the framework of local realities.

1.6 Theoretical frameworks

This study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge on theories of how communication facilitates participation for improved well-being of marginalised groups. To achieve this, the

[7] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld (accessed on 12 September 2015)
[8] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld (accessed on 26 August 2015)

study applies theories of global governance, hegemony and critical participatory and communication theories. This theoretical analysis is foregrounded on Cox's (1981, 1983, 1987) critical thinking to enable examination of ideas on well-being from outside the problem-solving approach which remains dominant in the practices of communication for development. Critical thinking enables the exploration of issues from outside the parameters of political and social structures. This approach takes into account that the long standing problem-solving approach is part of the problem because it has historically been promoted as the ideal and ahistorical because it is methodical in the way it addresses problems.

Cox's ideas are relevant in examining how societies respond to external power, especially in the analysis of how participation is theorised within international development policy against the villagers' own culture. To examine how power deploys communication, this study is interested in the global policy architecture with the objective of identifying opportunities and moments available for participation, by which actor and with what effect. Two objectives underlie this theoretical approach. First, that the UN system is a public global space – a public sphere for member states, including Malawi and Zambia. Each member state is assumed to be equal – in the same view as the UN system assumes equal authority over each of them. The relationship and policy discussions between the UN system and member states occur in a context presumed to be neutral and untainted by interests. As this study shall demonstrate, policy discussions in the UN system are influenced by ideas which advance interests of the dominant actors. Second, such policies consist of words that shape worldviews. In this study, the MDG framework is a global policy and a product of global governance institutions, therefore representing and communicating the interests of the elite (Cox, 1996; Overbeek, 2004). Discourse and messages arising from the UN system's global policy spaces, are most likely a manifestation of dominant interests or a "coalition of interests representing dominant class interests, supported by a broader social hegemony incorporating subordinate classes and social forces" (Cox, 1996, p. 5).These are communicated through a "common framework of thought and guidelines for policies that are disseminated through the process of internationalization [of a standard way of looking at life]" (Cox 1996, p. 111).

MDGs become relevant to examining whose ideas frame global policies, especially in relation to how the poverty problem and its solutions are defined. The theory of hegemony popularised by Cox (1981, 1983, and 1987) is essential, when one considers that the MDGs promote a universal approach to addressing poverty in all countries including Malawi and Zambia. This study proceeds to examine how power and knowledge converge in selecting issues that are packaged into policies and how these reconcile actors' material interests in transforming ideas into practice. Theories of hegemony are applied to explain how knowledge and power rationalise and establish a generalised worldview on poverty and how that worldview secures consensus, domination and submission (Cox, 1996). Central to Cox's approach, (1963) is the interplay between ideas, material capabilities and how these play out in global governance arenas. For Cox, hegemony is not limited to the citizen-state relationship but is "an order within a world economy with a dominant mode of production which penetrates into all countries and links into other subordinate modes of production" (1963, p. 62). Policy actors therefore become a hegemonic social class which holds "its own ideology, strategy and institutions of collective action" (Cox 1981, p. 111) and is responsible for agenda setting (cf. Fiske, 1987; Shannon &Weaver, 1949).

This theoretical undertaking aims to provide a basis for re-theorising the extent to which communication can facilitate participation towards heterogeneous well-being. Although a critical analysis of the extent to which communities participate to improve their well-being in whatever context is equally important, how communication is used within and outside global policies is also vital. By referring to Rogers' diffusion model, Freire's dialogical and pedagogy ideas, as well as behaviour studies and social marketing (Kotler and Lee, 2008), the study seeks to establish the effect of communication on behaviour and participation and how this can either be used to improve well-being or diverted by hegemonic interests. Participatory development's popularity in the 1980s (cf. Cooke and Kothari 2001) compels us to search beyond its concepts, definitions and its cosmetic application. Cooke and Kothari have dismissed the benefits of participation as null and void in the context of neoliberal global policies although they have not discounted the importance of communication in social transformation.

1.7 Context and scope of the study

The study analyses the extent to which the UN's Communication for Development strategy is used to implement the MDGs in Mwandama Village in Malawi and Kamaila Village in Zambia. The Millennium Villages were established to demonstrate how the eight MDGs can be met through community-led participatory development approach. The villages are believed to demonstrate how communities can lift themselves out of poverty and achieve the goals if they have access to proven and powerful technologies that can enhance their farming productivity, health, education, and access to markets, while operating within the budget constraints established by international agreements for official development assistance (Millennium Project, 2006)[9].

Villages were selected on the basis of having been part of the MDGs projects, including communication for development processes. Mwandama Village in Malawi is part of the UN MDG Village initiative, whereas Kamaila Village in Zambia is not, but has been exposed to a number of MDGs projects (MDG report, 2010). While there are many villages in Africa and other developing countries that can fit the required criteria to address the objectives of this thesis, I took into account that studying many villages is burdensome and not easy to manage within the given time frame. Through these two villages, it was possible to undertake a thorough and critical analysis of the issues in question. Patton (1990) advises that in qualitative studies such as this one, it is not the size of the sample that matters but the relevance of the unity of analysis if selected purposefully. The strength of the data collected and the findings lie in the power of purposefulness of the unit of analysis in providing the needed in-depth information from which to draw knowledge about issues of importance to the goal of the thesis. For instance, the purpose of this thesis as outlined earlier in this chapter was to critically examine the use of the UN Communication for Development in implementing MDGs, which makes this study an analysis of policies as texts, messages and ideas and their relationship with power and social practices (Freire and Macedo, 1987). I use these villages as instruments to understand the extent to which the MDGs projects and the UN Communication for Development strategy influenced social dynamics of the villages, hence making the findings of this study easily generalizable. The selection of these two villages yielded more than adequate information to illuminate the questions under study. In the next section, I explain the selection of the Mwandama and Kamaila Villages as cases in this study.

1.7.1 Mwandama Village - Malawi

The Mwandama Village in Malawi is one of the 80 Millennium Villages clustered into 14 different sites in ten countries. Each cluster site is located in a distinct agro-ecological zone which, together, represents the agro-farming systems used by 90% of the agricultural population and 93% of the agricultural land area of sub-Saharan Africa (Millennium Village Project, 2006). Mwandama Village, with a population of over 35,000 is located in the southern region of Malawi’s Zomba district, considered to be among the poorest places in Malawi, “intensively

[9] http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/mv/mv_faq.htm

cultivated both by smallholders growing maize, pigeon peas, cassava and groundnuts, and by the commercial estate owners growing tobacco and maize”[10] (Millennium Village Project, 2006). Livestock management is practiced at a small scale and includes chickens and goats. According to the Millennium Village Project (2006), there were only three cows in Mwandama before the project, and nearly 90% of the people in the Mwandama Millennium Village cluster live in extreme poverty (ibid.). This is significantly high in comparison to the 65% of the population who live below the poverty line in Malawi, when economic income is used to measure poverty. The Millennium Village project uses this to justify its relevance by stating that:

> *The core idea of the Millennium Villages Project is to demonstrate that working with communities to implement integrated, practical interventions – such as improved seed and fertilizers to raise farm productivity and support school meals, or long lasting insecticide treated bed nets to reduce malaria, clinics to dispense effective treatment and care, and safe drinking water – can be transformative* (Millennium Village Project, 2006).

The Mwandama Village in Malawi fits within the scope of this thesis as it is one of the 14 village sites across ten countries in Africa under the MDG Village initiative established in 2010 with the sole purpose of implementing a poverty reduction project in a laboratory-like model. The ideology by Sachs (2005) - the author of the idea which underpins the Millennium Village concept, makes the idea relevant to the objectives of this thesis, especially its view of communication, participation, and external material and financial support as the means to poverty reduction.

While the goal of using the two villages in this study is not for comparative purposes, the Mwandama Village project embodies a dependent variable as it represents the ‘ideal experimental model’ of conventional development, in which a global idea is implemented with the full backing of external actors’ knowledge, resources and technical expertise to address poverty of villagers. It is somewhat ironic, therefore, to call such a project community-led. Through its reinforcement of the superiority of western ideas on poverty and how it perpetually undermines the importance of reading poverty from the villagers’ inside perspective, the

[10] http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/mv/mv_faq.htm

Mwandama Village project represents the prototype of how the UN system has always viewed poverty and how it should be addressed.

It is this ideological context which makes the Mwandama Village project relevant for analysis of communication for development, as well as its link with the MDG poverty reduction agenda. The history of the UN system and conventional development is offered in detail in later chapters. It is worth highlighting at this juncture though, that in principle both were established to fight for the cause of the marginalized and weak societies against the powerful elites. Practice strongly suggests that the contrary has been achieved. Since its establishment, the UN system has remained under the control of a few powerful member states who sit in the Security Council, the UN system's principal body charged with peacekeeping, sanctioning and acceptance of member states in the UN system (cf. Scott and Hulme, 2007; Yoo, 2003; Charles, 2007). Given the above scenario, the UN system as a global government through the MDGs is most heavily skewed towards serving the interests of the powerful member states. That being the case, it becomes necessary to interrogate some of its projects such as the Mwandama Village project, particularly how communication for development strategy principles drive the UN notions of participation, community-led development and ownership.

1.7.2 Kamaila Village - Zambia

Kamaila Village in Zambia is situated 50 kilometres from Lusaka City and is 11 kilometres into the bush from the main road. It was established in 1963 by charcoal burners. The population is estimated to be over ten thousand people residing in six villages, spread over a wide area. Most of the villagers live in traditional houses made of mud bricks, with grass roofs. Like many in Zambia, according to Water for Kids, an NGO operating in Kamaila Village and one of the units of analysis for this study, the village is believed to be facing the biggest challenge of poverty as Zambian official statistics indicate that almost 64% of Zambia's over 15 million people are living on one-dollar per day or even less (Zambia Weekly, Volume 2, Issue 42, Oct 2011). But in Kamaila, the government estimates that more than 80% of the people live below a dollar a day. With no health facilities, the nearest clinic is 18 kilometres away and the people in this area survive through rain-fed subsistence farming. In bad seasons, the communities rely on selling labour to the nearby commercial farms. With the absence of good social amenities such as schools, clinics and other facilities, the standard of living in Kamaila is, according to a Sharing Life report (2009), below the normal survival level. As indicated earlier, Kamaila does not officially fall under the Millennium Village Project but is a beneficiary of MDGs projects.

The Zambia Association for Research and Development (ZARD) trained the villagers on the MDGs as part of localisation of the MDGs, and in order to raise awareness of people's rights to know about and participate in development as a fundamental human right (UN General Assembly A/RES/41/128, 1986).

The Kamaila Village in Zambia is selected for several reasons. Firstly, unlike the Mwandama Village, it is not part of the Millennium Villages project and therefore does not enjoy the same resources and financial attention from the UN system and donors. One of the reason Kamaila Village was chosen for this study is that activities implemented in the village are aligned to the MDG targets. On that ground, the Kamaila Village is an independent variable in the sense that, while it receives spasmodic support from the Water for Kids organisation, the lifestyle and activities in the village are locally driven. Kamaila Village is largely free from external influences regarding how poverty or development are framed. While contestable, it may be said that the Kamaila Villagers have more power to decide how they want to define their lifestyles, meaning that their activities are individually or community-driven in response to the needs arising from the local realities and not externally constructed. The link between communication and participation is intrinsically inherent within their ways of life. Kamaila Village is used in this study as a template for a village that is, to some extent, not directly 'tainted' by external influence. Since the commercial farms in the surrounding areas scaled or shut down, individuals, families, communities have been able to define how they want to pursue their aspirations. These factors above and others, make the Kamaila Village worthy of selection for data collection to meet the objectives of this study. The flow of ideas is recursive and sometimes moderated by their local leadership and family gatekeepers than external consultants or development workers as happens in Mwandama Village. In addition, people's identities are defined by what they choose to do than how they are viewed through external lenses.

1.8 Organisation of the Study

This study is divided into ten chapters, linked together by the flow of the research style and presentation. The first five chapters present the aims of the study, the background of the MDGs and UN Communication for Development strategy, literature review, theoretical frameworks and the methodology of the study.

The first chapter introduces the study; the second provides a historical background of the MDGs, the Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper, and the UN communication for development strategy in addition to other accompanying approaches such as the Millennium Village Project. Chapter three reviews literature on development, poverty reduction, global governance and communication for development. The methodology used in this study is presented and discussed in chapter five. The chapter discusses document analysis, qualitative interviews and focus group discussions, and the various ways in which data is generated and interpreted. An instrumental case study method of research is used to focus specifically on the two villages in Malawi and Zambia. The instrumental case study enabled the researcher to investigate "a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (Yin, 1984, p. 23).

Because this study combines critical discourse analysis on policy documents and practical analysis of how communication for development is used in the MDGs in Malawi and Zambia, for proper critical analytical purposes, findings are split into chapters six, seven and eight. Chapter six presents findings of the critical discourse analysis on policy documents, mainly examining how the poverty problem and the solutions are framed while establishing the discourse and narratives that underlie policy documents. Chapter seven provides a critical analysis of how participation is operationalised in formulating and implementing policies within available spaces from the villages to the national level in Malawi and Zambia. Chapter eight provides findings of the extent to which the UN Communication for development was implemented in MDGs-related projects. The objectives of these three chapters is to examine how the framing of ideas and concepts influence the use of words such as participation and poverty; how their meanings shape practice in the selected villages and also how villagers view these issues from their own perspectives.

Chapter nine offers reflection and discussion on the findings from chapter six, seven and eight. This chapter argues that communication remains vital but needs to be repositioned within the right knowledge framework if it is to help achieve empowerment and an independent well-being. It also argues that although the global elite actors seek to dominate and establish hegemony, there are possibilities of delinking and re-theorising communication for development and re-linking it with local discourses. Whereas this study pursues the media studies route, it also notes that for individuals to claim their power and define their destiny, requires a broader cultural re-orientation, which involves enlisting other fields of study such as education, behaviour studies, and social marketing. Chapter ten provides a concluding discussion of the study. The next chapter provides a historical account of the MDGs, Communication for Development, Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper and the Millennium Village project.

Chapter Two: Contextualising the MDGs

2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a historical background of the MDGs. It also critically discusses the formulation of the MDGs, as well as the Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper and the Millennium Village project, among some of the approaches to meet the MDGs targets. The adoption of the MDGs was followed by resounding emphasis on the need for participation and empowerment to reduce poverty. The central belief is that when communication is used to change behaviour and cultural practices, poverty can be easily reduced. With this confluence of positions, the MDGs have been hailed as a new way of addressing poverty. The chapter references authors such as Cornwall and Brock (2005) to argue that the ideas in the MDGs framework are not new, but rather a rehashing of old development ideas couched in seductive buzzwords to regenerate a new consensus on poverty reduction.

This chapter has three objectives. The first is to provide an analytical and historical account of the context in which both the UN Communication for Development Strategy and the MDGs were formulated. The second is to argue that within that context, while poverty reduction is a central theme of the MDGs, historical factors preceding and influencing their formulation have little or nothing to do with addressing the problem of poverty. The third aim is to zoom into the Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper and the Millennium Village project. In both approaches, communication for development is viewed as essential to improving participation for meeting the MDG targets by 2015 in Malawi, Zambia and other developing countries. It concludes by critiquing the function of communication for development strategy in interest-laden discourses of participation and poverty reduction.

2.2 The MDGs: the birth of another development myth

In September 2000, Malawi and Zambia were among the 189 countries that adopted the Millennium Declaration, making a commitment to reach eight development goals by 2015. The adoption was done through “consensus” implying engagement, participation, or that the goals were in tune with local realities in developing countries. Between 2000 and 2015, the MDGs were the world’s biggest poverty reduction policy which sought to halve poverty by year 2015.

The MDG project is backed by major finance institutions such as the World Bank, IMF and other bilateral aid agencies, to meet its targets[11] (Easterly, 2007; 2008).

The origins of the MDGs can be traced to two unrelated scenarios which later converged in pursuit of goals unrelated to poverty reduction. The first phase of the birth of the MDGs was led by a group of ministers from Western countries as explained later in this paragraph, while the second was led by a UN technocratic system. The following discussions provide an analytical and historical account of these phases. A detailed account of the first phase is found in Hulme and Scott (2010) and to a lesser extent, Amin (2006). Initial discussions can be traced back to the time when the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) inherited the International Development Goals (IDG) in the late 1990s, a process that was led by the Utstein Group12 in the mid-1990s. When formulating a new global development agenda, the Utstein group claimed to have been motivated by the desire to "correct the political conditions influencing the flow of aid during those years" (DAC, 1996) and to reinvigorate the depleting development funding at a time when donors were fatigued by financing ineffective poverty reduction projects. While the privileging of the narrative of correcting mistakes of the past and conditions that influence aid gained prominence among the Utstein group and other donors over the years, I argue in this chapter and in Chapter Six that these have served to mask the continuation of the economistic focus of poverty reduction. The eight MDGs can be subdivided into three key categories. Goal 1 combines the broad economic definition of poverty as lack of a dollar per day. The other goals which include Goals 2 universal primary education, 3 gender equality, 4 child mortality, 5 maternal health, 6 HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases and 7 environmental sustainability, are all indicators whose baseline is the dollar a day and whose targets can be achieved by increasing economic growth. Their reduction in the context of the MDG framework is conveniently dependent on Goal 8 which calls for a global partnership for development. As shall be discussed in Chapter Six, this goal requires developing countries to "develop an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system" – a scenario which favours the rich nations than developing nations. The plausibility

[11] The United States, the European Union, Canada, Norway and others made promises of substantial aid increases at Monterrey in 2002, a result doubtlessly influenced by the MDG negotiations two years earlier (Clemence,Kenny and Moss, (2004).

[12] The Utstein group formed in the 1990s is a loose association of six donor governments which include Canada, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom, with a commitment to promoting increased coherence, coalition-building, coordination and cooperation among on various international organizations, donors and development partners on areas such as poverty reduction.

of what seems to be the reversal of a traditional approach to development becomes seriously compromised by the fact that the MDGs place the dollar a day, a consumption measure, as the means to an end.

Despite these paradoxes, the Utstein group, largely made up of ministers of international development in Europe, saw the increasing gap between the rich and poor and the waning confidence in the aid industry among donors as a threat to their relevance and their global economic and political influence in the arena of international development policy. A response was therefore essential to redeem their fading significance, concurrent with regaining confidence in a development industry facing organizational down-sizing due to dwindling funding.

Notwithstanding that none of the objectives mentioned above resonate with the poverty reduction agenda for countries in southern countries such as Malawi or Zambia, the Utstein group's ideas culminated in the first attempt at the MDGs in a document titled *Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation report (1996)*. This was the first document to outline the seven goals. These ideas were then transferred from the Utstein group to the OECD where they were further refined with support and guidance from the IMF and the World Bank, leading to their adoption (Easterly, 2007; Reddy and Heuty, 2004; Hulme, 2007). While the interests of the Utstein group and these financial institutions were not the same, exhibiting major contrasts, they were in fact complementary in securing a global consensus on the "new narrative", which both were desperate to achieve. For example, the World Bank and the IMF were worried about the growing uneasiness among developing countries who had endured the negative effects of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) policies resulting in the "development disaster decade" of the 1990s (Stiglitz, 2006). A former World Bank head admits that there were growing fears that deepening poverty caused by their policies would trigger dissent among developing countries, resulting in loss of markets (cf. Wade, 2002; Easter, 2007).

From the view of these financial institutions, it was imperative to join forces in seeking a new global consensus on what seemed to be a new development idea, whose actual objective was to tie developing countries to some form of global commitment as a means to forestall dissent. The fundamental objective was not necessarily to address poverty. Discourses such as these echoed those of the 1970s, when consensus and participation were applied to domesticate dissension through colonial community development (Presley 1988), imposing a false sense of independence through indirect rule.

The second phase of the MDG formulation is discussed in Wilks and Lefrancois (2002) and Hulme and Scott (2010). As the Utstein group-initiated process was underway, the UN system, through a group of technocrats, launched its own internal process in the basement of the UN offices in New York. Just like the Utstein group and international finance institutions, the UN system was under immense pressure to launch a major project to coincide with the turn of the new millennium. This was against the backdrop of the UN's *50th Anniversary Summit* which had failed to deliver a credible global development agenda. A team of UN technocrats was established to glean ideas from previous global conferences and commitments on a wide range of development initiatives from 1945, when the UN transformed from the League of Nations. The process culminated in the report *We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century*, a near replica of the OECD's *Shaping the 21st Century* launched in April 2000, albeit, with slight variations from the IDGs. Again, the aim of the UN process was not to address poverty, but to create a public relations campaign or performance appraisal exercise to justify the UN system's relevance in the new millennium.

Despite developing countries such as Malawi and Zambia being the main targets of these two processes of international development policy-making, they remained marginalised in the formulation process, perhaps under the usual assumption that their intimate local knowledge was insignificant to shaping a global agenda. Notwithstanding that the actors and processes in both projects showed little or no intention to address the poverty problem, the two documents merged into one in what seemed to be a contest of power and interest, involving negotiations and compromises. The process reveals a strong pre-occupation with elite interests and financial power, and less with the desire for inclusivity and participation. These dynamics contributed substantially to the framing of what would be perceived as a 'new solution' to the poverty problem. For example, the UN system secured consensus from member states for its '*We the Peoples'* policy document which led to the Millennium Declaration in 2000 as a normative framework, buoyed by a moral imperative, caveated on the need for countries to re-align the targets to their local contexts. The Millennium Declaration outlined the eight goals as discussed earlier. The following chapters, especially Chapter 6, offer a critical discourse analysis of the MDG targets in keeping with the objective of this study, which is not to give an analysis of the technical contents but to critically analyse the MDG policy positions as they relate to power.

The OECD, supported by the IMF and the World Bank, backed their view by arguing that their IDGs were simpler, results-based (by use of logical framework) and in line with donor interests. A narrative shift ensued, from a moral imperative where the states could decide priorities, to a model that was global, prescriptive and methodical, backed and supervised by the same donors but through the UN system. With the economic growth model occupying centre-stage under the stewardship of the UN system on behalf of the Utstein group, OECD, IMF and World Bank, came the imperative to integrate the logical framework as part of national plans. It must be noted that this was not the first time such a tool of control had been used. The World Bank had led the promotion of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) launched in 1999, with the goal of enhancing performance and accountability (Scott and Hulme, 2007).

Consequently in 2001, the UN General Assembly approved the revised MDGs in the UNSG's report *A Road Map Towards the Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration* (United Nations, 2001), largely succumbing to donor pressure, with a plan of action developed by the OECD, World Bank, IMF and other unnamed key stakeholders. With the logical framework and PRSP becoming part of the MDG framework, also came funding commitments from Western donors. The UN's Monterrey Consensus summit held in 2002 noted that "a substantial increase in ODA and other resources will be required if developing countries are to achieve the internationally agreed development goals" (UN 2002). This was followed by a renewed funding commitment from Western donors, curiously coinciding with the introduction of Goal 8. Having not been part of the initial discussions, Goal 8 saw countries from the North promising to allow greater trade access, reduced debts and increased aid as sought by the Utstein group (Clemence, Kenny and Moss, 2004).

With the confluence of these tools, once again, the poverty reduction agenda had regressed to become policy and tool-kit-driven and problem-oriented with money as a determinant and solution to poverty reduction. Capitalism had yet again assumed the driving seat, but in this case as neoliberalism and re-created a scenario similar to that which had led to failed development approaches of the 1960s and 1970s (Escobar 1995; Esteva and Prakash 1998; Rahnema, 1995). Armed with the tools of control and money, capital interests represented by donors had secured a controlling stake and their actors occupied a strategic position which allowed them to dictate how development would occur. In short, the Utstein group redeemed themselves by regaining donor support in exchange for allowing economic interests to control and supervise global and national poverty reduction policies in developing countries and this scenario has implications on how communication and participation are operationalised. Against this background, Amin (2006) and Ziai (2011) have concluded that the MDG framework is culpable for promoting standardised lifestyles, creating demand for external knowledge and suppressing non-monetary local concepts of development in southern countries. This chapter concludes that the MDGs framework is not as new but a recycled product of the same old idea repackaged with new themes (see Clemens, 2004; Amin, 2005; Hulme and Scott, 2010).

Today, implementing the MDGs is configured around several policy approaches. This study focuses on two main policy projects, namely the Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper (PRSP) and the Millennium Village Project (MVP). The PRSP and the MVP place communication as a central pillar for the participation and empowerment prerequisite for poverty reduction. Defining the term “participation” outside these two approaches may not be an easy task because it is situated within a specific discourse of poverty analysis. According to Fairclough, (2003), Sorel (1941), and Wodak and Meyer (2009), words derive their meanings from context. For later discussions, the study is informed by Fairclough’s (2003: 24) proposition that “words as independent constructs are limited to defining certain potentials and possibilities but once placed in a particular context, can exclude others”. Sorel (1941) in Brock and Cornwall (2005: p.9) cautions that “comparing statements of intent with what actually happens in practice is to misunderstand their purpose”, especially when looking at language as a social practice (Wodak and Meyer 2009). The next section discusses the Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper (PRSP) model and its link with the MDGs. The PRSP forms part of the policy documents where participation is considered the corner stone to achieving poverty reduction in the MDGs.

2.3 The Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper: The autocracy of participation

The MDGs implementation at a national level is framed along the Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper (PRSP). This is a template developed by a task force comprised of the UN, OECD, World Bank, IMF, including bilateral and multilateral donors to operationalise the implementation of the MDGs (Hulme, 2004). While the PSRP and the MDGs are outcomes of two different processes and intentions, they show similarities, especially in their theoretical positioning of the concepts of participation at the centre of poverty reduction projects. The World Bank and IMF launched the PRSP in September 1999. The PRSP is a template planning tool designed for developing countries to help them access concessional assistance from global finance institutions. An analysis of the participatory approaches proposed by the PRSP is relevant to Malawi and Zambia for a number of reasons. They are among the countries to submit for HIPC (Highly indebted poor countries facility), with Zambia successfully receiving debt relief in December 2000 (IMF and World Bank, 2004). In addition, when the PRSPs were to be integrated with the MDGs, Malawi was among the few countries hailed as having effectively complied with the PRSP requirements (IMF, 2012).

Just like the MDGs, the PRSP is not a new concept, and was also a response to growing anxiety resulting from failed SAPs. Lewis et al. (1997) trace the origins of the idea to the 1950s and 1960s when economic growth occupied a central position in international development policy discussions. The same ideas were central in the World Bank and IMF's SAPs and the Washington Consensus, both of which sought to configure national fiscal and monetary policies, altering regulatory frameworks along global norms in clear disregard of varying economic and social contexts (Maxwell, 2005). Agitation by developing countries who fell victim to the SAPs, led to numerous initiatives including the Copenhagen Summit in 1995, the Programme of Action on Poverty Eradication, the HIPC Initiative in 1996, the PRSP in 1999 and the MDGs in 2000.

In a context where the IMF and the World Bank were concerned about losing control of dissenting countries, following the failure of SAPs, the PRSP was again promoted as a new way to purportedly rectify the situation by improving national planning, implementation and monitoring of the poverty reduction project. Developing countries argued that SAPs made them poorer and multinational investors had reneged on their promise to invest profits in developing countries in exchange for favourable investment conditions. But the international financial institutions saw things differently as they argued that the SAPs failed because of poor planning on the part of developing countries (Hulme and Scott, 2009). The debate was not won by the global institutions on merit but the promise of more funding which developing countries needed to address their increasing poverty problems with the PRSP presented as a second chance, a way of improving what did not work in the SAPs. The UN system gave in to pressure to merge the PRSP and the MDG plans. Malloch Brown, a senior UN staff stated that "just as the Bank and Fund have clear strengths in driving the PRSP process, I think the UN system can build on the real momentum of the Millennium summit and Declaration and play an invaluable role in helping develop a new campaign at global, national and even community level to monitor and benchmark outcomes" (Brown, 2001, p. 3). His statement endorsed the marriage between the PRSP and the MDGs by forcing all developing countries to adhere to the World Bank and IMF norms.

A close analysis of the four principles that underpin the PRSP model reveals congruency with neoliberalism and a deceitful regression to failed top-down models and a coexistence of policy paradoxes couched as global consensus (cf. Dijkstra, 2005; Stewart and Wang, 2004). For instance, the PRSP foregrounds the long-held view that since the World Bank and IMF's establishment, they always have used concessional lending to coerce states to abide by their policy narratives and templates. Such an observation remains relevant to the analysis of the discourse on participation and poverty reduction against a context in which the scope of national-ownership of development projects is compromised and sacrificed at the expense of compliance to global prescriptions (cf. Levinsohn, 2003).

Firstly, the PRSP places ahead of other principles, the narrative that countries are assumed to take the lead in developing their national plans, but using a World Bank and IMF template (Brown, 2003). The notion of taking the lead is explained in later chapters but it is worth highlighting that taking the lead refers to filling the PRSP planning form and not necessarily in making substantial decisions. There is a reason for predicating this narrative because according to the PRSP, those countries wishing to access HIPC relief and all those under the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility are required to develop a PRSP to demonstrate commitment to reducing poverty, complying with the norms of the Bank and the Fund. Addressing poverty is tied to conditions which require countries to comply with the World Bank and IMF who make the final decision on the allocation of resources. This situation also questions the assumed consensus on the concepts of participation, empowerment and ownership promoted within both the MDG and PRSP (Levinsohn, 2003). Levinsohn (2003) views this as a way for the Bank and Fund to use the newly secured consensus to revive some of the models which they earlier failed to launch such as the Comprehensive Development Framework due to the similarities of the two projects.

The second principle of the PRSP is that such national plans must be based on a logical frame approach, a tool thought to be results-oriented (OECD, 2006). Earlier discussions revealed how the logical framework is a tool deployed by the World Bank and IMF, the main drivers of the neoliberal agenda, to control and supervise the management of national economies of developing countries. As the PRSP became a central planning tool for MDGs national planning, the World Bank and IMF won over the control and supervision of national economies of developing countries. As discussed earlier, for the UN system, and as observed by Cornwall and Brock (2005), the MDGs were adopted as normative framework with a moral imperative based on loose commitment and did not seek to impose terms on member states. The integration of the PRSP made it imperative for countries, developing countries in particular, to adhere to its conditions using debt reduction and cancellation to impose compliance with the Bank's principles. Rückert (2007, p.101) notes that the World Bank and IMF "continue to push for only slightly modified inclusive-neoliberal macroeconomic and structural policies" in their role as "gatekeepers," in deciding which countries qualify for financial assistance and debt relief, when they will receive it, and under what conditions. The Reality of Aid (2002, p.8) has described this as "retooling the aid regime under rubric of ownership and effectiveness".

The third principle of the PRSP exhibits a policy paradox, an attempt to portray the PRSP as a locally-driven project, while obscuring the inherent economic growth model (Rückert, 2007). Suggesting that national plans must reflect local realities and acknowledge the many dimensions of poverty is surely incongruent with the policy dictates of the PRSP. Placing narratives of ownership, participation and empowerment at the centre of the PRSP is inconsistent with the demands made by the World Bank and the IMF for uncompromised conformity and compliance to global norms. For example, the PRSP Sourcebook alludes that the PSRP's "shift to country ownership will allow more leeway in terms of policy design and choice, acceptance by the Bank and the IMF boards will depend on the current international understanding of what is effective in lowering poverty" (Klugman, 2006, p.4).

Configurations of the poverty reduction narratives appear to be similar in the MDGs and the PRSP as they follow the same logic that participation plus empowerment equals poverty reduction. There are, however, contradictions in how participation is conceived, how the marginalised are supposed to be involved in decision-making and how global policies are formulated. A curious divergence can be noted in the fourth principle of the PRSP, where the process of developing national plans is supposed to be open for participation and inclusive of all players as described in the PRSP Sourcebook (2001) as "development partners". Inclusiveness in this regard, is by no means in reference to the ordinary citizens, but civil society, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the private sector and donors to put available resources together towards one national poverty reduction plan. This is in contrast to the language of participation endorsed by the UN system in 1975, when member states were advised to embrace broad and active citizen participation in processes of national development planning and implementation (Cohen and Uphoff, 1980). Once the UN system seeks to draw on this premise to localise development projects, with participation occupying a central role in empowering people to address poverty, the PRSP subordinates citizen participation to institutions of development and civil society organisations to pre-determined poverty reduction projects.

These contradictions and similarities foreground how discourses are framed and how they manifest into policies and practices in Malawi and Zambia. Citizen participation is subsumed within civil society participation in the PRSP processes, which is viewed as necessary in creating a broad-based consensus around development priorities. This, however, dislocates communities from engaging with their realities, simultaneously undermining local traditional and government structures. Participation in this context is supposed to be a means of maintaining relations with the government and institutions of development. This is problematic when considering that in most African countries, civil society organisations, institutions of development and their funders are controlled in the North, and that the UN system and developing countries also depend on these for funding.

2.4 The Millennium village project: A foreign village in a local village

In 2005, Jeffrey D. Sachs, the director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University and Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General on the MDGs, argued that locally-driven national plans through PRSP were not enough to stimulate participation at village level[13]. He cited some of the reasons why the PRSP was institution-driven and remote from the communities as the projects usurped the ability of communities to take appropriate decisions and actions when responding to their local problems (Millennium Project, 2006). Perhaps Sachs's ideas were influenced by Chambers' (1997) participatory methodologies from his Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) model which prioritises the importance of infrastructure such as roads to improve access to medical facilities, markets, schools and capacity building for staff to provide services in these facilities. While Chambers (2004) praises the PRA by highlighting areas where it was successful, he however admits that these participatory methodologies are not panaceas

[13] http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/ (accessed on 28 August 2015)

to poverty reduction but merely offer opportunities whose success depends on local realities than the efficiency of projects.

Sachs drew attention to the dominant democratic participation model premised on the civil society activism model, arguing that active participation should go beyond influencing decisions, to also promoting local production at local level. Sachs derives from the normative approaches, that participation and people are central to addressing the poverty problem (ibid). The only problem is that his approach as well assumes that those at grassroots are unthinking and lack capacity and thus require external western supply of knowledge and resources.

As a model, Sachs' idea is plausible, demonstrating a shift from institution-driven to community-driven approaches. Much as his model had much promise for the reasons given above, it remained theoretically grounded in the same old ideas of understanding poverty and development and never allowed space to listen to the villagers. Conventional development has been historically blamed for undermining local knowledge and capacities. For instance, according to Sachs, the success of community participation is seen as complementary to external interventions and not with building local empowerment. The establishment of the Millennium Villages concept is based on this parlance, creating an assumption that the village concept is new, has never existed, and that people need to belong to a village for development to be facilitated. Without making an attempt to understand how different communities perceive and define their poverty within their context, the project presumes that villagers, seen as poor, are incapable of making "meaningful investments in human capital and infrastructure required to achieve self-sustaining economic growth, unless there is a community-led development, largely designed around their local needs, but based on foreign knowledge" (ibid). In fact, as later chapters will demonstrate, Sachs never cared to establish if what he saw as poverty was really poverty from the villagers' perspective.

As a result, the Millennium Village project from the onset fails to acknowledge the importance of the prevailing local social orders in the villages in Malawi; instead, it seeks to re-organise the targeted communities to enable development. Such an attitude is evident in Sachs' emphasis on small areas to promote an "integrated approach to rural development through community-led development by providing access to basic services and facilities as well as technologies to enhance productivity" (ibid). In addition, the MVP's failure to acknowledge that community collective projects have been part of the African village practice for many centuries should have flagged the need to investigate how uninformed external development interventions have been part of the poverty problem. Rather than paying attention to ways of seeking to understand the local context and listening to those concerned on how to support local efforts and thereby build on existing structures, the project derives from the interventionist approach which prioritises development ideas from Northern countries.

Despite these conceptual shortcomings, based on Sachs' idea of participation, more than 80 Millennium Villages have been established in 14 different sites across ten countries[14] in Africa. Investing in a single mode of production such as farming (as proposed by Sachs) obscures the local and multi-dimensional nature of the productive capacities of individuals within communities. That a community is located within an agro-zone does not always make every member of that community a farmer. Such universalised prescriptions occupied centre stage in the criticisms of poverty reduction models in the 1970s with post-development scholars advocating for more diversified approaches that draw on individual capabilities (Abrahamsen, 2000; Escobar, 1995; Sen, 1999). The MVP model, however, serves to demonstrate the deflections of meanings discussed earlier, often bending over backwards to the whims of political power and so-called expert knowledge.

It is evidently and overwhelmingly clear that the MVP concept is influenced by the economic growth model largely premised on the logic that intervention at the local level should aim to increase production and that increased production would equal development. Such economic thinking influences the choice of MVP project sites, with most of the villages located in Sub-Saharan Africa where roughly 300 million are perceived to be living on less than $1 a day. For Sachs, that is how the problem of poverty is defined and should be solved through a single approach of increasing production. "The continent's environmental, epidemiological and geographical challenges – including low-productivity agriculture, a high disease burden, and high transport costs render African countries most vulnerable to persistent extreme poverty," argues Sachs (Millennium Village Project, 2006).

This statement summarises a view that justifies his model, one that privileges providing high-yield seeds, fertilizers, medicines, and materials to build school rooms and clinics including

[14] Koraro, Ethiopia; Bonsaaso, Ghana; Dertu and Sauri, Kenya; Gumulira and Mwandama, Malawi; Tiby and Toya, Mali; Ikaram and Pampaida, Nigeria; Mayange, Rwanda; Potou, Senegal; Mbola, Tanzania; Ruhiira, Uganda

technology and science, all considered to be an effective way of combating poverty and launching communities into a new age of health and opportunities (Millennium Village project, 2006). Where local context is acknowledged, it is viewed through universal lenses to justify its amalgamation and dilution with global narratives, often backed by scientific knowledge which overlooks local knowledge and culture. In fact, the concept is characterised by a reluctance to listen and learn before conclusions are drawn, as illustrated by the urgency to refract the knowledge domains of conventional development.

Sach's model of participation in the MVP is premised on the assumption that people in a certain area are in locations of their productive capacities, an assumption that disregards heterogeneity as the basis of setting individual priorities. Such an assumption retains and maintains the dominant structures of power with both knowledge and capital needed to implement projects outsourced from the West. In addition to re-creating a cycle of long-term dependence for resources and markets, outputs of such projects are measured only in terms of monetary value (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). By imposing external knowledge on local contexts, knowledge of experts like Sachs dis-empowers local communities. Approaches such as these resonate with criticisms of modernisation and dependency models that are often blamed for disempowering people by dispossessing their knowledge.

When ordinary people increasingly depend on foreign technical knowledge and financial resources to sustain their lives, it creates a cycle of dependence which is not easy to break (Moss, Pettersson, van de Walle, 2006). Imposition of knowledge and resources, on account of discursively ascribed poverty, implies a backward and hopeless community whose human capital is only necessary because of the invocation of external intervention. A stereotype which development intervention has historically subscribed to, in this context, is being recycled, refreshed and sustained through what seems at first glance to be new ideas. Participation is not about simply providing information and knowledge or answering questions, neither is it about being part of a social group nor being involved in whatever form of project (Arnstein, 1971). It is rather about action to increase control over resources, self-determination and one's wellbeing (Stiefel and Wolfe, 1994).

Empowerment and sustainability in Sachs's proposals are not assessed on how much the villagers are recognised as social actors who possess the ability to lead the process of their own development unaided. Rather, economic growth is believed to be the means to ending poverty.

The application of the concept of empowerment in the MVP echoes that of the World Bank which entrenches a wide range of meanings deriving from various actor networks to conform to certain policy requirements on which aid depends. While empowerment maintains a central role in the MVPs, it is often part of the policy narratives in a contaminated form, weakening the actual emphasis on building people's power to enable them to fight for the autonomy needed to reclaim the control of their lives. Sachs derives this view in part from the 1960s, when sustainability was linked to "the need to empower the entire community, especially the most vulnerable by building their local technical, administrative, and entrepreneurial capacities"[15]. Similar views are echoed in Rostow (1960) where he advocated for increased production as the only way of poverty alleviation. While acknowledging the important role of villagers in addressing their problems, Sachs places the success of such problem-solving initiatives in the hands of donors, especially those from the West. As noted in earlier discussions, most of the donors pursue the neoliberal interests of their constituencies. For similar reasons, the MVP project operates on a "results-based approach, a mechanical process that does not take into account other dimensions of development"[16]. Even though village committees are established to include local chiefs and the local government to spearhead the process of implementing and evaluating project possibilities with the support of a scientific team and local partners, there is reluctance to draw from local knowledge.

2.5 Communication for development and the MDGs: delivery of the minds

Since the adoption of the MDGs, UN member states, the private sector and donors have continued to reiterate their commitment to achieving the targets at every five year UN summit, including the five year planning and reporting periods. In Clemence et al's (2004) assessment, of the 47 African countries, 42 were considered "off track" on half of the targets and 12 were "off track" on all MDG targets and 86 of the 155 countries at risk of not achieving the goals, most of them sub-Saharan countries (UN, 2014). Signs were already clear in the UN system's assessment in 2010 that the MDGs would not be met. However, the UN opted to reinforce the paternalism that has always characterised development by stating that "goals are achievable when nationally owned development strategies, policies and programmes are supported by international development partners" (UN MDG report, 2010, p.3).

[15]http://www.unileverusa.com/Images/mc_Millennium%20Villages-FAQ-Oct-2012_tcm23-315708.pdf (accessed on 12 September 2015)
[16] http://www.millennium-project.org/

While the UN system and other development agencies have historically applied different forms of communication strategies and tools in their projects, recommendation in the UN report (2010) resulted in the need to strengthen communication for development. The report justifies localisation of the MDGs on the grounds that there was a lack of awareness of the goals at grassroots level. The report creates an assumption that without local participation at the community level, the MDGs would not be achieved. It is worth noting that communication for development has a longer history in the UN system but the practice itself has always been part of the African cultural reproduction systems (Eyoh, 1987; Chifunyise and Kerr, 1982). Within the UN system, it started gaining a sense of organisation in the 1970s with the establishment of a United Nations unit called development support communication services led by Elsine Childers who initiated the process of round tables (Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte, 2006). Academic debates on the concept of conventional development communication can be traced as far back as the 1950s when they were linked to a systems model of communication – a strategic way of producing effective messages to change behaviour and transform societies (cf. Soola, 2000; Neufeldt, 1998). Such debates have been largely led by global institutions of development often using social change as corollary to development theory and politics, characterised by varying interpretations of the concept of communication for development from top-down diffusion models to empowering participation and through to what has been described by Servaes (1999;p.52) as "the multiplicity paradigm".

Today, the concept is characterised by different variations, ranging from empowerment, democratic participation, holding government accountable and collective ownership of plans in addressing poverty problems (see Chambers, 1997; Pieterse, 2009; Fischer, 2003). Notwithstanding the variations, central to the concept of communication for development is that it leads to participation, facilitates listening, trust, and reduces the social distance between development actors and the beneficiaries as well as increasing the uptake of transmitted ideas. Examples such as "disease prevention, protection of ecosystems [...] improved agricultural practices" (UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development 2007, p.4) have been used to justify the use of communication in addressing social problems. Such narratives ignore the fact that these are not achieved through the use of communication only, but through a situation where people have power and control to respond to their problems.

Perhaps the UN system was informed by this theoretical and historical foundation in proposing the integration of communication for development strategy to fast-track the implementation of the MDGs? The process was preceded by several efforts to strengthen communication in projects. For example, the World Bank and IMF published *Development Communication Sourcebook: Broadening the Boundaries of Communication* (1998) which acknowledged that local ownership and strengthening communication were of strategic importance to enhancing participation (Wade, 2010). The sourcebook emphasised a two-way process which would enable development specialists to influence the targeted communities:

> *[T]wo-way communication, when used from the onset of a development initiative, is not only a useful but also a necessary ingredient to enhance development initiatives and avoid the failures of the past, and a two-way communication should be applied professionally by specialists familiar with the rich body of knowledge and the diverse range of methods, techniques, and tools of development communication* (Mefalopulos, 2008, p. xiii).

The dominant narrative, derived from the paradigms of modernisation theories, viewed communities as vulnerable, lacking knowledge and history, and essentially passive receivers of aid in need of development knowledge from professional specialists (Hartung, 2011).

The UN communication for Development strategy was adopted in 2007 following recommendations from the 10th UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development report entitled *Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (2007)*. The final strategy is an amalgam of various initiatives dating back to the 1980s. Emphasis was on the importance of communication in meeting project goals. Among some of the major global instruments on communication for development are: the *Bellagio Statement on the role of Communication in meeting the MDGs* (2004), *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* (2005), the *Rome Consensus* (2006), and several others. Both the Bellagio and Paris Declarations focused on integrating communication within institutional structures, while the Rome Consensus (2006) focused on “social process based on dialogue using a broad range of tools and methods... and about seeking change at different levels including listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change” (Mefalopulos, 2008. p.1).

The UN Communication for Development strategy largely draws from these instruments in recommending integration of the concept into the UN system – strategies and plans to allow marginalised people to participate in development projects to address their poverty. According to this recommendation, the only available option for people to take the lead in addressing their poverty is when they are part of institutionalised projects. Ownership of projects, which are already and literally owned by NGOs, is achieved through listening to project officers and being actively involved in their projects. Anyone outside development projects is portrayed as marginalised and therefore poor. The type of ownership conceptualised in the PRSP inheres in this approach as well, neglecting the importance of the role of power and how it strips communities of their capabilities to imagine alternative approaches to poverty reduction.

The UN Communication for development strategy as an approach reinforces the diffusion model, further widening the gap between expert institutions and the communities. The effects of the diffusion model go beyond that as it creates another gap between communities and their knowledge. This defeats the moral essence of participation, empowerment and ownership in the process. Nonetheless, to effectively implement this recommendation, the UN report (2010) proceeds to suggest that strengthening of communication systems is important in order to promote participation of the grassroots. The assumption in the UNSG's recommendation is that people-centred and "information and communication focused interventions are central in bringing about such participation" (UNDP-BDP, 2006, p. 6). Thus communication for development needs to be integrated in every effort aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals and improving aid and development effectiveness (UNESCO, 2009, p.1).

The processes of formulating a global strategy which promotes participation would obviously require participation and consensus by all states including Malawi and Zambia to foreground and determine a shared understanding of the concept in both policy and practice. The process that formed the UN Communication for Development is at odds with the narratives of broader ownership through participation which it seeks to promote. The first UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development was made up of "UN agencies, western NGOs, academia, western donors, and communication practitioners from western countries, who gathered in 1986 to devise a coordinated and organised mechanism for UN system collaboration and information exchange"[17]. In 1994, the Joint Inspection Unit of the UN Round Table on Communication for Development urged improving communication strategies for projects (UNESCO et al., 2009, p. 5). These were followed by Inter-Agency Communication for

[17] http://www.c4d.undg.org/articles/un-agencies-gathered-discuss-communication-development (accessed on 16 June 2012)

Development meetings from 1995 to 2009 when a strategy was finally adopted. Both the structure and process deny access to spaces for engagement to developing countries such as Malawi and Zambia, even when Malawi is hosting the UN Communication for Development office under FAO's management. Perhaps it is the limited scope by participants and the reliance on experts from the North, which culminated in the narrowing of the conceptualization of participation, often subordinating participants to the dictates of the funders.

2.6 Conclusion

The chapter discussed the history of the MDGs framework, the PRSP and MVP from a critical perspective, questioning their suitability in local contexts. It also discussed the history of the UN Communication for Development strategy. The chapter was able to create a platform to discuss development practice and the concept of participation proposed in the MDGs. Cooke and Kothari (2001, p.12) offer a refreshing view by asserting that when participation focuses on individuals and the local communities as sites of empowerment and knowledge, participatory approaches can reduce the relevance of the "other" sites where power and knowledge are located such as the North. The more people are capable of increasing their ability to make "independent choices" the better chances they have of obtaining self-determination (Foucault, 1982).

The next chapter is a literature review on the concept of development and how certain historical epochs have shaped it. The chapter critically interrogates the concept of development from different historical paradigms. This chapter has also laid the foundation for critiquing the conceptual and practical perspective on both development and communication within the realms of participatory approaches, paying particular attention to how powerful actors and interests play out in framing them. An attempt is made to establish how communication for development has been used since its conception in the early 1950s, and whose interest it served. It also investigates how it can be applied for emancipatory participation and for empowerment.

SECTION II: LITERATURE REVIEW, THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND METHODOLOGY

Chapter Three: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

Poverty reduction is among the most topical aspects in contemporary society. It dominates global discussions and has become a key determinant of human well-being, central to the global order. As stated earlier, the MDG framework was the latest milestone in the global development agenda before the Sustainable Development Goals of 2015, yet another contribution after a long series of failed models that were launched over the past seven decades.

This chapter has three main aims. Before outlining these, it is important at this stage to clarify that poverty reduction or development is viewed in this study as a discourse which influences the functioning or use of communication in society. The first aim is to define and analyse poverty reduction, with particular reference to the articulation of its implementation and the implications of power relations and stakes with communication. This critique is mainly diffracted through different scholars such as Escobar (1995), Esteva (1987, 1992), Rahnema (1991) and several others. I argue that the dominant ideas on global poverty reduction agenda, particularly their coinciding with major political events such as the achievement of independence in Africa, served neoliberal interests, thereby acting as a tool to control, manage and dominate the former African colonies. The second aim builds on this premise by discussing landmark global development policies launched after World War II. Key to this discussion is to establish how African poverty became a global concern only post-second world war and post-independence. The third and last objective is to examine, through literature, how the poverty reduction discourse relates to communication for development. I argue that as a project embedded in development practice and because of a lack of its own theoretical baseline, the field has become a tool used to maintain longstanding power relations. As an alternative, I propose that even though they have been co-opted into the corridors of power, communication for development and media remain useful in the retention of authority by populations in need of development. It is also contended that there are real prospects for achieving the right kind of development in African countries.

3.2 Perspectives on the concept of development

Central to this study is a critique of the extent to which the UN communication for development strategy has been used to implement the MDG framework in Malawi and Zambia. Debates in the field of social sciences and economics on the meaning of development are characterised, since the 1980s, by a growing body of criticism. Escobar (1995) alongside several authors such as Esteva (1987, 1992), Rahnema (1991) and others have spearheaded a scholarly campaign challenging the conventional conceptualisation and definition of development. Central to their argument is the position that development means different things to different people in different contexts. These post-development scholars have noted, with increasing urgency, that development in its current format has many faults, lacks accountability to those classified in terms of dominant views as poor, and is quick to prescribe a solution without understanding the localised meanings of poverty.

Among the models that have been severely criticised by post-development theorists are Rostow's stages of growth, which have continuously been the underlying principle of different variations of development theories since the 1960s. Rostow (1960) equated development with increased *per capita* income, which must culminate from change of an economic system, and not necessarily the development process *per se*. Abrahamsen (2000), a post-development scholar, avers that Rostow's model imposes structures, policy-making and implementation processes which are impervious to genuine consultative, deliberative and participatory processes. A central consideration for Abrahamsen is that by placing economic growth at the centre of development, it implicitly allocates the responsibility for development to economic growth actors who are thus able to dictate the meaning of development, a meaning that inherently determines ways of life as well as centralising and controlling of wealth. An implication of this viewpoint is the closure of spaces for alternative views and local forms of development and opportunities for participation.

While Abrahamsen's (2000) work took issue with a lack of participatory opportunities and exclusion of local ideas in the implementation of the economic growth model, the notion of participation had earlier gained momentum through the work of scholars such as Everett Rogers (1962). He postulated that in order for modernisation to yield the intended result of reducing poverty, people should be integrated into the modernisation culture. Rogers' theory of diffusion of innovation rose at the same time as the modernisation model in the 1960s, where different communication strategies were used to foster social transformation by changing culture and behaviour. By maintaining that development evolved through innovations introduced by social agents, Rogers (1962) endorsed Rostow's (1960) ideas, which epitomised modernisation theories and their variations. The difference between these two models, however, is that Rogers' ideas, for all their merit, are embedded within structures of power that suppress alternative views of development, while Abrahamsen (2000) proposes the liberation of alternative views from the constraints imposed by universalised and centralised power structures.

Like most post-development authors, however, Abrahamsen's (2000) very positive argument has not gained much ground for lack of a different perception of poverty that can serve as an acceptable alternative to income (i.e. the monetary value of an acceptable basic standard of living of workers in an industry). The dollar per day perception of well-being has remained unchallenged since it was pioneered by Booth (1887) and refined by Rowntre in 1901 - 1918, giving rise to the adage of a-dollar- a- day. This perception was clearly related to labour relations, rather than development, during the period of industrialisation. Porter (2001) and Alvares (1992 trace the history of development to two different historical epochs. They trace Rostow's (1960) economic growth model to the Enlightenment period in the 18th century, when the Industrial Revolution triggered demand for raw materials leading to the colonisation of Africa and the partitioning of the oil-rich Middle East (Porter, 2001). At the time, development meant wealth accumulation by the elite groups as a means to economic growth sustained by the expropriation of raw materials from colonies not considered worthy of note at the time. However, as noted in Porter (2001) and Pieterse (2009), those left behind by the fast-growing capitalist system born out of industrialisation, began to be seen as a security threat to the status quo which necessitated and marked the beginning of organised philanthropy in the form of a social welfare system and poverty reduction programmes (see also Steeves, 2001). Within that framework of thought, development meant different things to at least two different groups (Porter, 2001; Escobar, 1995). From a capitalist point of view, development still maintained its meaning of economic growth – a process of centralised wealth accumulation. This was while, from a philanthropic perspective, it meant providing for the poor (note though that the philanthropic view was merely a function of the capitalist stance – a critical consideration with far-reaching consequences since it simply meant that philanthropy would inevitably serve as the handmaiden to capitalism). These two worlds (philanthropy and capitalism) converged into one global programme, which manifested in the MDGs and their predecessors and became the central theme for criticism generated by later post-development scholars (see Rahnema, 1991; Escobar, 1995; Crush, 1995).

Recent post-development scholarship emanated from conditions prevailing in the aftermath of World War II. The premise was that if economic growth is equated with wealth accumulation by the elite , then development, charity, social welfare and poverty reduction are not acts of goodwill but tools used to control and forestall revolt by those either left behind or deprived of opportunities to develop, thus echoing the situation occurring during the enlightenment period (Escobar, 1995; Rahnema, 1991). This argument will receive further attention later in this chapter. Similarly, Pieterse (2009) postulates that historically, development interventions were designed as a catch-up prescription which spread across Central and East-European countries considered to be latecomers to industrialisation (Melkote and Steeves, 2001). The questioning of modernisation ideas commenced in the 1950s. In examining the collusion between and convergence of the economic growth agenda with that of poverty reduction, Kutznets (1955) wonders whether such complicity would not result in a repetition of the negative effects of post-industrialisation "in the sense that in the early phases of [modernisation] in developing countries income inequalities tend to widen" (p.28). Rodney (1982), Webster (1984), Escobar (1995; 1999), Cowen and Shenton (1996) and Davids et al. (2009) have used these arguments to express their concern with western industrialisation for the underdevelopment of non-western territories by transmogrifying Africa, Asia and South America into suppliers of raw materials. Since the period of western industrialisation and World War II, a lot has changed and so did poverty reduction in the global arena. Rawls' (1958) work on theories of human capability offers the notable assertion that happiness and fulfilment are the key indicators of development. While economists argue that Rawls' ideas cannot be maintained to any reasonable level of sophistication without a sound economy, it is probably erroneous as well, to equate economic growth with general social accumulation of wealth as wealth carries varied meanings. It also runs the risk of the generalised assumption that those outside the capitalist arena of economic growth do not possess other forms or sources of wealth.

The capabilities model and the economic approach to understanding poverty are not necessarily reconcilable, particularly if economic elitism is predominant. Individuals have the capacity to define their own development even in the absence of externally driven development projects and expertise. For Rawls (1958), individuals are not passive beings; they are born with potentials, aspirations and the ability to initiate action to satisfy their needs. Rawls (1958) opines that "Each person participating in a practice, or affected by it, has an equal right to the most extensive liberty compatible with a like liberty for all", and that "inequalities are arbitrary unless it is reasonable to expect that they will work out to everyone's advantage". Sen's (1999, p.188) idea of development complements Rawls' proposition by linking freedom of choice "within the context of available opportunities". His hypothesis that a society is naturally in charge of its development agenda – which is neither driven by economic growth nor externally driven but derives its meaning from within – remains relevant but neglected. Sen's ideas were instrumental in creating a platform for a plethora of participatory, empowerment and community development models in the 1980s. In the absence of new conceptual ideas on development, his ideas were diverted by Chambers (1997) and many other scholars whose work on participatory approaches concentrated on co-opting people into institutionalised modernisation development projects, such as those proposed by his social choice theory.

There is no academic consensus on what development should consist of and how it should be achieved, and there is material evidence that in practice, the "dollar-a-day" adage encapsulates the dominant perception of what is meant by development. The world is therefore divided into the developed and the developing; the rich and the poor; the modern and the traditional (Giddens, 1991). The wide array of views on what constitutes development demonstrates the endemic confusion in which efforts at development are elusive today. Numerous studies have been carried out since the period of Industrialisation and through to the post-Second World War era and recently, with the pertinent question, following Ziai (2011), being: to what extent do the MDGs represent such an evolution? It is beyond question that they represent a concoction of ideas including economic growth, (Rostow, 1960), transformation (Rogers, 1962), social choice theory (Sen, 1999) and participatory development (Chambers (1997). Although post-development scholarship is yet to gain traction, it can already be stated with conviction that the overall project of poverty reduction has failed comprehensively and irretrievably, as will be shown by analysis of relevant literature.

3.3 Critique of the agenda for development and poverty reduction

> *The idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape. Delusion, disappointment, failures and crimes have been steady companions of development and they tell a common story: it didn't work (Sachs, 1992, p.1).*

While Sachs is not a post-development scholar, his remarks in the epigraph above summarise a common trait among several development eras and ideas ranging from modernisation theories, dependency, alternative models, structural adjustment programmes and plans for good governance reforms (Smith, 2007). The MDG framework was adopted at a critical juncture, a time of paradoxes and policy dilemmas, in the aftermath of conventional development being subjected to severe critical pressure from post-development scholarship, especially by Escobar

(1995), Crush (1995), Abrahamsen (2003), Rahnema (1995) and others who have committed to deconstructing the concept of development and its processes. Yet, it is also came at a time when the number of people living in poverty in developing countries such as Malawi and Zambia was increasing, a situation that perhaps requires new ideas, rather than refreshed modernisation under the guise of the MDGs. I must point out that the Global Monitoring report[18] released by the World Bank in July 2015 attempted to contradict the above notion by projecting "decline of those living in global poverty, which is reclassified as living on $1.90 or less a day, to a forecast 9.6 percent of the world's population in 2015." This argument however, does not hold as it only relates to economic boom in China and India, scenarios which are insignificant to the countries under study. It is for the same reasons that the above authors blame this sad reality on the development project as a whole, justifying their calls for abandoning that project on grounds that they consider it not only obsolete but also bankrupt and harmful rather than beneficial (Matthews, 2004). It seems inevitable that a policy dilemma might well ensue in that abandoning conventional development in favour of new ideas could mean nothing in practice. Through reference to recent literature, this section will seek to address the central question that occupies post-development scholarship, namely, why development failed and why its intention is not to address poverty despite its supposed commitment to do so.

Rahmena (1991), Escobar (1995) and Crush (1995) are among a group of authors who emerged in the early 1980s and challenged conventional development and pronounced it a failure. I am also aware that Mohan (in Cooke and Kothari, 2001) is critical of post-development scholarship for deconstructing conventional development without offering alternative ideas. In Africa, the Ujamaa by the late Julius Nyerere, the first President of politically independent Tanzania, represented a socialist and non-capitalist model of development. His policies included localization of means of production through collectivisation of communities, creating individual and community self-reliance and nationalisation (Keshomshahara, 2008). Nyerere's ideas suffered the same challenges as other alternative models of development because they were conceived to counter the economic growth models than to create a new way of viewing well-being which is detached from economic growth. For instance, Nyerere's Ujamaa wilted with the oil crisis in the 1970s and the collapse of global markets for Tanzania's products. One of the factors that has sustained conventional development to establish an overwhelming impression that achieving MDG targets is a necessary cause, which is the "most urgent

[18] http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/pubdocs/publicdoc/2015/10/503001444058224597/Global-Monitoring-Report-2015.pdf

challenge humanity faces today" (Ziai, 2011, p. 27) is linking their ideas with human suffering. That urgency has spawned a sudden and overwhelming consensus which threatens to close all doors for criticising the MDGs, since views that contradict a solution to human suffering can easily be misconstrued as heretical while allowing the suppression of alternative ideas. In his paper, "The Millennium Development Goals: Back to the future?", Ziai (2011) acknowledges a shift in discourse from the development thinking that was current in the 1960s and 1970s to that of the 21st century in terms of topics and priorities. He notes however, that power is retained in favour of "neoliberal, market-oriented measures to counter global poverty" (2011, p. 40). Ziai concludes by drawing parallels between MDG and modernisation theories of the 1960s and 1970s against a backdrop of literature which asserts a shift in development discourse since the 1980s. The inability of post-development scholarship to extricate itself from the trappings of conventional development and post-development's continued use of economic income as a frame of reference in its research could be one reason that has hindered the generation of new ideas, hence we are still confronted with the same old ideas repackaged in new words in the form of MDGs (Easterly, 2007; Moyo, 2010, 2011). However, Mohan admits that post-development scholarship remains a vital foundation for contextualising the intricacies and paradoxes that beset conventional development today, and that perhaps the framework constitutes a launch pad for new ideas.

A close analysis of Ziai's work (2011) suggests that essentially there is no dearth of new ideas; rather, the situation is bedevilled by powerful interests that refuse to allow breathing space for the generation of new ideas. A similar view is advanced by Brocks et al. (2004, p. 27) who note that development policy is "embedded and embroiled in politics, the theatre of power, in fact firmly located in the realm of the social and the political science". This dispels popular claims by Chambers (2007) and several others that development is technical and apolitical. Scholars such as Escobar (1995), Crush (1995), Rahmena (1991) and others have been vocal concerning the operation of power in political and other guises in development discourse, with the result that these scholars are naturally seen as a threat to the *status quo* and have therefore been relegated to the periphery of global development. The intention here is not to rehash their work but to apply their seminal ideas in mapping how power has historically disguised itself as development in three key historical epochs – the industrialisation/enlightenment period, the post-second world war and the 21st century MDGs. These examples are used to argue and illustrate that development has historically never been intended to address poverty but to keep the poor and subordinates under control. Poverty reduction is a social construct that draws a (transparent) veil over the power agenda inherent in development discourse.

Like other discursive constructs, the term "poverty reduction" can be understood only within the context of the imbalance of power, which gave rise to it. Later chapters will discuss this imbalance of power by analysing various meanings of poverty reduction. The discussion of power overshadowing the development issue will revolve around the historical account of development given by Porter (2001), Rodney (1981) and Pieterse (2009). These authors trace the origins of conventional development to the Enlightenment period also known as the Western Industrialisation Revolution or Age of Reason in the 17th century from which they locate two forms of development namely, the welfare systems for citizens left out of the economic boom and the catch-up model for Eastern European countries which were economically lagging behind. Rostow's (1960) stages of economic growth are largely influenced by this model. The underlying view is that the welfare system was established to control dissent among those who were either left behind by economic growth or those who lost their jobs when European economies began to slump. Capitalism was the biggest beneficiary of industrial revolution and it sustained itself from the lessons drawn from the period of adversity. Given this reality, a quest was mounted to establish a welfare system to ensure that poor people's basic needs would be taken care of and simultaneously exact compliance with the rules of capitalist governance. While variations exist between welfare and poverty reduction, Porter (2001) and Pieterse (2001) emphasise the need to limit the damage that can be caused by revolt against capitalist dominance and centralisation of power and wealth as the ultimate goal of poverty reduction agendas. Here capitalism is not a governance system in itself, but it influences people's thinking and the ways government functions, for example by sheltering behind taxes. The paradoxical capitalistic exploitation and control of the citizenry mark the dilemma of the state, which has to balance democratic participation, the responsibility to protect citizens from exploitation by capital interests and at the same time ensure economic growth to service the welfare bill incurred by protecting its subjects from exploitation.

A similar scenario has supervened in post-colonial Africa, described in Escobar (1995: p. 239) as "post Second World War coincidences" which gave rise to modern development practice in the 1940s to 1960s with similar objectives of protecting Western capital interests. Before proceeding, it is worth noting that whether by natural coincidence, default or design, the people-driven struggle for freedom and independence in Africa is punctuated by international policies seeking to reduce poverty and to provide welfare programmes that are in fact funded or at least instigated and motivated by capitalism. Such coincidences and convergences have been a major concern for Escobar (1995) who postulates that poverty is either socially and historically constructed or deliberately produced. Escobar (in Sachs, 1992) does not deny the existence of social problems, especially in African countries, but the point is made emphatically that much needed transformation has to be conceived at a local level and fit for local purposes:

> *While social change has … been part of the human experience, it was only within the European modernity that 'society', i.e. the whole way of life of a people, was open to empirical analysis and made the subject of planned change. And while communities in other [regions] may find that there is a need for … change—in part to reverse the damage done by [imposed poverty] —this undoubtedly will not take the form of 'designing life' or social engineering"*[19].

The long-term effect is that when people adjust to an imposed way of life, the meanings of their lives have to be redefined. Here Escobar is referring to "coincidences" and "similarities" that characterise, especially the simultaneous emergence and convergence of events in the 1940s. In particular, he highlights the sudden "discovery of poverty" in the 1940s when it assumed a new urgency on the global agenda that coincided with African independence.

A dominant discourse that arose between independence and development in African countries indicated that the newly liberated countries would be free from colonial rule and able to work out their own destinies (Escobar, 1995). The so-called discovery of poverty at such a time betokens the false cheer offered by the poverty agenda overall, under the aegis of global governance. This is especially so given that poverty reduction had not been part of the colonial agenda for more than half a century while the colonial powers were pursuing their main aim of extracting wealth from their colonies (see Adas, 1989). They salved their consciences by taking refuge in the belief that the "natives" would be uplifted by the colonisers, and "not much could be done about their poverty because their economic development was pointless as they lacked the technological capacity" (Escobar, 1995, p. 22). While the idea of development had started as far back as the 17th century in Europe (Porter, 2001; Pieterse, 2009), in Africa it only became part of the global agenda after World War II.

[19] http://www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/escobararturo.html

Whereas most post-development scholars have focused on deconstructing development as a concept, the real issue is the unstable marriage between post-independent developing countries and the capital interests that drive institutions of governance. This is what lies at the root of the failure to cope with poverty in consonance with declarations of intent to eliminate poverty. The next section discusses the third historical epoch of the development disaster decade leading to the 21st Century launch of the MDGs. The following section will also reveal the psychological effects of the poverty reduction discourse on developing nations through the operation of power embedded in global structures.

3.4 Shifting colonial power into global governance

The establishment of the UN system, while portrayed as being fashionably part of the global village, also meant that newly independent states had to cede their autonomy to the UN system and its agencies. The freedoms attained and desires for a better life that drove the struggles for independence were immediately re-appropriated and integrated into the global structures of the UN system controlled and funded by the same Western countries that were formerly colonial administrators of pre-independent African countries. Moreover, by being members of the UN system, developing countries found themselves compelled to obey global rules of conduct by virtue of their membership to the "global village". This issue is never pursued to a satisfactory conclusion, but it will suffice to say here that global governance has grown to include a myriad of actors and interests and has attracted its fair share of criticism since the 1980s (Dingwerth and Pattberg, 2006).

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has adopted Weiss and Thakur's (2010) definition of global governance as "a complex web of institutions, mechanisms, relationships, and processes between and among states, markets, citizens and organizations, both inter- and nongovernmental, through which collective interests on the global plane are articulated, rights and obligations are established, and differences are mediated" (ECOSOC, 2006, p.4). Studies linking global governance with international relations are broadly divisible into three strands according to Keohane (1984). These include global transformation across national borders, transnational relations (cf. Nelson & Wright, 1995) and globalisation with its connection to the UN system. In this study, the focus is on the third strand, and how it has become central in social, political and economic global reforms through global policy frameworks and cooperative and multilateral solutions to a range of global problems such as poverty reduction and development (cf. Karl Deutsch, 1953; Ernst Haas, 1958, 1961; Giddens, 1991). Despite these divergent approaches to global governance, Kreutzmann (1998) contends that in all these, the UN system acts as a centralised command post for a system of wealth accumulation built on an "unequivocal belief in solving problems of underdevelopment by applying [foreign] economic-growth oriented strategies" (1998, p. 256) such as the modernisation, dependence, alternative models, structural adjustment programmes and the Big Push theory (Easterly, 2006). Recent insights into levels of control extend beyond the physical to encompass psychological effects that have profoundly influenced developing countries' political, economic and cultural well-being (Escobar 1995), the net effect being the replacement of colonialism with a global system of governance.

Before addressing Kreutsmann's (1998) psychological effects of the discourse of conventional development on developing societies, it is worth noting that Escobar took issue with the position that global governance and development are driven by the desire to reduce poverty. Kreutzmann (1998) notes that since the time of the League of Nations in 1919, its role in brokering peace among warring nations after WWI shifted to a global mandate to mediate global politics, manage the global economy and coordinate the common interests of Western states (Rosenau, 1990). Despite proclamations of the League of Nations' intent to promote self-determination among African states, it continued to preside over the trusteeship of African colonies.

When the League of Nations transformed into the United Nations in 1945, its mandate significantly changed, focusing on the establishment of international mechanisms for the economic advancement of all people and the promotion of "higher standards of living and full employment, conditions of economic and social progress and development" (UN, Article 45). This is the promise the UN system makes in the preamble of its Charter, which forms the basis for the proliferation of specialised United Nations agencies, which lead in the implementation of development policies largely formulated by the International Monetary Fund[20] (IMF), the World Bank (1946), and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). These institutions collectively control global monetary, economic development and trade policies. Since the 1990s, the UN system, painfully embraced neoliberalism. Among the reasons for hesitantly adopting that approach was the threat of funding imposed by the donor community who had started

[20] The World Bank is not a bank in any ordinary sense but is a development institution that provides loans to encourage development in developing countries, while the IMF caters for all countries (see Hoy 1998 76-79 for further discussion).

advocating for "economism and marketism, as achieved by means of privatization, liberalization and deregulation" (Scholte, 2005, p. 7).

Scholte further highlights that as the UN system moved to embrace neoliberalism in late 1980s for its survival, most national, regional and bilateral agreements were tailored towards supporting a common global market by embracing liberal market practices and principles such as regulating labour, trade, finance and industry. The World Bank, IMF, OECD eclipsed International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) who were at the time, at the forefront radically resisting what they felt was recolonization of smaller nations (Scholte, 2005). UNESCO, for instance, had launched a debate on the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in early 1970s to 1980s challenging the skewed media coverage against smaller nations, unbalanced flows of media influence and unfair control of military and commercial uses. NWICO challenged global power imbalances. The process led to the McBride Commission report entitled, *Many Voices One World* by UNESCO, articulating the same issues and laying out the way forward for addressing them. During the same time, the ILO was critical of the IMF and the World Bank's structural adjustment strategies, the standardisation of policy mechanism known as the "Washington Consensus" (Fraile, 2009) and dismantling of protective labour regulations (Standing, 2008).

In 2000, to coincide with the MDGs, the UNSG Kofi Annan launched the Global Compact initiative redefining transnational corporation relationship with the UN system, which became the world's leading corporate responsibility on several issues including poverty reduction. While it is legitimised by several resolutions, it is a business-led (private sector-led) initiative which has exposed the UN system to business interests (cf. Rasche, 2012). One of the reasons the ILO was critical of new policies was that they led to job losses and disempowered labour, while giving more power to the private sector (Fraile, 2009). The proliferation of non-state actors such as NGOs[21], the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development[22]

[21] The role of NGOs, mainly from the North, in global development has grown since the early 1980s, and these entities have taken their place in global governance. However, their impact was first felt in 1945 during the drafting of the UN Charter, emphasising the UN's role on human rights, economic and social questions, and equality for women (Willetts, 2011). Their input has become critical in shaping the global development agenda.

[22] The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), formerly the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) established in 1947, is not a UN member but has become a key player in international development. OECD has expanded to include other members outside Europe and USA such as Canada and Japan. Since 1961, the OECD has been a policy advisor to European countries, including the United Nations system. In 1996, a Development Assistance Committee (DAC) report, Shaping the 21st Century, sets out a number of development objectives, including prospectively

(OECD, 1961), the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), and several other specialised networks cannot be ignored.

In the 1980s, a line of research emerged built on Heclo's (1978) seminal conceptualisation of civil societies and issues networks, purportedly to promote participation in policy formulation processes. Subsumed in these efforts were attempts to challenge power dynamics and promote democracy within policy arenas. This as an agenda culminated in the proliferation of another set of global players called civil society actors who have added a new dimension to global governance in pursuit of democratic participatory approaches, local ownership and empowerment (Fischer, 2003). What was evidently meant to counter capitalist hegemony is today reduced to a watchdog role for development policy and implementation and has not altered the power dynamics and the discourses that feed on it. This is because their economic survival is dependent on funding from the same institutions they wish to challenge. Consequently, capitalist hegemony has remained intact. Against a plethora of studies challenging western domination, the World Bank and IMF, the main authors of global policies have remained under direct control of the USA and Europe respectively since the 1940s (see Woods, 2006). In a recent study, Jackson (2010) addresses the question of corporate interests in poverty reduction. He observes an increased inflow of Western private sector funds into the UN, World Bank and IMF, outstripping states' contribution, which he attributed to energy that drove the SAP policies in the early 1990s. Hulme and Scott (2009) note that during the UN Millennium Summit, developing countries were forced to withdraw their push for locally driven development plans due to pressure from Western countries, who promised through Goal 8 "to create a global partnership for development with targets for aid, trade and debt relief". Heywood (2007) and Stiglitz (2006) present a grim picture of how, through global governance policies, economic interests have preyed on and weakened developing countries. These countries are obliged to relinquish their decision-making powers to the UN, World Bank, IMF and behind-the-scenes actors (Heywood, 2007) "who control the rules of the game that prevent the redistribution of benefits" (Davids et al., 2009, p. 169). Stiglitz (2006), a former World Bank head, questions the commitment of the IMF and the World Bank "to help developing countries onto paths of stable, sustainable and equitable growth" (World Bank, 2004, p. 1). Looking closely at the adoption of the Millennium Declaration preceding what has been described as a decade of development disaster (1990s), we can see similarities with issues

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halving poverty by 2015. These would later form the major part of the current set of Millennium Development Goals (Hulme, 2009). Other initiatives followed, including the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat.

highlighted earlier in this chapter, thereby sustaining the argument that development is an obstacle to social progress (see Gill, 1997; Rosenau, 1990, 2003).

The central argument in the post-development literature is that societies can transform if they are liberated from the restrictions imposed by capitalist rules disguised as global governance (Biermann and Bauer 2005; Rosenau 1997b). Power in these structures is pervasive in the discourse of development. For Escobar (1995), institutionalised poverty – especially when it is defined extraneously – tends to distort reality in favour of those who control the discourse. These critical reflections by Escobar reveal underlying intentions of putative developmental intervention. Ziai (2011) and Stiglitz (2006) link the adoption of the MDGs to the time of the above-mentioned development disaster. Hence, the goal of the MDGs is to mask the damage caused by SAPs in the 1980s and 1990s, again demonstrating how economic growth driven global governance favours the developed northern hemisphere at the expense of developing countries. While the MDGs will not actively address the poverty problem as in Stiglitz's view, the framework is deployed, like social welfare during the enlightenment period and poverty reduction after World War II, to quell dissent among developing countries that have once again fallen victim to the treachery of neoliberal development policies.

3.5 Unpacking the power in poverty reduction discourse

Some scholars such as Rahmena (1991) go beyond the structural oppression imposed by development. Rahmena (1991) takes a psychological view on this broad argument as to why economic growth driven poverty reduction interventions always emerge immediately after people-led struggle or imminent revolt for freedom. Beyond the purported aim of alleviating human suffering, poverty reduction is little more than an idle promise to psychologically disarm dissatisfaction with a view to cushioning, protecting and preserving capital interests. Rahmena (1991) and Escobar (1995) have extended this argument to suggest that poverty reduction is an autocratic agenda deployed to ensure continued psychological control of former colonies without stopping the inevitable political independence. This intricate relationship is also revealed in Ferguson (1995) and his investment theory of politics which demonstrates the connection between capital interests, power and control and the management of the poor. Therefore, development for Ferguson is an arm of capital’s interests, which establishes a system of governance that thrives on consensus and the creation of a false sense of collectivity and inclusion in the fight against social problems such as poverty, while profits from economic growth are privatised. Presenting poverty in such a manner conceals underlying power structures (Cowen and Shenton, 1996). Through such a discourse, power is camouflaged and rationalised through systems such as Rostow's (1960) stages of economic growth while blaming poverty on backwardness and the inability of the poor to effectively catch-up with the developed world. Rather than letting them define their own way of life through catch-up models, a course of action is imposed on developing societies.

Escobar (1995) refers to the widely quoted United States President Harry Truman's inaugural speech in 1949 in which the former set the tone for power relations between the North and the South. The speech characterised Africa and other non-Western countries as desperately in urgent need of western intervention. Development became more than a catch-up model. It also became a humanitarian emergency that required urgent western intervention to save human lives from poverty in developing countries. This statement of urgency diverts attention from the operation of power and economic interests of the West, preferring to prioritise the discourse of saving lives and subsequently opening up unquestioned space for western development intervention, which is embedded in neoliberalism. Countries that had fought long and hard battles for liberation found themselves succumbing to the narratives of development without critically analysing inherent ideas and intentions. Hence, for seven decades the concept of development has become sacred, representing the only way to solve poverty problems, thereby creating an impression that challenging it would endanger humanity. In so doing, local ideas suffered, further leading to annihilation of cultural diversities and differences, and homogenisation of all non-western countries as experiencing one significant problem – poverty. Developing countries are constructed as objects that need to be transformed, rather than as existing societies who have their own lifestyle and with their own power to utilise their capabilities and resources to transform their world and react to changing circumstances. Truman's speech has been used by post-development scholars not only to demonstrate how the identity of poverty is discursively constructed, but also to emphasise that this stage offers both a point departure and opportunity to deconstruct the poverty identity and reconstruct a new one. This can be achieved through either democratising the policy formulation process or extricating participatory approaches from the binds of systems which privilege certain identities in the allocation of resources and consequently benefit from economic opportunities at the expense of others.

To illustrate the effects of discourse on identities and poverty, it is instructive to take a cursory look at how Africa is discursively constructed against how it is in reality. While ethnicity and cultural diversity as the fabrics of the structural dynamics of African societies are acknowledged in many fields of study such as literature, history, art and cultural studies, in the field of development, developing societies are all seen as one homogeneous block experiencing similar problems needing one solution. This, coupled with the forced acceptance of a socially constructed poverty, have contributed to developing countries' parochial allegiance to the rules of western hegemony that demand unquestioned adherence and compliance to universalised global development solutions making them easy to govern (Escobar, 1995). Ziai (2011) reiterates points made by Escobar (1995) and Rahmena (1991) about how development is linked to new global shift from decentralisation towards regression to the old centralised global governance system. While the issue of centralisation of power is at the centre of the post-development argument, it is worth noting that there is little or no evidence demonstrating that global and universalised policies worked for developing countries, nor were they behind the success of Western countries. The effects of the power of discourse on African societies go beyond subservience to orienting and socialising people to see their world as filled with human suffering, emptiness and nothingness, denoting the absence of something of any meaningful economic value unless there is Western intervention (Escobar, 1995; Said, 1979). In fact, the mind-set is affected, altered and disarmed. According to Rodney (1981), this is part of the psychological scheme that promotes the notion of nothingness, adding to the reconstruction of the African mind. Rodney's propositions, though considered controversial by some scholars, remain relevant and insightful in demonstrating how discourse establishes domination of North over South especially when read alongside Foucault's (2003) insights on the irrevocable nexus between power and knowledge.

Despite the acknowledgement that Africa is endowed with abundant raw materials, for instance, most African societies ceased to see the value in what they possess, subsequently allowing their identity to be shaped by imagined inadequacies. The rapid shift from fighting for freedom to accepting the prevalence of poverty and nothingness and subsequent submission to the same western narratives that oppressed them, is instructive. Today, most African national development policies and plans prioritise attracting foreign investment as a solution to unlock their potential, by so doing exposing themselves to "techniques designed to structure an organic social order which, whatever the concrete localisation of the human subjects it deals with, has hitherto remained formless" (Proccacci, 1991, p. 164). The role of locals in transforming their lives is taken away or not acknowledged as they are considered poor and incapable of improving their conditions. This is not only malicious and misdirected but is behind the obliteration of the diverse African cultures; their history[23], local civilisation[24]; knowledge and industrial revolution that occurred in Africa prior colonisation (see Walter Rodney, 1982; Hooker, 1996; Venter and Neuland, 2005). Development literature exhibits a gap which literature of African history employs to demonstrate that interesting advancements occurred centuries prior to the Western invasion.

Development literature thus deliberately erased African advancements, selectively failing to acknowledge the vibrant industrialised economies in the form of farming, mining, smelting of copper, iron and gold, spinning of cotton, glass and ceramic manufacturing that existed in Africa. Studies by Venter and Neuland (2005) and Hooker (1996), provide practical examples of how Africa might have been if it were not for colonisation. Rodney's arguments go beyond Rahnema's (1991) argument on how power controls dissent by offering aid to those left out of economic growth and considered poor. This observation is pertinent when we consider that African civilisation and industrialisation could have potentially equalled, overtaken or threatened western dominance. Regions such as the Mapungubwe Empire[25], the Great Zimbabwe, the Zulu Kingdom in South Africa, Timbuktu in Mali and Songhay in West Africa, Mossi to the East of Mali and the kingdom of Dahomey in the central part of Africa were among the emerging economic centres in the continent prior to colonialism. Europe, at the time, was not the only dominant region: the Mesopotamia (in West Asia), Egypt in North Africa, Indus in India and China were comparably dominant in their regions.

Based on the above, Rahnema (1991) concluded that conventional development is not only irrelevant, but an active barrier to progress. Other authors such as Smith (2007), Escobar (1991) and Matthews (2004) concurred but disagreed on the way forward. The proposition by Said (1979) and Escobar (1995), that poverty is a social construct, could be a key to challenge power

[23] Hooker (1996) in Venter and Neuland (2005) provides historical synopses rich in African industrialisation and civilisation in the southern part of Africa. The region was occupied by the Mwenemutapa Empire (Munhumutapa or Monomutapa or "The Conqueror") who had migrated from Central Africa. The Mwenemutapas introduced iron smelting and agriculture in the rich goldfields of the Great Zimbabwe kingdom. This vast wealth and proximity to the Sofala coast (Mozambique) enabled trade with the Chinese, Indians and Persians. Their industry grew to include iron-smelting, textiles, gold and copper along with agriculture.

[24]These include the period renaissance or high points of civilisation; the Ancient Egyptian period between (3100-343 BC); ancient Carthage (814 BC-697 AD); the trans-Saharan trade and development of African empires (800-1100 AD); ancient Ghana (ca 1000 AD), ancient Mali (ca 1230-1325 AD); the Shongai period (ca 1464-1600 AD); the Mossi kingdoms (11th - 15th cent.); the Haussa states (ca 10th cent. AD - present); Iron Age culture south of the Sahara from about 1400 BC, and Great Zimbabwe and Mapungubwe around 1000 AD (cf. Venter & Neuland, 2005. p. 40).

[25] The Mapungubwe ruins are situated at the Zimbabwean border with South Africa and Botswana.

relations or devise ways of improving people's lives without recourse to interventions falling under the rubric of development. Rahnema (1991) acknowledges that developing societies whose lives have been made difficult by development intervention do need change, but does not provide a practical plan of action beyond the vague suggestion that regenerative ideas should be pursued with a view to eliminating development intervention. By regenerative he means the adoption of an enterprise that aims to reclaim power, freedom, autonomy and cultural diversity, and that generally shuns the paths and toils of institutionalised power. This must be achieved by promoting locally driven approaches based on local culture, knowledge and capacities. This intends to displace and dismantle conventional development, which, for Rahnema (1991), is part of the neo-colonialist agenda (cf. Foucault, 1986; Escobar, 1995).

Although there is a growing realisation that African countries must spearhead their own development, the innovative effort required to that end is thwarted by the absence of state autonomy (i.e. not captive to neo-colonialist agendas) (cf. Presley, 1988). The Asian and Latin American experiences of how cultural heterogeneity combined with state sovereignty have steered them to better living standards are insightful. Heterogeneity in these countries takes two forms. First, cultural diversity is allowed to flourish by means of social and collective mobilisation resulting in new micro-forms of development. In Asia, heterogeneity was cultivated nationwide as attested to by Jinyong et al. (2008) in tracing the rise of the Asian Tigers of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan between the 1960s and the 1990s. The mentioned sources demonstrate how the Asian Tigers gained autonomy to shape their own destiny by parting company with western narratives. To this end, though, they had to ensure state autonomy so that they could develop a state-driven national identity, which would become a fertile breeding ground for improving people's living standards. Second, autonomy gave the state the power to formulate and enforce national policies that owed no deference to global governance. This led to the creation of prosperity attached to national and local identity. While these two models seem to be different, they offer the common insight that heterogeneity must be allowed to set the pace as a driver of human progress. We also learn from these regions of the importance of transnationalism, which is considered a critical factor contributing to the rise of Asian economies between the 1960s and the 1970s, and more recently to the unprecedented growth of the Chinese economy (Moyo, 2011). Both citizens and states were engaged in cultivating a needs-based supra-/transnational entity with regulatory systems to control and manage interaction. Transnationalism in this case is based on a pluralist theory that accords equal autonomy and equal membership to each state (Risse, 2002) in matters of supra-

/transnational governance. Note that autonomy does not preclude interdependence and collaboration, but instead proposes a process that caters in due measure for each member's interests (see Keohane, 1984; Mansbach and Rafferty, 2008). Supranational institutions in this category include the African Union, Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), and the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). The recent emergence of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) demonstrates the strength of transnationalism in establishing new power structures that are threatening traditional institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF by reshuffling global economic, social and power dynamics to make way for political reforms that are amenable to global governance (O'Neill, 2011).

National autonomy is indispensable for operation in the transnational arena (cf. Foucault, 2003; Burchill et al., 2009). The main sources for this discussion are Rawls (1996) and Foucault (2003) who emphasise that quality of life is vitally dependent on individuals' specific capacities and characteristics, including their ability to be innovative and contribute positively to society regardless of their situation. These traits are critically dependent on the prior existence of national autonomy of the country concerned to cushion the individual and community to manoeuvre independent of global governance narratives. Cultural reorientation seems imperative in light of the damage caused by the discourse relating to conventional development interventions (cf. Escobar, 1995; Rodney, 1982; Said, 1979; and Foucault, 2003). Among the recent studies is Mutunhu's (2011) in which he proposes renaissance theory, which encourages citizens to be active, innovative and to take the lead in shaping their development destiny and promoting micro-level development, local solutions based on the plurality of development ideas and reliance on local resources and capacity. The historical and main theoretical approaches to communication as aid to development, particularly referring to Malawi and Zambia, among other developing countries, are covered in the next two sections. Aspects considered will include the role of communication in institutionalised development, the implementation of development policies such as the MDG, and its impact on participation, empowerment and sustainable development in Malawi and Zambia (Cornwall and Brock, 2005).

3.6 Communication for development

The discussion above offered a critical analysis of the concept of development. Further discussion is necessary, however, of the closely related idea of communication for development, which has been acknowledged as a necessary adjunct to development projects since the 1940s. According to FAO (2006),

> *…the best way to reduce poverty is to provide people with opportunities to earn income through participation in the production process. Therefore, any strategy aimed at defeating ... poverty in the long run will have to be rooted in sustainable, broad-based economic growth and development.*

The literature review will present a critical analysis of the narratives and discourses that underlie the UN's Communication for Development strategy. First, the differences between development and communication for development are discussed for the sake of clarity.

The coinage 'development communication' is attributed to Nora Quebral (1970) who taught in a professorial capacity in the Philippines during the 1970s. The specific context was communication of new ideas in rural development with a view to fulfilling human potential and achieving dynamic economic growth where poverty normally prevails (Quebral, 2006; Currin, 2002). Quebral (1970) equates poverty with ignorance, which has to be overcome with the aid of communication strategies. However, in her conceptualisation of poverty, she does not provide a contextual definition of ignorance; whether it is lack of knowledge on modern ways of life or a complete lack of knowledge on anything related to well-being.

However, despite this porous conceptualisation of communication in her earlier definition, the practice of applying it to effect change is traced to her and various other theories relating to communication and media studies, development studies, behaviour studies and social marketing – all of which emerged during the 1950s and 1960s (see Quebral, 1972; Mefalopulos, 2008; Singhal and Rogers, 1999). Harrold Lasswell's (1930) magic bullet theory asserted that mass media messages had the power to control people's minds and alter their worldview. Later studies by Shannon and Weaver (1949) argued in their agenda-setting theory that mass media was not as powerful as earlier believed, but was capable of setting the agenda. Similar views are expressed in later studies by Hornik (1988), Wilkins (1999), Servaes (1989), Jacobson and Servaes (1999), and Fair and Shah (1997), reaffirming that mass media has limited impact on behaviour. Even comprehensive reviews of mass media related studies from 1958 to 1996 concluded that the impact of mass media on social or behaviour change was insignificant but such reviews acknowledged that the mass media remained a marketplace for new knowledge and ideas. This conclusion contradicts the gist of studies in behaviour sciences and social marketing theories. For example, Lerner and Schramm (1967), Pye (1963), and Rogers (1962) consider that poor communities need to adapt new or rather western ideas and increase production at all levels in order to develop. While Kotler and Lee (2008, p. 8) argue that communication as social marketing strategy can actually “sell behaviour”, they do not explain whether selling behaviour implies willingness to partake in the new behaviour with regard to the targeted audience. Their pre-occupation was limited to injecting a message into the audience. There is no consensus on the extent to which communication can influence behaviour even though communication for development has remained central in promoting change, which tends to assume the same meaning as development. Historically, communication for development’s attachment to modernisation meant that local culture was the target to be replaced by western ideas, with participation measured by the level of adoption of the preferred ideas (see Escobar, 1995; Crush, 1995; Servaes, 1999) in order to achieve a preferred form of development. Said (1979) and Foucault (1972) provide extensive literature on the use of knowledge to exercise power, including how communication is used to impose universal ideas which become the source of disempowerment (see also Sachs, 1992); Escobar, 1995); Rahnema, 1997); Crush, 1995); and Rodney, 1982).

The assertion that media messages have limited impact needs to be reconsidered (Said, 1979 and Foucault, 1972). A glimpse of such analyses is offered by several scholars who extract a message from mass media channels and examine the power of the message not as a standalone unit of analysis but in relation to social power. For example, Blummer and Katz (1974), Fiske (1987), and McQuail (1983) concur that messages influence public discussion, public opinion, persuade or educate people in the context of planned development and political campaigns and cultivate the audience’s perception. According to Katz and Lazarsfeld’s (1955) two-step theory model, participatory communication leads the field when it comes to changing attitudes and behaviour with the aid of locally designed media strategies and tools. Suggesting that messages have limited impact contradicts the sociological view that transmission and exchange of knowledge, whether vertical or horizontal, is inherent in a cultural socialisation through which human beings acquire their identities (Giddens, 1984). This realisation has spawned a proliferation of studies in the use of indigenous communication strategies, rooted in cultural socialisation. Indigenous media are a powerful means of engaging and involving people in the process of message creation, presentation and awareness, which is believed to lead to action. Foucault does not question the power of the message itself, but the power and intentions that drive the message. He registers his concern about the ability of power to alter the mind, especially concerning the “delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories" (Foucault, 1972, p. 199). By not questioning the power of the message, perhaps Foucault is endorsing Giddens' sociological view that communication is an important part of culture. This, however, places communication for development in a classical dilemma. The transfer of knowledge is used in the service of agenda-driven development projects such as the MDG (Rogers 1962, 1983; Chambers, 1987) or alternatively in the service of an autonomous people's culture - where people are not passive receivers of new knowledge (Hall, 1980; Alvarado, 1987; Halloran, 1970; Blumer and Katz, 1974). These alternative views have led to various rationales concerning the most suitable type of communication, namely how it was achieved with the aid of communication for development, instead of the other way round.

A close analysis of existing global instruments and declarations on communication for development points to a centralised message of development. The UN, for instance, stresses "the need to support two-way communication systems that enable dialogue and that allow communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns and participate in the decisions that relate to their development" (UNDP, 2009). Participation is seen from the perspective of integrating people into national and global systems and confining it to communicative practice without considering that people can also lead a better life outside development projects based on their potential and capabilities (Sen, 1990; Rawls, 1958). On that account, we can conclude that the social transformation agenda of the 1940s still endures in the UN Communication for Development thinking. The Bellagio Statement (2004) emphasises "helping people change the [way] they live", while *The Rome Consensus* (2006) promotes "...dialogue... [and] ...seeking change...". UNICEF[26] and FAO[27] are also pro-transformation. For Cornwall and Brock (2005), this reasoning not only distorts and limits participation, but also promotes neoliberalism. Instead of promoting autonomy and empowering people to initiate and drive their own development agenda, participation focuses on engaging "intended beneficiaries" in development projects by changing their behaviour and culture (see Chambers, 1997). Renn et al. (1995) and Habermas

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[26] UNICEF: Communication for Development: a systematic, planned and evidence-based strategic process to promote positive and measurable individual behaviour and social change that is an integral part of development programmes, policy advocacy and humanitarian work. UNICEF understands C4D as a field that uses dialogue and consultation with, and participation of children, their families and communities. It privileges local contexts and relies on a mix of communication tools, channels and approaches.

[27] Communication for Development (ComDev) is a social process based on dialogue using a broad range of tools and methods. ComDev is about seeking change at different levels including listening, establishing trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change. The ComDev process goes beyond information dissemination to facilitate active participation and stakeholder dialogue. It highlights the importance of raising awareness, the cultural dimensions of development, local knowledge, experiential learning, information sharing and the active participation of rural people and other stakeholders in decision-making.

(1989) go further to propose participation as institutionalisation of “communication between government, citizens, stakeholders and interest groups, and business regarding a specific decision or problem” (Renn et al., 1995, p. 2). Among these numerous attempts to construct an appropriate model of communication which promotes locally driven participation, this study sticks with Quebral’s later version of communication for development which she defines as “the art and science of human communication linked to a society's planned transformation from a state of poverty to one of dynamic socio-economic growth that makes for greater equity and the larger unfolding of individual potential” (2001).

3.7 Communication for development in Malawi and Zambia

The use of communication for development in Malawi and Zambia has been and remains a matter of dealing with theoretical tensions between horizontal and vertical models. Poverty reduction and communication have been indissolubly linked and are effectively no longer separate entities. This is not aided by the theoretical crisis that characterised the evolution of communication for development and how it has not been able to bifurcate to become its own discipline. This study, however, takes a closer but by no means exhaustive look at literature on how communication has been used for development in Malawi and Zambia from both developmental and traditional perspectives. The goal is to bring these two dimensions into dialogue in analysing how each interacts with development as a sub-section of cultural socialisation.

The use of communication for development in poverty reduction has dominated development practice in Malawi and Zambia since the early 1980s, about the same time as the democratisation processes in both countries. The belief in the people-centred approaches, which dominated the 1980s, gave rise to large numbers of participatory communication initiatives in Malawi and Zambia, chiefly spurred by the ideas of Chambers (2007). Malawi and Zambia are signatories to the *African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation* (1990) which was adopted after leaders of many African countries realised that lack of "full appreciation of the role of popular participation in the process of recovery and development" was partly to blame for social and economic regression in the continent. The Lome IV Convention (1985) set the tone, compelling mostly African countries to strengthen the use of communication in order to improve participatory development (FAO, 2007). The UN established an office in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1996 through the FAO to promote the use of communication for development within the member states of the Southern Africa Development

Community (SADC). The office, which later relocated to Malawi, offers in-house training for national teams to apply communication for development in rural development projects.

Although anecdotal, available literature on how communication for development has been used in Malawi and Zambia reveals affinities with globalised top-down models (see Servaes & Malikhao, 2006; Mefalopulos, 2003; 2006; 2008; Waisbord, 2000; Hemer and Tufte, 2005). Consequently, the faith placed in participatory approaches is not backed by willingness to abandon old ways of development and to make way for heterogeneity and endogenously driven development. Mefalopulos (2008) and Pretty (1995) identify seven forms of vague and incoherent application of participatory approaches at different stages of community projects. Driven by these global policy imperatives, the relative opening of democratic space aided by improvements in telecommunications and recent proliferation of community radio stations in both Malawi and Zambia have allowed governments and NGOs to use different forms of communication to serve development aims. The rise of community radio in Zambia was intended to address the information needs of communities by fostering community development through programme content (Musanshi, 2000). In Malawi, community radio stations are considered centrepieces of participatory communication (Dagron and Tufte, 2006). However, the tools, strategies and messages used still resemble Rogers's diffusion model and an over-reliance on western modes of thought in which promoting dialogue on development ideas is considered an effective process of promoting adoption. In Malawi, Zambia and most developing countries, FAO (2007) observes a gap in that the practice of communication for development follows the western model, still funded and driven by western donors and NGOs, perhaps confirming why it exhibits an issue-based and top-down knowledge transfer model that anticipates a change in behaviour, attitude and cultural practices as an ultimate result.

For instance, Kotler and Zaltman's (1971) pro-persuasion social marketing approaches have been adapted for small groups and mass media, because they are seen as an effective way of promoting social transformation in both countries. Their use though, tends to address information needs based on specific issues such as engagement with local and national authorities, HIV/AIDS, combating diseases, and information on civic matters in the community (e.g. civic responsibility, child abuse, human rights and entrepreneurship) (Banda and Fourie, 2004; Kalindekafe cited in Bessette, 2006; Yoder, Robert and Chirwa, 1996; Hornik, 1997). Communication is not used to inspire citizens to take part in economic growth but in addressing their social problems. The same is true of participatory communication, which is based on the premise that grassroots should be able to influence policies (Brawley and Martinez-Brawley, 1999). In many cases, this is interpreted by a reinforced focus on promoting the voices of those perceived to be voiceless through access to the national and community media and by promoting cultural diversity. Most studies in both Malawi and Zambia base the use of communication for development on the community approach and the grassroots-awareness raising model linked to modernisation thinking. A critique of the social marketing theory is offered by Fourie and Froneman (2009) who argue that it privileges a top-down communication model than two-way dialogical communication strategies suggested by the participatory development approach to communication. Besides being issue-based and non-humanistic, Fourie and Froneman (2009) question its relevance to complex and involved social factors such as development in developing countries.

Among the few African studies to add their voice and step out of the modernisation enclosure are those found in Makumbe (1996) and Chisinga (2003) which discuss the concept of participatory development as a means to alleviate poverty in Malawi. Makumbe, for instance, argues that institutionalised participatory communication is largely to blame for perpetuating poverty in Malawi and notes that attempts to change people's culture merely takes them away from their own ways of development. Therefore, the participatory communication in Malawi, Zambia and other African societies has not been representative of a multi-cultural world of development. Makumbe (1996) considers this not as a gap or deficiency in academic knowledge, but as a main cause of poverty. Manyozo (2014) is among the new few African voices to emerge in the field of development communication. Manyozo has added a different dimension, which detours from binary discourses, especially notions of development communication and homogeneity and the North-South relations, a complete departure from scholars such as Melkote & Steeves (2001), Srampickal (1994) and others who have invested much of their time focusing on the message-oriented diffusion approaches. Manda (2015) has also added his views on how radio and technology can be integrated into national policy framework to improve production. Kalipeni and Kamlongela, (1996) have also placed community participation in Malawi at the centre of addressing social problems such as health care to the extent of arguing that communication for development reduces deaths. This, however is a common claim among most scholars of communication for development. This claim rarely examines the sustainability of external knowledge and resources used to raise awareness of health issues. Penina Mlama (1975; 1987; 1990) another African author, has shifted her attention to the use of folklore for educational purposes. While her writing has used folklore to examine its instructional value, she acknowledges that folklore actually comprises an enormous array of cultural facets such as beliefs, ideas, symbols, assumptions, attitudes, texts, and sentiments of peoples. She places its role beyond just didactic media and identifies it as central to cultural reproduction. Similar views are echoed by Mtonga (1980) in his focus on theatre and dance as tools of cultural reproduction.

Even with a meticulous proposal, the above authors remain lone voices for several reasons. Literature shows that certain aspects of communication for development in Malawi, Zambia and Africa in general, are scattered across disciplines such as literature, arts, religion, and African history. Additionally, these aspects of communication are not effectively analysed and linked to the technocracy of poverty reduction. Consequently, most of the African and non-western literature on participatory communication presumes that indigenous Malawian and Zambian cultural media are an effective means of instilling a preferred form of development ideas through cultural transformation without acknowledging that such media is part of the local culture. Such an approach has perpetuated the view that communities targeted for development are a blank slate on which anything can be written at will. It accords with the recommendation by Ericsson (2001) and the UN (2010) that by restricting communication for development to processes between governments, NGOs and donors, it can be used to localise MDG and enable people to take charge of their own development. Stepping out of this literary enclosure requires exploring how communication was traditionally and historically practiced in Malawi and Zambia. The villagers in Malawi and Zambia have been in existence before conventional development projects.

That said, there is an irresistible temptation to connect the response to the question of how Malawians and Zambians have traditionally used communication for development with Freire's ideas on the pedagogy of the oppressed before zooming in on the traditional methods. Boal (1979), together with Chambers (1997) are blamed for integrating Freire's ideas in institutions of conventional development, an approach which facilitates integration of indigenous knowledge, as a form of participation, into institutions of power. Interpersonal media and local mass media are used as agents of development and socialisation to instigate conventional development by project officers (Bessette, 2004). "The concept of interactivity, with traditional media as its operational instrument, makes possible the endogenous acquisition of knowledge and skills within the framework of a search for solutions and the communication process" (Scrampickal, 2006, p. 7). Theatre in Malawi and Zambia, for instance, proved highly significant because of its traditional religious and ritualistic application. "In the pre-colonial period, a combination of activities including poetry, myths, songs, dance, acting, wrestling and even serving various dishes took place over a period of time, sometimes days or even weeks, in one all-encompassing performance" (Article 19, 2003)[28].

However, Freire's initial ideas remain crucial and relevant to this study. Within the paradigm of endogenous development, the need for change is driven by internal dynamics and cannot be induced externally. Freire's ideas combine nationalism, individual and community progress and empowerment (Freire, 1970; 1978). He argues that if people can analyse their own reality, then they can identify solutions to their problems. He grounds his ideas in the anthropological view that people must be authors of their own culture and development (Freire, 1978). This refers to an endogenous process, intended as a set of interrelated tools that sustain the existence of a society and its cultural progression, in spaces characterised by a local power and knowledge base. A survey of studies on African art and literature reveals that Malawi and Zambia have a rich history in the use of indigenous media drawn from their cultural background (Mda, 1993). Theatre, for instance, remains a rich form of cultural communication, especially in the rural areas where the majority of the country's population still reside. It remains a unifying factor, with people watching or participating in performances that entertain, educate and inform (Scrampickal, 2006). Like most African societies, theatre, dance, song, music, story-telling and poetry were common tools used in Malawi and Zambia to promote development by sharing information, exchanging ideas, raising awareness and stimulating society to react to certain themes and causes, including the transmission of knowledge from one generation to another. Similar views are found in Mda (1993) who observes that in Malawi and Zambia theatre was pivotal in mobilising and stimulating action towards addressing developmental causes. He notes that between 1965 and 1975 this practice, with the aid of a few educated Malawian and Zambian authors, led to the creation of a new genre of plays aimed at fostering the spirit of liberation struggle for independence.

3.8 Conclusion

After defining and offering a critique of the concept of development and analysing it from a global governance perspective, this chapter identified some critical observations that are vital in considering how communication for development is used in Malawi and Zambia. Firstly,

[28]http://www.abstract.lib-ebook.com/a1-history/1544020-1-article-the-global-campaign-for-free-expression-february-2003-arti.php (accessed on 28 September 2015)

based on emerging literature, development embraces a variety of meanings that tend to preclude the formulation of a universally acceptable and accepted definition. However, the fact that the organisation of the world today is predicated on global and national economies suggests that development has become the central organising concept and therefore has a definitive meaning. Studies by Escobar (1995), Crush (1995) and Rahnema (1991) are instrumental in exposing the underlying meaning of development and its significance as an intrinsically embedded element in global governance structures. The work of Said (1979), Proccacci (1991) and Rodney (1982) on the effect of development as an agent to alter mind-sets, opened an insightful discussion on communication for development and its cause-effect relationships with development. The marriage between these two concepts remains an unholy one which undermines fundamental principles of participatory approaches. The MDG as a global governance policy is propagating a particular point of view of development that can be potentially enslaving and undermining of human interests and potential and a regression to the past. Earlier discussions have shown how development, which now dominates culture, is not only limiting, oppressive and dominating. The convergence of top-down models of thought into horizontal processes is in discord with the principles of true participatory theories (see Sachs, 1992; Escobar, 1995; Rahnema, 1997). This is not helped by the confusion that characterises the origins of development. Emerging out of many different theoretical disciplines has denied it the chance to evolve away from the trammels of past theories. For instance, recent literature on communication for development remains committed to diffusion of innovation models of the 1930s as a service to modernisation ideas. Servaes and Malikhao (2006) observe that communication for development is still pro-media, pro-innovation and pro-persuasion, drawing on old ideas of Lerner (1958) and Schramm (1964) and diffusion models (see Servaes and Malikhao, 2006; Everett Rogers, 1962, 1983). Media theories have evolved to embrace freedom of thought, citizen empowerment and participation in democracy (McQuail, 1983; Fiske, 1987). Similarly, participatory approaches have become preeminent in addressing poverty issues (see Jennings, 2000; Cooke and Kothari, 2001). Lack of funding has inhibited independent academic studies on communication to the extent that most are commissioned by donors or NGOs to improve project efficiency and largely to integrate diffusion models and influence social and behaviour change (see Mefalopulos, 2003, 2006, 2008; Servaes and Malikhao, 2006; Waisbord (2000); Hemer and Tufte, 2005).

This theoretical gap is not without consequences. While there are many views on participatory involvement, it is clear that participation is about autonomy, power and the ability of communities to define their lives independently without extraneous reference to the West

(Jacobson, 2003; Snyder, 2002). To that end, communication for development first has to loosen its ties with the past (e.g. influence of MDG) by establishing its own theoretical grounding. By advancing this proposal, this study rejects the patronising idea of social conscientisation proposed by Melkote (2002), and Barranquero (2005) as the main goal of participation. Such an assumption can be risky as it presupposes that communities are unaware of their problems and therefore justifies intervention from outside. By not denying shortages or the need for external ideas, this is intended to empower communities to gain external knowledge and resources without compromising their power and autonomy (cf. Said, 1979; Habermas, 1989).

Jacobson (2003) and Freire's (1970) ideas are useful in suggesting that true participation is not about the object-subject relationship but a way of life that is driven by internal dialogue within particular contexts. Therefore, people are already aware of their problems and needs, including how they should address them. Freire's (1986) later work is inspirational, especially in postulating that no matter how difficult life can be, human beings are capable of looking at the world in a critical manner and thus having a dialogic encounter with the social environment. In Freire's engagement with knowledge theory, everyone is at the same knowledge level, therefore communication for development is more than just a one-way, top-down, exclusive process. It is, rather, a dynamic, recursive, transactional and an experience process. Ultimately, unless people themselves are leading their own development, no amount of investment in ideas, technology and inputs will bring about any lasting improvements in their lives. The next chapter reflects on theories of global governance, ideology, knowledge and power, hegemony, communication for development, and participatory approaches.

Chapter Four: Theoretical Frameworks

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical frameworks used to analyse the application of the UN Communication for Development strategy in implementing the MDGs in Malawi and Zambia. The chapter begins by discussing state and society participation in the context of global governance theories, in an attempt to identify opportunities and limitations for Malawi and Zambia to participate in policy formulation and implementation.

The first objective of this chapter is to present theories that have helped to address the aims of this study and the role of actors in policy spaces and how they influence ideas in the UN system, including the implications of such ideas on how member states interpret participation and practices pertaining to poverty reduction. The second objective of this chapter is to discuss how ideas, material interests and global governance structures metamorphose through theories of hegemony, and how they are mirrored through policies (MDGs and UN Communication for Development strategy) as sites where 'words' impose a 'worldview' on developing countries. The relationship between states (Malawi and Zambia in this instance), global policies and the UN system, are not considered neutral, but rather, a complex set of social relations, and in complicity with power that seeks to condition and configure local behaviour in its favour. As part of the third objective, this chapter discusses communication for development and participatory theories, taking into account the role of the UN system and hegemony as central sources of policy narratives which, in this case, are sources of the communication messages to effect behavioural change.

The study is situated in Cox's (1981, 1983, 1987) critical view to allow analysis to step outside the problem-solving theories which have dominated governance, communication for development and participatory debate. The strength of applying critical thinking lies in its ability to explore issues outside the parameters of political and social structures. By taking such an approach, this study attempts to explore alternative positions on poverty, which derive from local realities that stand apart from the prevailing ones. The use of Cox's critical theory is also necessitated by its attention to the different state forms in response to power, production and world orders, and his argument that social order influences production modes.

4.2 Global governance: a definition and mainstream approaches

As mentioned earlier, in 2000, Malawi and Zambia were among the member states that adopted the Millennium Resolution, setting out eight development goals to be achieved by 2015. With the UN system acting as the major global governance institution, the adoption of the Millennium Resolution was conducted through a process described as 'consensus'. The UN Communication for Development strategy was similarly conceptualised by a UN technical team, with an objective to expedite the implementation of the MDGs (cf. Chapter Two). The study views these texts through the lens of the international development policy, as they are products of the UN system – a system of global governance (Rosenau, 1999). On that account, the study applies theories of global governance to critically analyse these texts within the framework of participation, both in terms of formulation and implementation of the MDGs by Malawi and Zambia.

The analysis of the MDGs and the UN Communication for Development strategy is predicated on earlier academic discussions on global governance theories in the 1950s by Deutsch (1953), Haas (1958; 1961) and later by Giddens (1984), which foregrounded debate on global convergence and globalisation respectively. Deutsch (1953) for instance, hypothesised that the convergence of transnational exchange, communication and transactions would lead to social integration, while Haas (1958; 1961) proposed the creation of global institutions to manage the process of integration. Giddens (1984) summarised these in his theorisation of globalisation. The main purpose of drawing from these theoretical discussions is to establish a theoretical premise to interrogate the interface between member states (Malawi and Zambia) and the UN system as a global government in the process of unpacking the ideas that underpin international development policies. This is at the centre of this study's goal – to examine the operationalisation of participation deriving from both the MDGs and the UN Communication for Development strategy. In addition, the study seeks to ascertain claims by Thakur and Weiss (2006) and Rosenau (1999) that a global single rule system tends to manifest into a single world order because policies tend to define social positions where communication operates as a social agent in defining a worldview.

Despite global governance occupying a central position in the field of international relations, the concept faces definitional crisis. As a result, there are more than a dozen interpretations of global governance theories, perhaps an indication of the confusion that characterises the concept (Pattberg, 2006). Thakur and Weiss (2006) offer a loose and yet general definition wherein they describe global governance as a:

> *"...complex of formal and informal institutions, mechanisms, relationships and processes between and among states, markets, citizens and organisations, both inter- and non-governmental, through which collective interests on the global plane are articulated, rights and obligations are established, and differences are mediated" (p.3).*

It is not the aim of this study to pursue the conceptual confusion that characterises global governance, but to reflect on relevant interpretations as they converge into a single mode of global governance in the UN system.

Global governance theories are interpreted in a variety of ways which range from the role of civil society in global decision-making processes to supra-national organisations, specialised networks, technical bodies and transnational corporations in global politics. The study considers these as amongst the actors who feed into the global policy architecture. Dingwerth and Pattberg (2006) categorise mainstream global governance approaches into a single global socio-political order, the transnational relations and globalisation. This study, however, foregrounds its analysis on the third category – the UN system. This is not to render the two approaches irrelevant as there is interplay between the three, but the purpose is to understand them within the structures of governance which the UN system approach proffers. An analysis of the formulation and implementation of the MDGs and UN Communication for Development strategy through the UN system approach is vital for the purposes of locating the role of member states and their communities who are supposed to take the lead in addressing their poverty (Pieterse in Hemer and Tufte, 2006; UN, 2010). That the UN system now occupies a central position in establishing cooperative mechanisms to global problem-solving approaches such as poverty (see Risse, 2002; Cox, 1996; Soederberg, 2006), provides a context for discussing how communities and governments in Malawi and Zambia influence the poverty reduction agenda in the MDGs and the participatory approaches proposed in the UN communication for Development strategy.

4.2.1 Global policy formulation and the developing state

Responding to the question of 'how' communities and governments of Malawi and Zambia participated in the policy formulation and implementation processes alone is inadequate to address the goals of this study, without addressing the question of 'where', 'when' and 'what'.

International development policy studies have often glorified global governance theories as a prerequisite for social transformation; sustaining the problem-solving approach to poverty reduction. The concept of global governance in poverty reduction assumes that global cooperation is paramount to addressing global poverty, than lived experiences by the communities. The predominant problem-solving approach masks the presence of ideas and interests which control global relations. For the purposes of this study, the main focus is to understand the network of global governance, including its formal and informal interactions between actors at different levels which feed into the MDG formulation. The problem-solving approach is a main concern for Cox's (1981, 1983, 1987) critical theory which questions possibilities of diversity of conceptualisation of life as an outcome of participation within global policies. He contests the notion of applying a one-size-fits-all universal solution to problems in different contexts. The theoretical contradictions between external solution and local problems are where individuals' ability to determine 'their modes of perceiving the world, and of their potential" is undermined (Cox, 1987, p. 403).

Cox discusses global governance in relation to social order and dominance, largely anchoring his view in structures of power, ideas and material interest. Before addressing ideas and material interests, the study sought to gauge the extent to which the global policy structure permits Malawi and Zambia and their communities to participate in the formulation of the MDGs. The objective was to identify and establish moments and opportunities where Malawi and Zambia, with their people, could possibly interact with policy-making and implementation processes. To achieve this, the study examined the global policy infrastructure which according to Heclo (1978) and Grindle and Thomas (1991) is predominantly made up of three key categories of policy arenas. The first category of close policy spaces draws on influential work of the 1980s largely from Heclo's (1978) seminal conceptualisation of issues network, which focuses on policy subsystems, often made up of actors of the same interests and inaccessible to non-members. These policy subsystems are important for policy formation in the policy cycle. Unlike the agenda setting theory and the legislative spaces where representatives of the public or states are more directly involved, participation in policy formation is much more restricted to the members of a policy subsystem. The second category is the legislative spaces, a replica of Habermas's public sphere theory (Garnham, 1992), where decisions are made, adopted and endorsed through the process of consensus by elected or representative actors, often representing the public or citizens. The third category is described in Brock et al. (2004) as the autonomous spaces, largely occupied by coalitions, civil society actors and interest groups who claim not to be aligned with governments or corporate interests.

A thorough examination of these policy spaces goes beyond understanding the participation of Malawi and Zambia within the policy architecture of the UN system. This should also shed more light on the functions of each space in terms of setting the agenda (cf. Shannon and Weaver, 1949), the framing of issues and knowledge contribution in relation to actors' material interests. Cox has consistently argued that policies are not neutral, as they are burdened by actor interests, most specifically international capital in its aspiration for hegemony through neutralizing and marginalization by universalization as a way to curtail revolt (cf. Cox, 1981). A similar view is echoed by Soederberg (2007) who postulates that policies are outcomes of "compromises, negotiations or imposed by the interplay of popular pressures and the response of different actors" (p.500), which makes public policy unbalanced in favour of powerful actors. The scenario laid down by Soederberg (2007) provokes pertinent questions about who participates, where and with what interests, with implications for whose ideas govern in both the UN system and the dominant poverty reduction narrative. Analysis in this context takes into account that the UN system is a network of systems and actors. These include the UN Security Council charged with peacekeeping, sanctioning and acceptance of member states in the UN system. Implicitly, the five permanent member states[29] out of the fifteen have powers over other states and they exercise agency. The ability of member states to use force enables them to pursue their interests, either national or global (cf. Yoo, 2003). Yoo cites the use of the Security Council to declare war on Iraq in 1990 (UNSC Resolution 660, 1990)[30] and Resolution 1441, (2002) which led to the downfall of Saddam Hussein under the guise of destroying weapon of mass destruction which were later discovered to be non-existent. Charles (2007) has contested that the veto power is now being used by member states to pursue national interests instead of global peace. Soederberg's (2007) analysis also helps to address the question of whether the MDGs are a prescription designed to create an unquestioned demand for global governance in the affairs of Malawi and Zambia, rather than addressing local challenges, and whether or not they conceal certain interests.

[29] The permanent member states of the Security Council include Russia, United Kingdom, France, China and United States of America. Other non-permanent member states include Angola, Egypt, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, Uruguay and Venezuela.
[30] http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/660(1990)

The application of global governance theories to how MDGs are implemented in Malawi and Zambia through the UN Communication for Development strategy, seeks to interrogate the notion of the extent of equality of member states enshrined in the UN Charter, that “The Organisation is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members” (Chapter one, Article two). The charter considers Malawi and Zambia as equal members entitled to enjoy autonomy in making their own decisions as sovereign states. This study carefully examines how the UN system, according to Soederberg (2007), is dominated by multiple and non-state interest-driven actors. According to Soederberg, these interests contaminate the UN system, originally thought to be the sanctuary for the plurality of views free from inequality, exploitation and class struggle (cf. Rosenau, 1992). Habermas’ (1990) disputed public sphere theory perhaps appropriately characterises Soederberg’s (2007) thinking on participation in the UN system, especially where he theorised equal participation within spaces of the public sphere.

A further concern over global governance raised by Soederberg (2006), which is conversely a major weakness in Habermas’ (1989) disputed public sphere theory, is that given the centralisation of powers on the UN Security Council and Western corporations, public policy spaces such as the UN system weaken participation and autonomy when Malawi and Zambia (as member states) interact with the UN system as an authority. Soederberg’s (2006) arguments also raise the question of how such a western based participatory model is applicable to the African context given that the governance structures are very different from those in the West. In a context where such dominant actor interests dominate policy spaces and narratives, both the neutrality of the UN system (as a global government), and the autonomy of Malawi and Zambia as member states, are compromised by the interests of dominant actors. Weiss and Gordenker (1996) concur that the assumption that all member states are equal in an arena where they are ranked according to their economic size is merely masking the exercise of power. This is particularly relevant in light of Weiss and Gordenker’s (1996) postulation that the UN system is an authority which places itself in a position of governmental power over states, and its ideas are accompanied by authoritative power over member states yet it is controlled by few member states. The notion of diversity and plurality of ideas in such public policy arenas has been the central theme in Cox’s (1981) account of power imbalances. Cox drew his argument from the basis that material conditions required to configure equality of all member states in public policy spaces are inadequate. This is due to imbalances rooted in materialism that gave rise to the UN system at its formation.

In his discussion of the nation-state relationship, Cox's (1980) postulation implies that global governance can instead undermine developing states such as Malawi and Zambia by depriving them of their sovereignty and ability to exercise autonomy – a scenario that runs contrary to the principle of participation. In his arguments, Cox (1980) contends that ideas and discourses arising from policy spaces such as institutions of global governance, tend to favour those that sustain the interests of the dominant actors. This is part of what this study seek to establish, whether the MDGs are promoting the ideas of the elite as global solutions to poverty and therefore a mode of social transformation. Central to this study is the desire to identify opportunities to balance between a centralised global governance policy (like MDGs) premised on a participatory model, and examining possibilities of incorporating local ideas and interests into the global policies without compromising each other's interests. This is necessary because the concept of transformation proposed in the UN Communication for Development strategy prefers epistemological diffusion as an equivalent of social change or poverty reduction, while equality equates to a plurality of voices to disguise biased political and social relations between the North and the South (Gordenker and Weiss, 1996). To analyse the convergence of the two approaches requires interrogating the above theoretical arguments against the concept of state autonomy, which is the fulcrum of the participation agenda.

Gordenker and Weiss (1996) and Rosenau (1997a) also discuss globalisation in terms of how global policies, through the lenses of transnational relations, erase national state borders, shrinking the national-global interface and threatening state autonomy for Malawi and Zambia. Strange (1988b) discusses how state autonomy is diminished by the universalisation of production and consumption and how changes in production also alter social and political power. The authority of global governance institutions transcends state capacity in terms of seeking consensus for the global agenda. Gramsci (1971) too has argued that the regulatory function and the act of setting rules (by the UN system), is an exercise of power which introduces and reinforces a preferred social order, secured through consent (as member states), or by force (by ensuring compliance to global policies). Once consent has been secured, power determines priorities and knowledge parameters within its hierarchical structures, thus neglecting local realities (cf. Dingwerth and Pattberg, 2006; Weiss and Gordenker, 2002). This theoretical construction of global governance and its function is important in assessing the capabilities of governments of Malawi and Zambia to decide their priorities and the extent to which they can use their power to empower their people. Such analysis is carried out in relation to the extent to which the UN system exercises its authority over member states, especially developing nations.

In pursuing this approach, the objective is to understand the ability of Malawi and Zambia to independently formulate locally relevant policies suitable to address local problems without creating tensions with or succumbing to global policy pressures. Attention is given to how poverty reduction is framed and its relevance to the realities of countries under study. The primary purpose is to respond to Cox's (1953) concern that global governance theories overlook the link between power and social relations in pursuit of the globalization agenda. International development policy has often failed to address and conceptualise power, knowledge dynamics and epistemic supervision by international institutions and their consequences on the mind-set of people from the South. This especially takes place when an international Communication for Development strategy is involved in the promotion of such knowledge.

4.3 Hegemony: global governance, the state and social order

The effect of global governance power, as discussed in Gramsci (1971), Cox (1980) and other authors, is not only limited to how the UN system enforces compliance of member states such as Malawi and Zambia regarding the MDGs, but also questions the role of the UN system in promoting certain ideas and how they condition policies, knowledge and individual behaviour, rendering these as a given. Gramsci conceives this as hegemony, a form of social domination by the elite social groups operating through states, governmental and epistemic institutions. I am aware that in Gramsci, hegemony does not imply the direct actions of specific individuals, but refers instead, to a situation where the dominant ideas, and frames in which such ideas are produced, are aligned with the interests of a particular set of elite. The main insight in Gramsci's concept is that the hegemonic power of elite ideas makes them seem like common-sense, given or the only possibility. In other words, a development worker does not consciously or deliberately represent the interests of global elites at the expense of those considered to be poor, but because of the centrality of the economic growth ideas, he/she unconsciously reproduces economistic ideas and policy responses to the problem of poverty.

This study draws from the neo-Gramscian scholarship of Cox (1981, 1983, 1987), Robinson (2005) and others who have deepened Gramsci's nation-state relationship analysis to another theoretical dimension which provides a comprehensive framework of social change, which can be linked to the social change thrust in the UN Communication for Development strategy. In his framework, Cox argues that it is not only the relationship between the nation and the social power that matters, but also the actors, ideas and the material worlds, which are connected, manifesting as a social transformation agenda in establishing a particular social order (Leysens, 2008). From the onset, the study considers the MDGs as a set of ideas proposing a certain mode of practice, which provides the ground upon which to examine how such ideas are a form of hegemony exercised through structures of power, practices and systems. The study is further informed by Cox's idea (1987) that hegemony is not only limited to domination but is also a reflection of the dominant power in a given society where interests are implicitly linked to ideas and knowledge frames (Leysens, 2008). Acceptance of such ideas is acquired through rationalisation and social stability, leading to and in this instance, implying consensus with the dominant power.

Of particular interest to this study is Cox's neo-Gramsci thinking that global ideas, such as the MDGs framework, are linked to material capabilities, ideas and institutions. Also essential, is his analysis of how they manifest in 'transnational social forces' or a 'global civil society' (Cox, 1981, p. 105; Cox, 1983, p. 136). The symbiotic relationship between these factors defines a world order under the auspices of elite social groups. The need to investigate the role of actors in knowledge formation has already been discussed earlier in this chapter. Applying the theory of hegemony from a global governance perspective enables the analysis of local realities in Malawi and Zambia against what is proposed in the MDGs framework. In doing so, I consider Cox's postulation that global hegemony subsists through powerful states that canvass their interests of capital and the powerful class as they establish their ideas worldwide through global policies. While the role of the state institutions is not negligible, even though bypassed, hegemony, as explained in Cox (1983) involves transnational social forces, thriving on ideas and materialism to perpetuate a global mode of production.

By transnational social forces, Cox, (1983) refers to how domination is exercised by social elite groups with technical networks, epistemic communities and by earning control over knowledge to promote a certain form of production. He cites scientific knowledge and the way it is used to justify rules, norms, practices and standards in order to condition behaviour. By putting across this theoretical argument, Cox invites us to critically analyse how hegemony resides in both structures of power (global and state) and in the 'social science lexicon' of policy narrative and discourse such as those that underlie the MDGs (Robinson, 2005, p. 1). This makes it pertinent to examine the discourse and narratives that constitute the MDG framework by interrogating theories of global governance, both in terms of the structure and epistemological foundation. Such an analysis reveals how the MDGs construct social order through both consent and coercion.

Analyses of both the discourses and narratives that frame poverty reduction in the MDGs constitute an integral component of this study. This is largely because a Communication for Development strategy that speaks of social transformation and is attached to a global idea such as the MDGs framework raises concerns over altering subaltern culture in terms of production, practices and consumption patterns. The use of communication to link the global and the local has always been suspicious given that the flow of knowledge is skewed against the local, especially when considering Cox's (1983) argument about how hegemony is maintained through both state and social forces to transform society into a world order. For Cox (1980), when ideas laden with actors' and material interests are linked to social transformation agents, they lead to the universalisation of the societies and production (Leysens, 2008). Central to his theoretical argument is that hegemony seeks, through policies, to co-opt both the state and individuals into a certain world order, leaving little or no room for difference. Policies and ideas are produced in a context where they not only cease to be neutral, but are also contaminated by actors' interests in pursuit of a particular worldview. The power of ideas in such a scenario transcends the state's ability to protect its people from subscribing to the dominant ideology and hence the state may not be the only vehicle through which hegemony is transmitted and maintained. This, however, raises curious concerns where the success of the MDGs in reducing poverty is predicated on community participation (UN, 2010).

In highlighting the link between ideas and material interests, Cox (1981) is concerned about the increasing role of finance in knowledge production, especially in poverty reduction. Cox (1981, p. 110) states that 'international finance [is] the preeminent agency of conformity to world hegemonic order and the principal regulator of the political and productive organisation of a hegemonic world economy.' His main worry is that finance institutions now drive the processes to internationalise global production, which underpins the world order (Cox, 1992). This raises questions about the power exerted by finance institutions such as the World Bank and IMF, disguised as neutral technical entities, while imposing themselves on developing states such as Malawi and Zambia who must comply with macroeconomic policies. The role of finance in such a context is seen by Cox (1983) as a form of power, especially where it occupies a central role in defining the well-being of a society.

Earlier in this chapter, it was noted that policies are produced by an intricate web of actors and groups (Cox, 1983; Leysens, 2008; Robinson, 2005). In a context where global policies are constructed and maintained through a policy coordination system, elite actors represented by different networks, together form the machinery that delivers a world order, raising the question of the role of states and communities in defining their well-being (Leysens, 2008). This becomes relevant when Robinson's (2005) observation that a 'transnational hegemony [is] emerging in which a transnational capitalist class predominates, leading [to] transnational capital' (p.4) is taken into consideration. Such capitalist groups constitute a managerial class, which often does not include states but rather social groups with capitalist interests and who depend on state institutions for propagating their ideology. Their interests tend to influence state and cultural policies. Among these social groups are multinational and transnational corporations historically known for pursuing self-interests and imposing a particular material culture on states, with the objective of maximising capital accumulation (Leysens, 2008), with little or no desire to benefit local economies and uplift the well-being of local communities.

Of particular interest to this study is to ascertain the pressure on the governments of Malawi and Zambia and the villages to align their policies with the MDGs and for individual villagers to adjust their behaviour in line with development projects. In the context where a global governance policy presides over these adjustments, internationalisation of both the state and production at local level occurs (Cox, 1981), which ultimately leads to the centralisation of knowledge production and dependence on foreign epistemic frames. Once the control of knowledge has been secured, power is also centralised in the hands of the elite groups. While the conceptualisation of production may vary, this would not stop the elite group from claiming the right to knowledge production (Cox, 1987).

In Cox (1987) the cause-effect relationship between finance and production is central, especially in terms of how finance joins forces with ideas to alter means of production. In this study, Cox's (1987) theorisation is used to analyse the MDGs' goal of halving poverty, based on the income of a dollar-a-day benchmark. This study does not limit itself to this symbiotic relationship, as doing so endorses the parlance that all types of well-being are determined by material and finance. Instead, I take a detour at Cox's (1983) advice that the finance-production nexus is responsible for delinking society from its ‘eco-system’ which effectively reduces societies’ productive capacity, leading to material and epistemological dependency on the transnational managerial classes for policy guidance. In so doing, I am not completely discounting the importance of material input in achieving well-being but stating that the conceptualisation of life cannot be universalised and centralised. Viewed from the perspective where social transformation is an outcome of both power and socialisation, with communication as a socialising agent, the effect can only be the subordination of weaker groups, with hegemony as an ultimate outcome, hinged on the ruling ideology subsisting under unquestioned consensus (Leysens, 2008). In the next section, the study explores the role of power and knowledge in conditioning state and individual behaviour.

4.3.1 Alignment, detachment and local realities

The role placed on communication in the implementation of the MDGs demands further analysis, especially in line with the link between ideas, interests and knowledge in shaping behaviour and practices (Stoddart, 2008). The UN report (2010) notes that the failure to meet the MDGs is largely attributed to the lack of appropriate communication of the development strategy to localise the MDGs and stimulate participation among those considered poor. By localisation, the report implies that communities at a lower level needed to adopt a certain form of knowledge congruent with the MDGs. This is not necessarily intended to improve their well-being. Earlier discussions highlighted the UN system as a global government that sets rules and ensures compliance. In a context where Malawi, Zambia and other developing countries are coerced to align their plans to global narratives, it would be interesting to establish if participation is anything more than pacification to maintain existing inequalities. Power becomes a repository of capital interests, a driver of transformation or social change towards a preferred order, which undermines state autonomy. This is explored following Cox’s (1987) argument that aligning individual behaviour or national plans to global policies links to capital interests, which in turn affects the framing of participation. The goal is to understand how the proposed alignment of behaviour, practices and national plans to the MDGs frame both the conceptual and contextual meaning of participation, while simultaneously unravelling the discourses and narratives that frame both the poverty reduction agenda and participatory approaches. In the analysis of hegemony, alignment of development plans has the effect of altering or replacing social realities with socially constructed lifestyles. Cox’s (1987) typology of modes of social relations and economic production is relevant in understanding how power seeks to reinforce or impose certain production patterns, including how it erodes autonomy. Within the context of these theoretical tensions, the study questions the viability of the participatory project in the absence of state or society autonomy.

Examining the concept of alignment in the context of autonomy is central to investigating if the Malawian and Zambian national plans are informed by local realities or aligned to global policies, which tend to make national plans more outward-oriented. Outward-oriented plans tend to lead to epistemological dependence through the outsourcing of knowledge in order to comply with global norms. Externally imposed knowledge often distances societies from their reality and makes them epistemologically dependent, as it drags them out of their cultural repository. Cox (1987:267) observes that 'international finance is the preeminent agency of conformity to world hegemonic order and the principal regulator of the political and productive organisation of a hegemonic world economy'. He aptly notes that global governance internationalises the state in a space where dominant discourses triumph at the expense of the less dominant and sees global governance as processes in which 'the nation state becomes part of a larger and more complex political structure that is the counterpart to international production' (Cox, 1987, p. 253). Thus these processes, argues Cox, subsist in consensus formation, hierarchy formation and the transformation of global policies into national policies and practices. It is on that basis that Garnham (1992) calls for the acknowledgement of the importance of other public spheres outside formal structures, as alternative modes of participation. Garnham's (1992) proposition for all its merit, has not gained sufficient ground.

In Rosenau's (2002) research, autonomous modes of participation are not treated with the same importance as in the formalised structures, which suggests that anything outside or that counters the global governance discourse is either of no significance or is viewed as anarchy. In neglecting or suppressing differences and the autonomy of societies, it is necessary to investigate how global policies are antagonistic towards participation, maintains Calhoun (1992). This is in line with Fraser's (1992, p.116) view that the 'exclusionary bourgeois public' suppresses the 'sub-spaces' and marginalises the 'subaltern counter publics' to ensure control.

4.3.2 Power, knowledge and actions

Theoretical debates on how knowledge and power frame practices are of relevance to this study. As noted in Overbeek (2004, p.10), 'monetarism holds that by making money scarce … economic reasoning can be forced upon states and society as a whole'. This is a foundation for understanding how the power of money conspires with knowledge to become an oppressive force in societies. The importance of such an analysis is derived from what seems to be the dominant notion that in the absence of finance there can be no poverty reduction – a scenario that discounts grassroots and developing countries from taking the lead (cf. Cox, 1991). The primary strength of investigating the MDGs through the lens of knowledge and power is its capacity to provide insight into what has been highlighted by Ruggie (1998) and Soederberg (2007) that dominant ideas are purveyed through the impunity enjoyed by global governance institutions such as the UN system in order to facilitate the positioning of neoliberal hegemony (cf. Fischer, 2001). This is analysed in the context of both Coxian and Marxist positions, which suggest that ideas are not neutral. As such, the MDGs framework is a set of ideas which represents powerful interests.

In Marx, for example, ‘ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of dominant material relations’ (Marx and Engels, 1975, p.59), while Weber (1948, p.80) states that ‘not ideas but material and ideal interest, directly govern men’s conduct’, to which Burchill et al. (2009) add that global policies reproduce, extend and perpetuate the global capitalist system. Cox (1983) extensively explains the link between actors, ideas and material interests by stating that global policies tend to be framed by discourses that preserve capital interests, structures of power and social relations, while facilitating a smooth cultivation of neoliberal values (cf. Keohane, 1984). On these grounds, the assertion by Cox (1983), that global arenas, such as the UN system function to legitimise the ideology of neoliberalism into a world order and the superiority of market rationality as justification to intervene in developing countries through public spheres, requires further analyses.

Given the central role of texts in framing the poverty reduction pedagogy in the MDGs, it is instructive to analyse how these ideas manifest into knowledge in light of Cox’s (1983) observation that global governance is congested by actors and material interests all of which define relations. He cites how the IMF and the World Bank have become powerful stakeholders in designing development policies within specific historical circumstances suitable only for certain ideas and material interests and thus compromising the UN’s neutrality. The interest, in this case, is to investigate the claims that actors acquire power, seek to transform society through ideas and to uncover how the same ideas, when linked to power, often distort or replace social realities by altering social forms of production.

Leysens (2008) lays the foundation for analysing the link between knowledge and power, which has been pursued in detail by Haas (1992). Haas's (1992) analyses of the global policy coordination process and the role of global institutions in configuring the social order are relevant to the objectives of this study, especially in relation to how individual or national behaviour is conditioned. Haas's line of inquiry provides a basis for evaluating the extent to which global policy-making processes can accommodate national interests of developing countries. It is also useful for evaluating the degree to which countries such as Malawi and Zambia can formulate policies independent of global policy pressures in pursuit of their people's well-being (material and nonmaterial value). Haas (1992), however, sees opportunities for state action, but only if states are capable of identifying issue areas of policy-making and priority setting, rather than depending on global policy processes. His advocacy for these issues arises from several concerns. The first concern is that while human agency occupies the space between global policy conditions, knowledge, national actions and individual actions, the role of epistemic communities is crucial in supplying knowledge. The second concern is that such knowledge becomes central in 'framing the cause-and-effect relationships of problems and which frame issues for collective debate, proposing specific policies, and identifying salient points for negotiation' (Haas, 1992).

Epistemic communities, according to Haas (1992, p.2), are 'networks of professionals with recognised expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area'. While epistemic communities may be comprised of experts and professionals from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds, they operate under political conditions and their views are vulnerable to political interests and power. Because their knowledge is unquestionably believed and assumed neutral, scientific rationality is applied to suppress alternative views in decision-making and promote a situation favourable to elites. Haas (1992) further highlights that powerful actors tend to use knowledge from epistemic communities to advance their interests and condition behaviour of both the states and individuals. This is particularly important to this study to establish if the practice of poverty reduction in the MDGs framework relies on epistemic communities for guidance in defining and solving the poverty problem. These intricate linkages become pertinent in light of Haas's (1992) reflection that control over knowledge and information is an important dimension of power, and therefore the use of communication for development strategies premised on the diffusion of ideas and information can potentially be used to reconfigure new behavioural patterns in favour of a preferred social order. It is clear in Haas (1992, p.5) that 'the policy role of the knowledge elite' feeds into the narrative that policymakers and political leaders use knowledge to retain control. A similar argument is offered by Ruggie (1976) on how ideas shape social reality and how social organisations such as the UN system, and practices they establish in society, lead to a social order.

The study thus investigates the nexus between such knowledge and the mind-sets of those exposed to it. For instance, the mental schema through which Malawi and Zambia societies conceptualise how to address their poverty problem is of particular importance. Furthermore, to locate this connection within the realms of how a different well-being is imposed on them before analysing the parameters that guide the narratives is paramount. Foucault's (1977) contribution to the debate on the relationship between knowledge and power is critical in establishing if the MDGs have imposed a socially constructed poverty discourse in Malawi and Zambia – one that is remote from their local realities. Knowledge influences people's psychological schematic structures in constructing meanings (Chomsky, 2002; 1988). Chomsky describes schematic structures as frames of thought (representation) within which concepts are understood and put into practice. He highlights how knowledge can operate as an instrument of power. Foucault (2002) also describes the restricted public policy domain, such as the UN system, dominant ideology, institutional pressure and actors' interests as influential because of the forms of knowledge that they construct.

Chomsky (2002) discusses the notion of knowledge in detail and demonstrates how it manifests as mental frames of reference, which guide judgement, decision-making and behaviour, which are often the base for transformation. The role of power in the imposition of knowledge is to impose meanings on particular concepts (cf. Fairclough, 1989). This is described in Luke (1974) as representation of relative dominance, that is to say, where one party dictates to another. This makes it relevant to probe if knowledge on poverty is an imposition of power on Malawi and Zambia (cf. Escobar, 1995; Abrahamson, 2004). This study attempts to establish if the lifestyles of Malawians and Zambians have been socialised into foreign lifestyles as that may have resulted in an identity linked to poverty. Where lifestyles are altered, often through rationalisation, Stoddart (2008) concludes that knowledge becomes the oppressive force that intimidates alternative views, thereby distorting reality. The discrepancy between real and constructed poverty identities forms the basis from which conclusions are drawn on how poverty is defined in Malawi and Zambia.

4.3.3 Rules, power and subordination

It was noted in earlier discussions that hegemony also secures its positioning through rules, consent and epistemology in favour of those actors who originate ideas. Global governance theories have been criticised for giving a voice to the 'universal norms' that are part of the 'common-sense ideology of a hegemonic world order', because they function 'to uphold the rules that underpin the idea of a liberal world economy' (Cox, 1983, pp. 137-8). This is vital to the analysis of narratives and discourses that frame the MDGs' poverty reduction agenda, which is part of the transformation process in a given country. Both Cox (1983) and Overbeek (2004) have led discussions on how global governance is a discursive attempt to conceal the neo-liberal agenda by disguising it as a poverty reduction strategy. Historical materialism holds that hegemony maintains its dominant position through consensus under the guise of cooperatively managing global affairs while subtly imposing itself on subordinate states (Overbeek, 2004). Lefebvre (2005) summarises this process as the ostensible neutrality of poverty to disguise how it is advanced, while paying lip service to issues of inclusion and participation.

This study therefore takes interest in the connection between economic interests, social power and epistemology, often a source of debate, particularly the alignment of national poverty reduction plans for Malawi and Zambia to global policies. This is an important basis to question whether the alignment of national plans with the MDGs deprives Malawi and Zambia opportunities to draw from their own knowledge and their local realities. Hegemony effectively secures its positioning when the dominant knowledge presents its definition of reality and worldview in a way accepted by others as given, or as common-sense, and as the only sensible way. Alternative views are side-lined through knowledge supremacy and moral leadership (Gramsci, 1971). For hegemony to create and sustain a new society, it needs to maintain a new consciousness. This new consciousness either is ingrained in local culture or replaces the current culture, both aesthetically and anthropologically.

Most theories of development studies have largely placed culture at the heart of development policy, but this study contradicts this view and argues that development defines aspects of culture, while culture is broader than development. The differences between the two concepts have become blurred. In general, development denotes the well-being of a society, while culture is a whole way of life of a society. Both are determined by systems of production and consumption styles. Production is the source of material capabilities from which power is derived and a new culture is formulated and imposed. The struggle with hegemony lies in its control over production and consumption and the power resulting from it.

4.4 Participation and communication for development: a critical perspective

As earlier stated, one of the main goals of this study is to analyse how the UN Communication for Development strategy applies participation of those affected when implementing the MDGs in Mwandama Millennium Village in Malawi and Kamaila Village in Zambia. The role of communication in framing practice is central in the field of sociology and development studies especially in relation to behaviour stimulation, behavioural change and social transformation geared at improving the well-being of a society (Nair and White, 1993). In sociology, for instance, the 'word' occupies a central role in shaping 'worldview'. Chapters 1 and 2 have discussed the conceptual overviews of the role of communication in establishing participatory models within the framework of the Millennium Village. By applying a critical participatory theoretical analysis, the study engages with theories of communication for development, but within the context of theories discussed earlier in this chapter. This is not to rehash theories of global governance and hegemony, but to pave way for unravelling how their convergence delivers the proposed behaviour and social change at village level in Malawi and Zambia.

The application of the critical approach to participation and communication stems from the recommendation by the UN to add Communication for Development (cf. Waisbord, 2000) as a means to expedite participation (UN, 2010). This proposal by the UN report places communication in a position where it acts as 'a science to produce effective messages' (Waisbord in Hemer and Tufte, 2005, p. 77). Given the centrality of communication (both social and institutional) as a key theme of this inquiry, the study seeks to analyse its relationship with policy frameworks as 'words' that shape worldviews and frame practice.

Despite a mixture of approaches and practices, this study relies on two main yet opposing theoretical standpoints: the diffusion of innovation conceptualised by Rogers (1983) and the dialogical pedagogy of Freire (1970). These are employed in order to assess the participatory approaches applied in the villages under study. These two theoretical approaches can be linked to Daniel Lerner's study of communication and development (1958) and Wilbur Schramm's study on the role of media for national development (1964) wherein the media are central in mediating between the targeted audience and drivers of development projects. Despite huge investment in the communication for development project to influence behavioural change, there is no consensus on the extent to which media messages influence social behaviour, and it is safe to say that the media can offer choices and options from which people can choose to alter their behaviour. However, the study builds from behaviour theorists such as Darnton (2008) and Jackson (2005) who have offered authoritative views of how theories of behaviour have been integrated with those in media studies and adapted in the field of policy implementation to catalyse behavioural change. These authors refer to two key theories of behaviour where communication is used to effect social change towards certain policy positions – the theory of interpersonal behaviour (Triandis, 1977) and the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). While these theories differ in their approach, they give credence to the premise that the media remain a vital agent of socialisation and a catalyst for participation. When applied to the field of media studies, the focus has been on the analysis of ideas and how the messages that carry them reflect and affect social and cultural change, as well as practices (Hansen et al., 1998). Lasswell's (1930) famous communication model of 'Who says What through Which channel to Whom with What effect' summarises what seems to be the main source of concern for the diffusion model, especially where participation is concerned.

4.4.1 Communication, participation and social change

This study applies the diffusion of innovation theory popularised by Rogers (1983), which conceives of development as driven from the centre of power (sender) to the targeted beneficiaries (audience) with the intention of effecting behavioural change. Improvement of the well-being is conceived as an outcome of an interventionist linear process where individuals accept imposed ideas into their lifestyles. Communication, in such a scenario, facilitates transformation by spreading new ideas. While media scholarship broadly concurs on the limitation of media in altering behaviour, there is also consensus that the media can offer choices and options from which people choose to alter their behaviour. Applying this theory does not imply endorsement, but rather examines the mode of participation preferred in the villages to implement the MDGs in a context where knowledge diffusion is a function of power.

Within this approach, the role of the media is to alter behaviour by targeting attitudes, social norms and habits with the ultimate result of ensuring the adoption of a particular behaviour. This is often facilitated by measures and incentives to undertake the desired action leading to social transformation. The study takes into account that new perspectives on the diffusion model have incorporated cultural and inter-personal communications methods to improve the process of social behavioural change (Servaes and Malikhao in Hemer, 2005). Existing ideas which are a target for replacement, are seen as either irrelevant or barriers to a preferred mode of development. Social change in this theory is the ultimate goal of communication for development (Servaes, Jacobson and White, 1996; Wilkins, 2000). The study considers the concept of change or social transformation in the villages in terms of either reinforcing the preferred or eliminating the unwanted ideas.

In applying the diffusion of innovation theory to the analysis of how communication for development is used in Malawi and Zambia, the study seeks to address several questions. Firstly, it assesses how the UN Communication for Development strategy interprets the MDGs at village level and how that translates into behaviour that facilitates poverty reduction. Secondly, it examines how modes of communication for development have been applied in the villages. Thirdly, it assesses the poverty reduction ideas that subsisted in the villages under study prior to the MDGs idea, with the study establishing how the two worlds of ideas reconcile with each other. The fourth objective is to investigate the extent to which local ideas are considered relevant to the poverty reduction agenda and the form of participation prescribed in the implementation.

Rogers' (1962) emphasis on adoption, largely derived from the sociological research on socialisation, is premised on the proposition that diffusion of new ideas through well-designed communication strategy tools leads to the adoption of cultural innovation, and is the main source of concern in this study. While transformation is the diffusion theory's ultimate goal, it is not the central question of this study as transformation can be an outcome of both internal and external cultural dynamics. Rogers (1962) insists on the use of communication, as a social agent, to enforce the adoption of new ideas while giving little or no merit to local ideas (cf. Cox, 1983). He discounts the value of local ideas by conceptualising that poverty reduction is an outcome of the adoption of external and diffused ideas. Participation, in his theory, is only demonstrated by the enactment of these ideas. On this account, the study seeks to establish the capabilities of this model when applied to the two villages.

The purpose of such a critical analysis is to establish if the concept of participation is predicated on the assumption that individuals can only develop from the social orders from which they are nurtured. The diffusion theory is the centre of the construction of the order of things, which becomes the ontology (Cox, 1981). Consequently, the individuals should adjust to that social order in the form of behaviour and societal change, including global transformation, thereby surrendering the definition of individual and societal well-being to the hands of institutions. Such adjustment as Leysens (2008) observes, is co-option where power mediates between a top-down diffusion model and a dialogic model. The second purpose is to establish how the UN Communication for Development strategy frame is implemented. According to Gitlin (1980), communication is always linked to the way concepts are framed into a source of practices and cultural pedagogy. For instance, Rogers's ideas on communication are closely linked to the World Bank's framing of participation, which it describes as a process by 'which stakeholders influence and share control over priority setting, policy making, resource allocation and project implementation' (World Bank PRSP sourcebook, 1996, p.237). In the field of communication, the concept of framing is concerned with how main themes dominate texts and thereby shape practices. An examination of how the UN Communication for Development frames participation is therefore vital in its contribution to the debate on poverty reduction in the villages in Malawi and Zambia, taking into account that both countries are obliged to integrate participatory approaches in their national MDG plans as a prerequisite watchword for donor funding (cf. Waisbord, 2000).

Waisbord's (2000) proposition provides a platform to interrogate Chambers' (1997) participatory rural appraisal tools dominating the World Bank's model of participation. The same participatory rural appraisal tools were criticized by Cleaver in Cooke and Kothari (2001) as elusive and as merely an act of faith, as their efficiency is overrated. These authors questioned whether participatory development, as proposed in Chambers (1997), leads to empowerment. Given that the research investigates the link between communication, participation and empowerment, the critical theoretical approach to the study makes it necessary to examine the implied mode of empowerment in the MDGs in the villages, taking into account that Chambers' (1997) concept of empowerment focuses on people assumed to be excluded (relegated to the outskirts of society) from development project goals. They are, from Chambers' (1997) perspective, intended to be brought into the fold, and empowered to take control of development projects. A countervailing theory to this approach is found in Freire (1986) and it seeks to facilitate the escape of social groups from what he terms trappings of domination. The former holds that Chambers fails to acknowledge people's capabilities outside development goals. Lack of 'self-critical epistemological awareness' is evidenced by Chambers (1997) in his pursuit of enhancing participation without questioning the knowledge claims embedded in the development practice.

For a critical analysis of Rogers's diffusion theory, and Chambers' toolkit approach, the study relies on Cooke and Kothari's (2001) critical analysis. It pays particular attention to their argument that while the ideas may be relevant to the poverty reduction cause, the approach does not allow flexibility – which is a key characteristic of human vicissitude, premised on the belief that human life cannot be tied and limited to project goals. These project goals emphasise cost-effectiveness and yet are at variance with the empowerment agenda which is based on the assumption that communities are powerless, deeply ignorant in all areas, and incapable of any sort of initiative. Attention is also given to the notion that participation is only recognised when applied within project activities, without taking into account people's capabilities outside projects. Notwithstanding the World Bank noting at its conference in 1998 that participatory development must shift from preoccupation with project effectiveness, Francis in Cooke and Kothari (2001) observes that this narrative still endures in global development policies.

Given the importance of participation in the MDGs agenda, it is important to explore opportunities of self-awareness. Cohen (1994, p.65) argues that by ignoring these 'we inevitably perpetrate fictions in our descriptions of other people' – instead of enabling an individual to be 'someone who can reflect on her or his experience of and position in society of being oneself'. Building on Cohen's argument, it cannot be denied that communication for development is an interlocutor for participatory development, which Chambers (1997) uses interchangeably to mean engagement, involvement and inclusion of local populations in development projects. Cohen attempted to contest the assumption that institutionalised development knowledge is the only credible one, whereas this study indicates that local knowledge is equally valid.

Cohen's (1994) analysis is particularly important to this study, considering that both Rogers (1962) and Chambers' (1997) approaches were blamed for homogenising and imposing the poverty problem definition. That Chambers neglects the power embedded in institutionalised poverty reduction begs debate on whether this is due to an oversight of the tensions of merging a top-down participatory model with a horizontal model (cf. Cox, 1981) or a strong belief in power being an author of change. The role of power shaping the social order is central in Cox's (1981) criticism of centralised problem-solving models, which he blames for inherently undermining participatory principles. Although Chambers (1997) acknowledges the importance of local knowledge, he does so to integrate it into conventional development frames and not as a stand-alone epistemology. This effectively neglects the underlying autocracy of development epistemology which disadvantages knowledge outside the conventional development.

Applying critical participatory approaches to explore how power mediates between a horizontal model and top-down MDGs framework is intended to gain insights into participatory development practices in Malawi and Zambia. Cooke and Kothari (2001) for example, are critical of the top-down goal-oriented approach advocated by Chambers (1997), stating that it imposes institutional barriers over communities and thereby inhibits other processes that promote empowerment and freedom. Chambers (1997), however, insists that his participatory rural appraisal (PRA) tool can challenge the institutionally produced ignorance in the upper echelons of development professionals, which not only denies the realities of the lower echelons but also imposes its own uniform, simplified realities on them. Cooke and Kothari's (2001) objection to top-down approaches and these author's contention that any attempt to infuse local knowledge into development projects obscures local knowledge in complex technocratic planning processes which are themselves conditioned by the norms of development organisations, is problematic. This prompts further analysis to establish if the use of local Malawian and Zambian knowledge is an inversion of power hierarchies given the suggestion that development experts are not neutral agents. The latter represent institutions, which are not neutral either, as they are accountable to interest-oriented stakeholders (Jennings, 2000).

Since this study's primary objective is to examine the power of policy texts and how they transform individual and cultural practice, it seeks to analyse how experts and institutions create forms of social relationships in Malawian and Zambian villages, where people are obliged to adhere to the rules of engagement (Giddens, 1984). The theoretical tension between Cooke and Kothari (2001) and Chambers (1997) is of fundamental importance in drawing conclusions on relevant participatory paradigms based on the local realities in Malawi and Zambia. At the core of Cooke and Kothari's (2001) proposal is the assumption that people's ability to be innovative beyond the parameters imposed by institutional norms is constrained in the battle between the individual and institution. This limits their ability to organise their lives according to local realities and 'difference' (Cooke and Uma, 2001). These authors draw from Cohen (1994), who argues that the importance of the individual's thoughts, is often glossed over in generalisations derived from collective social orders and categories. His main objective is to underline that individuals are endowed with capacity, and attention should focus on how they think rather than how they belong.

On the contrary, Chambers (1997) places emphasis on the notion of belonging to social categories, which is premised on the assumption that social inclusion in development projects reduces marginalisation and improves sustainability, 'mostly fundamentally, the participatory and communicative structures, including new forms of social partnership through … a shared sense of public good' (Cleaver in Cooke and Uma, 2001, p.38). Such a scenario is described by Cleaver in Cooke and Kothari (2001) as a tyranny that regulates the individual's relationship with power, with the result that the person's capacities and individual characteristics are merged into a universal identity.

Criticism of the diffusion model transcends the institutionalisation of development, but is used by experts to promote certain forms of development, including cultural change. The relationship between communication and culture wherein experts are the drivers of development is one of the main concerns. Where culture is supposed to be the repository of knowledge and practices, the role of experts in the diffusion model is to eliminate and denigrate local cultures and replace them with what is perceived to be relevant. This conceptualisation occupies a central role in problem-solving theories (cf. Devetak, 1995) where social change is used as a measure of development even when the welfare has not changed. The importance of further pursuing the criticism of the diffusion model arises from the way the village projects are treated by institutionalised development vis-à-vis the villagers' own view of their capabilities and their wellbeing. For example, Cleaver in Cooke and Kothari (2001) contests that in institutionalised development, the responsibility of reducing poverty and changing attitudes is no longer with individuals but with experts. These experts are paid staff pre-occupied with achieving organisation goals with scientific methods and in pursuit of a single efficient solution that feeds into the dominant social order, rather than paying attention to the diversity of context and ideas.

This study follows a similar theoretical path, especially the dichotomisation of society through cultural change which is at issue, wherein terms such as local people, local knowledge, local solutions and many others draw the distinction between 'us' and 'them' – meaning the unconverted that still require social change, a reasoning that converts people into passive beneficiaries of development projects. Applying the diffusion of innovation in the analysis of how the MDGs are implemented in the villages in Malawi and Zambia, assists in examining how these MDGs and the village projects enhance or constrain opportunities for participation. This takes into account that local culture forms the groundwork for participatory development

(Cooke and Kothari, 2001) as people are likely to be better off when they have the autonomy to decide and work for themselves. This proposition is central among critical participation theorists who charge that effective participatory development is a combination of the power of local decisions and the capacities to steer development in line with individual needs (see Jenning, 2000).

4.4.2 Autonomy, dialogue and social wellbeing

The second theoretical framework applicable to the implementation of the MDGs in the villages is the dialogical pedagogy popularised by Freire (1970; 1973; 1983; 1994) who opines that participation is a right of all people to individually and collectively communicate dialogically and in an unhindered manner. Unlike Rogers (1962), Freire does not identify participation as the result of communication. Instead, his model considers the two as having a dialogic and symbiotic relationship. The main idea in applying Freire's theoretical ideas is to establish how the concept of poverty is understood and conceptualised at village level vis-à-vis Sachs's (2005) Millennium Village model. An investigation into the collision of the two worlds (village knowledge versus Sachs) enables analyses on who decides, whose ideas prevail and what form of power exists. The Freirian proposition is derived from two theoretical standpoints. Firstly, imposed ideas tend to subjugate people who, if participation is to be achieved, must be viewed as equal human beings in any development process. By this, Freire is not discounting the need for external ideas in improving the welfare of society, but is proposing a dialogical process of communication – a situation where knowledge is autonomously acquired by one society rather than imposed by another. It is on that account that the study draws from Freire's theoretical argument that communication and ideas are not privileges of a few individuals, and therefore the definition of concepts (in this case poverty) cannot be a function of a few, as that amounts to robbing others of their knowledge and communicative abilities.

In addition, Freire (1994) has drawn from Marx's (1844) vocabulary that human welfare cannot be measured only in terms of material needs. This proposition is further advanced by Baker (1996) in Brocks (2001), who borrows from Freire. Baker (1996) indicates that that the concept of policy at the individual level needs to be read within context, where individuals adjust according to their local realities and therefore 'policy [at individual level] is never made once and for all' (Baker, 1996, p.27). A key aspect of Freire's proposition relevant to this study is his argument that individuals are naturally ascribed with relevant capabilities to manoeuvre local realities and are capable of identifying solutions to their problems outside development institutions. An analysis of such conceptualisation contributes to the debate about the relevance and impact of the institutionalised poverty reduction framework. Cooke and Kothari (2001) further caution that the more people interact with project activities (cf. Rogers, 1983; MD, 2000; Sachs, 2005) the more their needs are shaped by institutional practices, thus creating an externally influenced lifestyle which often is not locally sustainable. This proposition by Baker (1996) points to the need to understand the relevance of locking poverty reduction within time frames and measurable material outcomes (e.g. halving poverty by 2015).

To study the dynamics that constitute the constraints and opportunities of participation, as proposed in Freire's (1994) theory, the study draws inspiration from the sociological position held by Giddens (1984) who indicates that actions performed by human agents are a process rather than a totality of externally driven goals, reasons, intentions and activities. The point of departure for such an analysis is that individuals are in the villages at the level where the problems of living conditions are both lived and defined. As Waisbord in Hemer and Tufte (2005) observes, the important form of participation is 'self-management' – a concept that implies the right to freedom to determine self. These authors concur that empowerment associated with project participation serves to justify the activity of outside agencies, ignoring the function of autonomous individual and self-empowerment (Stirrat, 1997). Attention is therefore given to the extent that every day activities are not limited to or outcomes of contact with development projects, but a manifestation of several factors. Humans are organically multifaceted and duly characterised by several identities such as age, class, gender, race, religion and others imposed by a variety of local factors and thereby dispute the western model of democratic participation popularised by Habermas (1990).

4.5 Conclusion

As discussed in this chapter, the selection of the theoretical frameworks of global governance, hegemony and critical participatory approaches and other related concepts was based on the premise that there are essential components in the way reality is constructed. The central argument is that development ideas are social constructs scripted by actors who use global governance platforms to pursue their interests. Through the application of the theories herein, the study seeks to understand how ideas shape discourse and the narratives that dominate the implementation of MDGs in Malawi and Zambia. The decision to use these theoretical frameworks stems from the realisation that issues of words, language and internal development policy (McQuail, 1994) have a strong influence on behavioural patterns of a society (participation) and are therefore susceptible to the whims of power. For lack of its own disciplinary grounding, communication for development, in its current conventional format has historically been associated with ideas similar to those in today's neoliberal agenda, often associated with globalisation (Pieterse, 2001). Where communication is applied for social orientation, especially for development, a crosscutting cultural aspect raises key concerns regarding the use of knowledge in the exercise of power and the reinforcement of hegemonic values in society (McQuail, 1994).

In a context where policy arenas are congested with material interests and powerful actors use ideas to govern, the chapter attempted to identify opportunities for participation outside structures of power. Scholars such as Foucault (2003), Derrida in Newman (2005), Marx and Engels (1989), Freire (1986) and others have offered useful insights with a view to reformulating apposite communication theory without reference to conventional development. Ashley (1981) offers means to securing freedom from institutional constraints imposed by conventional development, with Communication for Development applied to rescue the 'self' out of fixed identities often linked to materialism. This reasoning is derived from Freire's (1986) emancipatory communication theory on the idea that self-ownership is achieved through individual freedom and autonomy. Unlike a number of prestigious sources (Abrahamsen, 2006; Escobar, 1991; Cleaver in Cooke and Uma, 2001) who argue that external knowledge is part of the problem, the line pursued in this study is that it is not knowledge in itself, but the way power imposes itself onto communities. Power acquired by way of locally driven initiatives has an empowering effect along Freire's (1986) liberation and emancipatory ideas. In addition, such power can be deployed to acquire external knowledge to compensate for what is missing. This chapter has presented the theoretical frameworks and how they relate to the study. The next chapter discusses methodological approaches applied in the study. A combination of methods, including discourse, narrative and interpretive analysis were also used. Their justification is also offered in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: Methodology

5.1 Introduction

This is a study of policies as texts, messages and ideas and their relationship to social practices. It analyses how language operates within the realm of power relations. It is a study about words and the world (Freire and Macedo, 1987) and how the UN communication for Development strategy – as a behaviour and social change tool – connects with ideas in the MDGs. This study applies qualitative methods of analysis and this chapter introduces, explains and justifies the use of document analysis, qualitative interviews, including methods of data analysis.

This study applies a policy space analysis by Brock et al. (2004) to investigate the participatory opportunities and moments for different actors but mainly focusing on the governments and the villagers in policy formulation and implementation of MDG-related projects. To achieve this, this study relies largely on Brock et al.'s (2004) policy space analysis, to identify which actors have access to or participated in which policy spaces and with what level of influence in the cross section of policy hierarchy. It considers as actors, those who take part in policy formulation and implementation of MDGs-related plans and projects at all levels.

The goal in applying the policy-space analysis is to establish whose ideas shape the discourses in national and local spaces, from NGOs to government spaces before tracking the implications of such ideas on national planning processes and local behaviour. This is taking into account that actors hold positions and interests, belong to constituencies and therefore their discursive contribution to policies exercises agency (power) reflects interests of their networks. The relationship between ideas, communication and behaviour is well documented in the field of sociology (cf. Gerber and Linda; 2010). Critical theorists such as Cox (1987) have added their voice on the connection between ideas, political and economic interests.

As a point of departure, this study takes off from the common assumption that to participate in policy spaces is to influence (cf. Chambers, 1997; cf. Brock, 2004) but does not limit the understanding of participation to those spaces as human activity also occurs outside structures of power. In that regard, this study refers to policy spaces as any platform, arena, opportunity or moment where "poverty discourses and policy actors interact" (Brock et al., 2004, p.17) across power relations, governed by rules of practice which determine who participates with what effects on policy. The study tracks through the hierarchy of spaces from the individual villager, communities, local and national government platforms, including the same structures for NGOs on how the UN Communication for Development strategies facilitate the implementation of the MDG-related planning and projects (cf. Soederberg, 2007; Brock et al, 2004). In doing so, the goal is to assess available participatory opportunities at global level and in the localisation of the MDGs from the villages to national level in Malawi and Zambia as member states of the UN system. Fischer (2001) and Grindle and Thomas's (1991) categorisation of policy spaces into three relevant spheres – the closed, open and legislative (cf. Heclo, 1978), is useful in identifying the different policy streams and the views they feed into the mainstream policy spaces. Policy spaces, according to these authors are moments in which interventions provide opportunities to reconfigure the relationship between actors and policies. Used in this context, policy space analysis method provides the lenses through which to analyse the policy infra-structure as it makes it easier to break down the policy process into easily observable elements (Brock et al., 2004).

With the policy structure and analysis of ideas handy, this study proceeds to apply a critical discourse analysis on the policy documents, including the MDG resolution, the UN Communication for Development strategy, PRSP and Malawi and Zambia national poverty reduction plans between 2011 and 2015. The goal is to establish how the concepts of participation and poverty reduction are conceptualised and framed with whose interests and with what effects on the national governments and the villagers. Special attention is given to how power influences meanings of words and concepts and how this imposes a certain worldview on poverty and the practice of participation. Finally, qualitative interviews with the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) radio and Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (the Development Broadcasting unit[31]), the Ministries of planning, UNDP resident coordination, Water for Kids (Zambia), Millennium Promise Alliance (Malawi) and focus group discussion with Kamaila and Mwandama Villagers in Zambia and Malawi respectively, are used with the goal of examining how policy narratives are translated into practice.

[31] The Development Broadcasting unit generates and provides content to the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation radio one and other community radio stations across the country. Development Broadcasting Unit (DBU) has also set up a network of Radio Listening Clubs to generate content for radio development radio programmes such as Village Voice which presents through drama, music, poetry and prose, a priority problem the members have identified after community consultations: the village voice is an invitation to a service provider to fill the gap; this is played to the appropriate service provider who is then invited to visit the community. It also includes Dialogue - which connects the service provider and the community, and Action Update - recorded by the Radio Listening Club on progress update. These programmes are edited for a national and community audience.

5.2 Qualitative research method

This study investigates policies as texts and as carriers of messages and ideas, especially how they link with behaviours and social practices. It is an analysis of how language operates within the realms of power relations and for that reason, this study relies on predominantly qualitative methods of inquiry and analysis. The strength of applying qualitative methods is their ability to intellectually engage with theory and to explore intricate literary textures and how they connect with human behaviour and practices (Creswell, 2003; Miles and Huberman, 1994). This approach was useful where there was a persistent requirement to examine the policy documents in question, relating to their discursive positions and their interaction with behaviour and cultures in Malawi and Zambia (Huberman and Miles, 1994). Qualitative methods were relevant in exploring the diversity of social and policy issues about well-being and the MDGs. This is because the method is grounded on the reasons and ways of how policy decisions are arrived at before they are transmitted to inform behaviour at grassroots (Huberman and Miles, 1994; Creswell, 2003). As the concern is to understand the link between policy and practice, qualitative methods of data collection were relevant in providing ways of systematically comparing policy positions, meanings and practices (Shank, 2002), including how villagers in Malawi and Zambia make sense of their lived experience (Michael, 2008; Denzin and Lincoln (2000).

5.2.1 Explaining the case study element of the research

While this study broadly applies the qualitative research method, there are two cases – the two villages in Malawi and Zambia – which are used as the unit of analysis. Nevertheless, these two villages are not the main object of inquiry. As mentioned earlier, this study is about policies as texts, messages and ideas and their relationship with power and social practices (Freire and Macedo, 1987). It is an analysis of how language operates in the MDGs and the UN Communication for Development within the realm of power relations. In using the two villages as units of analysis to undertake this study, I take advice from Robert Stake (1995) to explain how the policy documents under study interact with the villagers within the domain of poverty reduction. Stake (1995) categorises case studies into three types – intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. The intrinsic case has the objective of exploring a phenomenon with less or no interest in building, extending or explaining theory, while in the instrumental case, the case itself or the unit of analysis is secondary to understanding the phenomenon under study. The collective case study, with similarities of the instrumental case, can also be extended to other cases. This study is an example of an instrumental case study because of its focus on policies and how they interact with the villagers in poverty reduction. While it is important to establish the social dynamics of the villages, it is not the ultimate aim. It is part of the means to understand the extent to which the MDGs projects and the UN Communication for Development strategy influence social dynamics of the villages, hence making the findings of this study easily generalizable.

5.2.2. Document analysis

To achieve the objectives of this study, an analysis of how participation and poverty reduction are formulated and framed in the MDG resolution, Malawi and Zambia national poverty reduction plans and the UN Communication for Development strategy is central. Qualitative analysis enabled an in-depth analysis of both visible and hidden meanings of thematic concepts such as poverty, participation and the role of communication for development. Data on these themes was collected and analysed to understand how ideas frame operational meanings of words.

Although this study also drew from other policy documents for historical perspective, such as the International Development Strategy of the 1970s to deepen analysis, its primary units of analysis are the UN MDG resolution, the UN Communication for Development strategy, PRSP and Malawian and Zambian national MDGs plans for the period 2011 to 2015 (Corbin and Straus, 2008). In focusing on these policy documents, this study assumes that since the UN system only adopted the Communication for Development strategy for the MDG framework in 2007, it could only have been incorporated and applied between 2011 and 2015 in Malawi and Zambia. Drawing from Bowen (2009), these documents as policy position encapsulate certain assumptions about development, which have implications on how communication is used in implementing the MDGs and the practices it imposes on those seen as poor. Such meanings are explained in the context of power. It is with this understanding that this study considered policies to be outcomes of Cox's (1987) critical thinking and the Foucauldian views on the relationship between ideas, knowledge and power. Fairclough (1992) has also added his voice is highlighting the causal relationship between discourse and societal behaviour because in his view, discourse shapes social structures of power relations and is the basis for sustaining hegemony or for instigating social change. This makes it imperative to examine the proposed link between the MDGs and the UN Communication for Development strategy.

The historical discourse analysis was used as an important component of critical discourse analysis to examine how the MDGs framework, especially the texts that define poverty derive their meanings from other texts such as the field of labour relations and economics linked together through intertextuality (Fairclough, 1992). Read on its own, the MDGs framework conveys development and poverty reduction as an independent policy position, but as this study reveals, it is only when it is read through the lenses of intertextuality that the hidden connections, meanings and causes drawn from other fields of study are revealed. Historical discourse analysis, as a method, is premised on a poststructuralist approach to critically examine texts, words and facts that form discourses. In rejecting the notion of historical knowledge as being neutral and objective, it makes it imperative to track the historical meanings of facts, statistics and interpretation of phenomenon. This study applies to question the dollar-a-day conceptualization of poverty which seems to have been taken for granted over many decades (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). By delving into the depth of meaning formation, this study's desire is to get to the bottom of how key themes are historically defined. Therefore the temptation to reflect on the history of concepts that underlie the poverty narratives and how they have positioned themselves in the UN system is irresistible. For example, the dollar-a-day as a measure of poverty, as noted in Chapter three, relates to consumption in the field of labour relations studies and production in economic studies with both being subfields of economics. The interpretation of these narratives facilitated the correlation between the contextual and real meanings.

Analysing discourses that frame the MDGs framework within the domain of power enabled the examination of relationships between discursive events such as the formulation of the MDGs and other processes foregrounding their adoption. This was necessary to examine how texts and narratives are organized to support the interests of different actors from various policy streams. Adopting this approach made it possible to demonstrate the multi-function of language in conveying interest-laden ideas, constructing new understanding of poverty, which omits or erases the realities in Malawi and Zambia while facilitating the translation of the dominant ideas into practices in the villages. Analysis proceeded by exploring the construction of storylines and sequencing of concepts. Within that discursive context, actors and participants whose roles are highlighted are revealed. This study was able to navigate, through the convergence between Fairclough's (2003) critical discourse analysis and Cox's (1987) Critical theory how a social discourse becomes an arena for ideological production and reproduction and how the discourse of development serves political interests (Bryan, 2004). To complement the strengths of the document and discourse analysis method, qualitative interviews and focus groups discussions were also used.

5.2.3 Qualitative interviews

To collect data relevant to addressing the objectives of this study, interviews were conducted with respondents from the UN system in Malawi and Zambia. The UN system represents the global governments, and its country offices are charged with monitoring the implementation of the MDGs and in some cases it takes the lead in national planning processes. Interviews were also conducted with Government Ministries of Planning, who are both national policy-makers and implementers. In focusing on these respondents, the goal was to establish an understanding of the planning spaces and processes, assess the source of the dominant poverty knowledge, identify opportunities for grassroots participation and unravel factors that influence the entire process.

During the initial planning of the interviews with media organisations (those who are knowledge interlocutors between the villages and the development institutions), this study considered national radio stations to be key sources of information, as they interpret government policies through a wide range of programmes in local languages. However, during interviews in Malawi, it was noted that the villagers were much closer to a Chanco radio station, a local community radio station, attached to the Chancellor University in Zomba, Malawi, which collects stories from the villagers and the Millennium Village Project and broadcasts them back to the communities. However, in Zambia, villagers in Kamaila, due to their proximity to Lusaka the capital, indicated that they listened to Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation Radio One which broadcasts in local languages, for development information. Interviews were also conducted with representatives of the NGOs operating in the villages to get their views on a wide range of topics from planning, participation, use of media and their assessment of progress.

In the process of collecting data from these respondents, the study applied both face-to-face and electronic mail interviews for different groups of respondents depending on the context and their choices (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Fontana and Frey, 2000). For example, there were challenges in fixing face-to-face interviews with government ministries and some UN officials and interview questions had to be emailed to the respective respondents, including follow-up questions. In some cases, some respondents requested written questions so that they could also keep a written record of their response.

In all these deliberations, qualitative interviews were useful tools to solicit views on how policies and decisions are made in different layers of policy spaces and how the village decision-making processes interface with institutional processes. Part of the goal of these interviews was to gain an insight into available policy spaces including the degree of participation by different actors in each of the different policy space levels, including their accessibility by and influence of the villagers. Data collected from these interviews enabled the researcher to draw inferences on who participated where and with what influence, including drawing the conclusion that although the individual and the villagers were neglected as policy spaces, they retained their power and knowledge against the run of the conventional development discourse.

Unstructured closed and open-ended interview questions were vital in engaging with the respondents and they enabled the researcher to analyse the respondents' emotional reactions about their thoughts as they narrated their experiences (Patton, 1987). Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were important in soliciting respondents' ideas and thoughts, and especially the villagers' perceptions on well-being and their fears and concerns in their own words rather than in the words of policies (cf. Ezzy, 2002). Responses from the interviews were analysed alongside the policy documents under study, which served the important function of triangulation. To manage the flow of the discussions, this study followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) advice to use interview guides which framed the discussion within key themes and concepts before starting the inquiry. This minimised bias and separated the views of the researcher from those of the respondents as suggested in Pickering (2008, p.106).

5.3 Focus group interviews

To complement data from institutional and individual interviews and the document analysis, this study applied the focus group discussion method with villagers in Mwandama and Kamaila in Malawi and Zambia respectively for purposes of triangulation. For focus groups, different authors recommend between 6 and 12 participants per group (Krueger, 2000; Langford, Schoenfeld, and Izzo, 2002; Morgan, 1997; Johnson and Christensen, 2004; Bernard, 1995). Convenience sampling was partly used to bring together villagers, in consultation with the NGO and the village leadership. I took advice from Lecch and Onwuegbuzie (2007, p.116) that "sample sizes in qualitative research should not be too small to achieve data saturation, theoretical saturation, or informational redundancy and not too large to undertake a deep, case-oriented analysis". Statistical inference was not the main objective, but the results according to Maxwell (1992) are adequate for generalisation. Interviews with villagers were conducted in both Chewa and English where any of these languages applied. The researcher possesses a fair understanding of the Chewa language.

In the Mwandama Millennium Village project in Malawi, the group was split in two based on their areas of focus. The first group comprised six members of four men and two women, including the village leadership who together formed the village project management team. The second group comprised seven respondents (four women and three men) who were mainly involved in the business section[32] of the project. While the splitting of the group was not part of the initial plan, it helped to have focused discussions on different issues which are part of the MV project. The scenario was different in Kamaila, Zambia where interview discussions with the villagers happened in one group made up of seven men and one woman ranging from community leadership to ordinary members of the village. The proportion of men to women in the groups also represented the gender dynamics in the villages where men tended to get more involved in decision-making than women. In both villages, the focus group interview method used semi-structured questions, largely to spark discussions based on the list of key themes drawn up by the researcher in the form of an interview guide (Kumar, 1987).

The focus group interviews in both villages yielded information on the villagers' general perceptions on issues related to how they define their well-being and their aspirations, including the role of social communication in their cultural ecosystem under study. In the case of Malawi, issues of participation and the role of traditional leadership in moderating village conversations were evident (Punch1998, p. 177). While there were challenges in Malawi, where women still shy away from contributing to discussions in the presence of men, the research ensured that women were given opportunities to contribute. Focus group discussions in both villages drew a lot from the interactions among the group members than with the researcher. One-on-one interviews with a few selected villagers helped to get detailed insights into issues that would have been left unaddressed in group discussions. Direct conservations with the villagers were instrumental to gathering data on their perspectives on poverty, well-being and different aspects around these concepts. This study was able to gather knowledge from the villagers' point of

[32] The MVP projects run a warehouse, retail shop, maize grinding mill, a purchase for progress initiative the UN World Food Programme and other small scale ventures.

view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, uncover their previous lived world before they were co-opted into project activities by the NGOs and their governments (Kvale, 1997; McNamara, 1999). These views formed part of the basis to establish an understanding of the role of communication in influencing the villagers' behaviour, views and attitudes, as well as how these interact with NGOs and government policies. This was relevant in locating the function of communicating from both institutionally-driven development and internal dynamics of the villagers' understanding of well-being.

Most importantly, villagers listened to each other's contributions, and that was a source of new insights as they developed their ideas (Kitzinger, 1994; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994) thereby enabling more data to be produced through participants' interaction with each other as well as the researcher (Pickering, 2008). Group discussion brought to the surface several aspects of their ways of life which were not always easy to extract if the focus had been limited to the MDGs only. Data emerged from discussions which, in many ways, offered new reflections of social perceptions of their well-being and ways of life. Group dynamics and reactions to questions allowed the researcher to observe feelings, expressions, perceptions, beliefs and traditions of the people.

5.4 Data interpretation methods

The relationship between global governance institutions, the state and the villager, which is analysed through investigating participatory approaches in global policy frameworks, including framing of concepts, is examined from the broader context of social relations. A detailed critical analysis of institutions and development theory, and factors that influenced institutions and theories are discussed in Chapter 3 and 4. Part of the goal of this chapter is to draw critical attention to the rudimentary frameworks of the global policy formulation structure and processes and to identify the possibilities and constraints impeding participation for governments and the villagers in Malawi and Zambia.

The MDGs framework is a response to what was perceived as deepening poverty in developing countries during the late 1990s, a period thought to be characterized by a widening gap between rich and developing countries. Post-development literature has blamed the deepening poverty on the World Bank and IMF policies. Zambia is among the countries that had adopted SAPs in the 1990s, which left more than 70 per cent of its people living below the poverty line. On the other hand, Malawians were believed to be poor due to economic stagnation. Together, the people of Malawi and Zambia were among the roughly 300 million thought to be living in poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa. Addressing these problems would, as this study argues, require individual effort, but then according to the UN system, a global solution was necessary to address all global poverty related problems.

A collective approach would apply at all levels; taking into account that deepening poverty during that time was believed to be prevalent in three continents[33], which justified a global approach in the form of MDGs. This is the basis on which global policies derive their consensus and secure a universalized poverty reduction, participation and empowerment discourse that inheres in the UN system. In order to zoom into these issues the study uses critical policy space analysis, critical discourse analysis and narrative analysis as data interpretation methods. In this section, theoretical background, purpose and justification of meeting the objectives of this study are presented. An attempt is made to briefly explain the distinct stages and activities that take place when employing each method and how interpretive acts shape the analysis.

5.4.1 Critical policy space analysis

The study applied a policy space analysis to determine which actors accessed and contributed to which spaces with what capabilities to participate (cf. Heclo, 1978; Grindle and Thomas (1991) in Brock et al., 2004). In analysing participation, this study considered policy spaces to be sites of discourse production with communicative impact on defining policy directions and how policy is implemented in practice (Cox, 1987). Assessment of participation, in this context, was grounded on the assumption of equality of all member states enshrined in the UN Charter, described in Habermas's contested but ground-breaking communication action theory, as a public sphere, an arena for equal and democratic participation for member states. Analysis of documents that provided a detailed account of the history of the formulation of the policy document under study was instrumental in facilitating data collection. As discussed earlier, the strength of document analysis lies in its ability to systematically examine institutional policy spaces from which policies are formulated and texts derive their meanings.

This study approached data analysis from the international development policy perspective, particularly policy space analysis in order to identify moments or opportunities or lack thereof available to villagers in Malawi and Zambia to participate and effectively influence decisions

[33] In Africa, Asia and South America

that affect them. Analysis is foregrounded on the Foucauldian discourse analysis of public policy, specifically to explain the structures of global governance. The study relies on Foucault's ideas to unravel how Malawi and Zambia and other actors engaged and interacted and elaborates who did what in which spaces, before exploring the impact of each actor on policy formulation and implementation (Foucault, 1982). That is essential in revealing contradictions and dissonance in the narratives of participation and poverty reduction within the MDGs discourse.

That approach was relevant to the goals of this study because policies are often considered as manifestations of interests through texts, language and messages (Fairclough, 1989), and also decreed through government institutions (Gramsci, 1992) and transferred through communication for development. The combination of these three (interests, power and communication) have the effect of either maintaining or altering social order (Freire, 1983; Chambers, 1997). Therefore for purposes of this study, I consider the MDGs framework to be composed of messages which must be understood within a context of interests (Cox, 1981; Smith, 1995), thereby laying the foundation for questioning whose interests are being served by the MDGs (Cox, 1953). The ability to map the policy space infrastructure helped to critique and interrogate the notion of 'consensus' in both the adoption and ownership of the MDGs and their implementation within the confluence of contradicting positions on participation and poverty reduction. The concept of consensus is used as a baseline for critiquing participation from various dimensions – including equality, involvement, inclusion and consultation.

5.5 Critical Discourse Analysis

Linked to the above, analysis of how concepts are framed in the selected policy documents constitutes a fundamental element of this study. To do this, I applied critical discourse analysis to investigate the UN Communication for Development and MDGs, for an in-depth investigation of the relationship between texts, language, ideas and social practices (Fairclough, 1995). The use of critical discourse analysis as a method must not be confused with textual analysis as the latter is concerned with gathering information on how members of various cultures make sense of their world through text. In textual analysis, texts such as the documents are interpreted to understand how culture or people make sense of the world around them. In this study, I use critical discourse analysis to establish how social orders, dominance, and inequality are produced or reproduced, enacted through text in the context of global poverty reduction policy (van Dijk, 1985). In applying this methodology, I take advice from other critical theorists who have used it in media and language studies, sociology, psychology, development studies and many other such as Rasmussen, (1996), Fowler et al. (1979), Wodak (1996), Singh (1996) and several others. Central for these scholars' work is that language or text is a form of social practice and therefore means by which social relations are produced or reproduced and different interests are served. In addition, the primary strength of critical discourse analysis, which was broadly qualitative, was its ability to critically analyse and break down how the poverty problem is defined in the MDGs and the PRSP. Analysis of how poverty is defined or framed helped to shed light on the discursive poverty construction and to create a foundation for theorising the role of power in deciding meanings of words, phrases and concepts in relation to participation and empowerment. Starting analysis from the poverty problem definition was necessary for two reasons. Firstly, it enabled to build an understanding of how the concept is constructed and secondly, to explain how power makes use of such construction for social ordering based on a variety of 'scientific' facts, beliefs, and moral values.

As a point of departure, this study took the general view that policymaking is a process through which individuals and communities define meanings of their self-worth based on their context. In addition, Cobb and Ross (1997) remind us that policy formulation process is not neutral. The same view is advanced by Foucault (2002) who argues that policy is not an outcome of rationality because its evidence is created within structures of power which tend to assume the value of the truth. Through critical discourse analysis, it was possible to expose the disparities between what was known by the villagers and what is proposed by the institutions. This was made necessary by breaking down the poverty problem into easily observable elements, narratives and storylines which sustain the main themes in the MDGs and the UN Communication for development strategy. The main themes under study were examined, analysing how words were put together in statements of the MDGs and PRSP, focusing on how their meanings were aligned to a particular ideological position. The MDG Resolution carries with it many statements of intent with performative effects, semantic qualities and reinforcement, which together mobilize rhetorical constructions toward consensus and setting a certain reading of social texts on poverty reduction. The study dwelt on this strength to illustrate how words and statements facilitate the production of preferred meanings and their interpretation (cf. Foucault, 1972).

When applied to policies, texts, words and phrases, critical discourse analysis facilitated the examination of how themes as signifiers, are employed to pursue certain meanings in policies

(Fairclough, 1995). This study considers discourse as represented by texts and spoken communication and explores the ways in which discourse is shaped by social practices (Hajer, 1995). Breaking down the concepts into easily observable units was important for two reasons. Firstly, to reveal the uncontaminated reality of the villagers' lifestyles and secondly, to understand elements that constitute the discursively constructed poverty by the NGOs (Foucault, 2003). Subjecting definition of the poverty problem in the MDGs framework to critical discourse analysis was not only limited to investigating the role of power in influencing choices and decisions but it also sought the villagers' views on the subject of poverty and well-being.

With findings of the critical discourse analysis on the poverty problem definition finalised and made apparent, it was possible to identify the possibility of re-theorizing poverty and well-being from either an alternative view point or from the villagers' perspectives. By using this methodology, the study was able to explore the link between power, narratives, positions and identity formations regarding social practices. It aided analysis in Chapter 6, to examine how the collocation of words in the documents enables the reinforcement of policy positions which become frames of reference for thinking and practices.

For a critical analysis of how communication for development is used to implement the MDGs, I drew from Foucault (2003) who offers advice on how to interpret policies and statements as a form of decoding meanings that convey a preferred worldview by power to influence preferred behaviour patterns and practices. The first level effect of such meanings of statements is to create psychological schematic structures which manifest into practices, actions, choices, judgements, self-regulation and self-governance leading to a particular identity – an object of discourse (Foucault, 1972). For example, the UN Communication for Development is very clear on its model and intentions. Firstly, it is a top-down model with overriding themes of transferring knowledge, building capacities and transforming communities assumed to be underdeveloped. These themes are repeated several times, sometimes in different words and phrases, devices used to reinforce the preferred worldview on poverty, privileging such positions into a dominant body of knowledge while silencing that of the villagers. With this discursive identity established, through communication as a socialising agent, it was evident that the villagers and the governments became discursive objects ordained into a new social order. As a result, the discourse that creates the object becomes part of the frames of and practices through which it is managed and governed (ibid, 1972).

In using the qualitative methods of critical discourse analysis, I took advantage of their ability to ground analysis on a wide range of disciplines including literary studies, cultural studies and social sciences. These approaches were important in enabling analysis, specifically understanding socially constructed human practices. While critical discourse analysis has historically demonstrated its ability to be a stand-alone method, in order to ensure the policy positions in the documents under study are engaged with practices on the ground, this study adopted a combination of data analysis methods to provide a credible and comprehensive explanation on participation, empowerment and poverty reduction in these countries.

To examine the role of communication in influencing participation within the framework of the MDGs, this study relied on the role of discourse in identity construction and how such identity is ascribed roles and responsibilities. To establish how the discursive identity plays out in the MDGs, this study made use of three critical lenses – the contextual discourse, the poverty discourse and finally how these two lenses construct identity and allocation of roles. Contextual discourse allowed analysis of the policy spaces as arenas of discourse formation – the discourse from which interests assume the function of ideas – while the poverty discourse enabled examination of how interests influence the poverty problem definitions and solutions (van Dijk, 1985). According to Albert Einstein (1917), how a phenomenon is formulated into a problem, influences how it is solved. The goal here is not to look at poverty from a problem solving perspective but rather to examine how the MDG discourse identifies a certain way of lifestyle as a poverty problem upon which it prescribes solutions. Findings from the critical discourse analysis demonstrate that the MDGs present a certain form of poverty as a global problem. This is in fact an act of priority setting which justifies certain responses to certain actors and how the villager in Malawi and Zambia thinks and talks about the imposed poverty as a social concern. The third lens brought the MDG discourse and narratives into life by identifying how discourse allocates roles and responsibilities, which in turn define social identities and discursive participation through communication. The study views communication for development as a reinforcement and transmission of behaviours that sustain the identity constructed by the dominant discourse, notwithstanding the notion that individuals as members of the villages are heterogenic. In other words, the ways in which Malawians and Zambians are identified within the MDGs discourse ascribes their roles, which in turn characterise their participation and also have an effect on their social position. Breaking down the MDG framework into narratives, actors and roles was useful in revealing the hidden message behind the knowledge, intentions, agency and interests.

5.6 Narrative analysis

In order to make sense of the data gathered from qualitative interviews and focus groups, I used narrative analysis as one of the data interpretation methods (Reissman, 2008; 1994). According to Reissman (2008), narrative analysis is a study of stories or accounts of lived lives often of individuals, groups, societies, and cultures. The method allowed the researcher to listen, take notes and to observe non-verbal signs (cf. Connelly and Clandinin, 2000). In choosing this as a method, I drew from Connelly and Clandinin (1990) who argue that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually (interviews) and collectively (focus groups), lead storied lives enabling the researcher to listen and analyse the stories. This is where the subject of well-being, participation and the use of traditional media, become part of the reason to understand the relationship between conventional development knowledge and what prevails in the villages in Malawi and Zambia. From that perspective, the study documented narratives from the villagers on their cultural and historical background in relation to their ways of life. Investigations and data collection to explain the lives of individual villages, the collection of individuals' stories of their experiences, and meaning of those experiences and then understanding them was made possible through narration (Elbaz, 1991). It enabled the researcher to draw conclusions on the relationships not only between respondents and texts (development policy), but also between the MDGs policy positions and social reality in the villages (Franzosi, 1998).

In the context of this study, narrative analysis took an individual or a group as its object of analysis to investigate the story from their different perspectives. The stories from the villagers in Malawi and Zambia were about their past lived experiences and were told in a chronology of sequences, with common properties situated within the same discourse. While there is no consensus on the relevance of chronology of events and stories, Young (1987) argues that for consequential sequencing one event causes another in the narrative, although the events may not always be chronological (Reissman, 1987). Regardless, the most important aspect of narrative analysis is that the discourse contexts in which events are configured are in one temporary unit (focus groups) but within a plot. The MDG poverty reduction projects were viewed as plots in a story in this regard. Bruner (1987) identifies two types of cognition: paradigmatic, which operates by acknowledging elements as part of a category; and narrative, which operates by combining different elements into a story within a plot. The respondents in their respective countries designated the category, while development projects formed the narrative. Narrative-type inquiry facilitated the gathering of events as its data and used narrative analytic procedures to produce explanatory stories (ibid).

5.7 Positionality and self-reflexivity

In undertaking this study, the researcher was cognisant of issues to do with positionality and reflexivity. This awareness helped the researcher to manage marginalization, prejudice and differences in data representation and interpretation (cf. Nagar, 2002). The researcher understood reflexivity as the awareness and assessment of his involuntary contribution and influence on the research and the findings. As an individual, the researcher is also positioned by his present and past engagements with the UN system and other development organisations he may hold a view over (Chiseri-Strater, 2006). In addition, the researcher's orientation can also be influenced by gender, race, nationality and his interaction with the above institutions, which may influence his views on things (Keller, 1985). The researcher was aware that these influences tend to be revealed or concealed during the conception of a research problem, objectives, methodology, theory construction, and methodological understanding, through the creation of the narrative voice and overall writing of the research study.

The researcher is a Zimbabwean citizen, a country which shares a lot of historical and cultural background with Malawi and Zambia and having worked in the field of humanitarian aid and development for nearly two decades, covering these two countries among others, an attempt was made to conduct this study under negotiated spaces and practices of reflexivity, critical to positionality. The researcher approached this study, especially data collection with full awareness that he occupied a privileged position by virtue of being an employee of the UN system and being an outsider academic for the villagers, which may have drawn demarcations between the researcher and the villagers (Chavez, 1978). My awareness of these helped navigate what Chavez describes as the insider bias which might have influenced my view of different knowledge and culture (Ibid, p. 475).

The researcher followed the advice of Chavez (1978) to manage the outsider perspective which enabled an objective analysis of the accounts provided by the villagers, but the insiders' perspective, mainly the researcher's prior knowledge of Malawi and Zambia helped to deepen insights about poverty reduction and implementation of several projects. During the researcher's previous engagement with other organisations in Malawi and Zambia, he had been involved in numerous poverty reduction project activities, a situation which inspired him to undertake this study, largely to question several approaches, but mainly participation. Therefore, the insider, who would otherwise project bias, is fundamental in achieving a detailed understanding of poverty issues in the two countries (Chavez, 2008). In addition, being a member of staff for UN systems at the time of finalising this study, exposed the researcher to the ways in which the organisation carries out its business, including the different policy spaces, planning processes, plus first-hand information on how the UN system functions. This echoes Chiseri-Strater (2006) who argues that being reflexive about one's positionality is not to 'self-indulge' but to reveal the researcher's involvement in knowledge production. In the case of this study, the researcher considers his positionality as a benefit, because he is a specialist in the area of media and communication, and thus has the advantage of basic knowledge. This makes the researcher somewhat of an authority in the area (Banks, 1998: 8). Therefore, the researcher's positionality or subjectivity cannot be viewed in the context of bias but as an advantage that comes with a combination of experience and the depth of knowledge of the subject matter, which is a crucial form of repositioning.

5.8 Conclusion

This study combined qualitative methods of data collection and analysis to examine both the global policy texts and the global governance contexts framing communication and the MDGs. Therefore, the research structure, including data collection and processing, were designed to meet the objectives of this study. Applying these methods to analyse poverty, communication and participation within the context of actor-interests and power relationships, is important in determining the framing of the concepts under study and how these through communication translate into practice. The next chapter presents the findings of document analysis.

SECTION III: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Chapter Six: Framing poverty, the actors and participation

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings of document analysis of the UN Communication for Development strategy, the MDG resolution, the national MDGs plans of Malawi and Zambia for the period 2011 to 2015 and PRSP. Reference is also made to Malawi and Zambia national plans from 2000 to 2010 to deepen the analysis. This chapter examines the global governance context in which the UN Communication for Development and the MDGs are conceptualised, formulated and adopted. It also seeks to examine the discourses and narratives that frame the poverty reduction agenda in these documents, largely because they are attached to the MDGs – international development policies formulated, adopted and implemented within the global governance arena of the UN system.

Before examining the main themes which are promoted in these documents, including critically analysing how the discourses embedded in them frame poverty and its solutions, this chapter begins by setting the scene through a policy-space-actor analysis by Brock et al. (2004). This is in order to unpack the global policy architecture and processes giving rise to the UN Communication for Development strategy and the MDGs. As stated in Chapter 5, policy spaces are moments in which interventions provide opportunities to reconfigure the relationship between actors and policies. The policy space analysis method therefore provides the lenses to magnify the policy infrastructure by breaking it down into easily observable elements (Brock et al., 2004). The objective is to identify which actors have or do not have access to particular policy spaces and to examine their discursive contribution to the MDGs formulation. This is significant in light of Brock et al.'s, observation that policy actors "hold opinion and interest" (2004:9); that policy spaces are arenas of discourse production and that policies are ideas representing actors' interests.

The third section is an analysis of the discursive implications of MDGs narratives on Malawian and Zambian national policies, looking at how they are transformed into practice. The chapter concludes by arguing that the poverty reduction agenda which is the same as the social transformation agenda in the UN Communication for Development strategy and MDGs, is actually a strategy of co-opting developing nations into one world order, perpetually displacing communities from their local knowledge and ways of life.

6.2 MDGs formulation: the actors and the global spaces

Since the adoption of the MDGs as a global development framework, participation has been the benchmark for assessing efficiency in reducing poverty, most specifically in developing countries (e.g. Malawi and Zambia). According to the UNSG's report (2010), achieving the goal of halving the number of people living on less than a dollar a day by 2015, requires strengthening participation through effective implementation of the UN communication strategy. This thinking is also reinforced in the World Bank and IMF's PRSP, which prioritises three themes – ownership, empowerment, and participation as enablers of poverty reduction. In both the MDGs and PRSP, participation is framed in various ways but mainly as involving the poor in making decisions that concern them. In this process, communication is considered vital (UN, 2010).

Despite the fact that participation faces definitional vagueness, this study uses the concept to refer to means, moments and opportunities available to Malawians and Zambians to exercise agency in deciding their lives and pursuing their wellbeing at all levels (cf. Cohen and Uphoff 1980). In its presentation of findings, this study will not limit analysis of participation to policy implementation activities alone, but will also investigate policy formulation processes as well. The first point to highlight is that the MDG framework is a product of global governance, adopted and endorsed in an open and legislative space (Brock et al., (2004; Heclo, 1978) at the UN General Assembly in 2000 where all member states were assumed to be equal participants. The MDGs framework derives its international legitimacy from having been unanimously adopted by all UN system member states, including Malawi and Zambia, through a process described as consensus. Underlying the participatory narrative in this process are two key assumptions. Firstly, that the adoption by all member states signifies participation and secondly that heads of states are representatives of their citizens thereby subsuming individual participation.

This study proceeds to identify key actors and how their interests manifest in ideas making up the MDGs discourse as well as how they translate into social and behaviour change through the UN Communication for Development strategy. Chapter 2 gave a historical account of the MDGs, and the focus here is the theorisation of spaces and processes. Early stages of the MDGs formulation process as documented by Hulme (2007), illustrate how the goals transitioned from the International Development Targets (IDTs) after their conception by the Utstein group, a “closed space” comprising a group of female European ministers. The interests of this group, formed in the 1990s but formally established in 1998, are illustrated in its aim of correcting the political conditions influencing the flow of aid (DAC, 1996) and in reinvigorating the development aid. This is in order to attract donors frustrated by the backlash on multinational corporations, stemming from developing countries that suffered the effects of SAPs. Given the composition of the Utstein group and their participants, the objectives of their mission could therefore not be characterised as neutral, nor was it intended to address poverty. The first objective speaks to Western countries’ foreign aid policies in relation to their home-country’s political and capital interests in those developing countries revolting after the effects of SAPs. On the other hand, improving aid efficiency by reinvigorating the waning donor confidence justified a new poverty reduction global policy purportedly to restore confidence among donors by wooing developing countries into the fold. It can be concluded that the ultimate goal of the Utstein group was to reconcile and mediate between donors and the unhappy developing countries which had suffered the effects of SAPs through a new global policy.

These observations make it instructive to elaborate the implications of the access challenges imposed by these interests on Malawi and Zambia. Firstly, as a group only made up of female European Ministers, I consider the Utstein group to be a political and closed interest policy space (cf. Heclo, 1978 in Fischer, 2001). In the case of the MDGs, the group allotted itself the responsibility of authoring a global blueprint in seclusion, marginalising countries such as Malawi and Zambia whose poverty it supposedly sought to address (cf. Brock et al., 2004). The non-neutrality of the group operating in the closed-shop policy discussions is betrayed by their status as politically elected and appointed politicians in their countries. These actors represented the economic and political interests of constituencies in their home countries, thereby making the initial phase of the MDGs formulation political. The content of their ideas compromised the agenda of reducing poverty as discussed earlier, the goal was never to address poverty but to bring back the development industry to the international finance institutions.

The second stage of the MDG formulation is a mixture of policy spaces from the technical level closed policy spaces before the draft blue print was presented to the UN system as open and legislative space. The MDGs changed hands for further refinement, to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in the late 1990s (cf. Hulme, 2009; 2010 & OECD, 2006). Operating as a technical organisation, the DAC fits with the criteria of a neutral and technical space even though it operates in a closed-shop group. The neutrality of the DAC is compromised by the fact that it reports to a supranational organisation, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), whose membership holds economic and political interests around the world, including developing countries. On that basis, the researcher concluded that though the DAC acts as a neutral face of the poverty reduction agenda, its neutrality is compromised by the economic and political interests of the Utstein group whose members are also part of the OECD (which is hegemonic). The technical and scientific character of the DAC creates an impression of neutrality of knowledge which enabled the MDGs to be seen as a new approach to addressing poverty (cf. Leysens, 2008; Cox, 1983). In drawing this conclusion, the researcher derives from the OECD's mission statement that it serves as a "venue and voice" to pursue economic and political interests of the European Union members (who in this case double as donors targeted by the Utstein group), a major stakeholder in the OECD[34] (cf. Cox, 1981). Handing over of the IDT by the Utstein group to the DAC may therefore be in line with the group's objective of reconfiguring the global aid industry in order to attract donor interest by assuring the "private sector" an open market and a conducive operating environment within developing countries. These narratives will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

A similar pattern was observed when the OECD/DAC and the World Bank/IMF processes converged in 1996 culminating in *Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation Report (*1996) outlining development targets that formed the core of the MDGs. The process, again, assumed a hybrid of closed and open technical spaces creating an impression of a neutral pseudo-public policy space. The World Bank and IMF as membership institutions, theoretically assume the open democratic policy spaces to member states, but also as an affiliate to the UN system. Technical "working committees drawn from a range of UN bodies"[35] led the drafting of the *We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century (2001)* report process. Where the UN system was supposed to act as an open public policy space for its member states and facilitate dialogue in identifying national and global poverty priorities, it instead "privatised" its spaces and ceded the formulation process to

[34] During the formulation of the MDGs, the OECD was largely controlled by the European Union (EU) but it is historically known to promote the USA neoliberal policies such as the Marshall Plan, spreading these ideas in East European countries after the Second World War (DAC, 2006). Framing of poverty reduction, in such a context, can be read in the context of the EU's mandate of advancing and safeguarding the economic and political interests of its member states and not Malawi, Zambia and other developing countries. [http://europa.eu/about-eu/index_en.htm]

technical experts who were linked to the IMF and World Bank. They produced a global blue print that promotes participation, while paradoxically excluding developing countries (Brock et al., 2004; Fischer, 2001). Malloch-Brown[36], the former head of UNDP for example, describes the MDGs as a nuclear fission, a negotiated mixture of varied and competing narratives which involve the human-rights based approach and human development models. He also added that the MDGs have accommodated the World Bank pro-market structural adjustment strategy; and the target-setting mind-set of rich donors in the DAC of the OECD. This therefore, makes the MDGs a "cooked up [discourse] by experts in a backroom – or basement"[37]. These policy positions put together do not point to a discourse that prioritised poverty reduction but rather, one that promoted western ideas. Ultimately, neoliberalism was the biggest winner as decision-making was dominated by its actors while fencing Malawi and Zambia out of all the important policy spaces, save the adoption of the actual policies over which they had little or no control.

The UN Communication for Development strategy followed a similar closed space pattern with participants drawn from the United Nations Secretariat, specialised UN agencies, UN programmes and Funds, the World Bank and OECD/DAC, as well as academics, practitioners and other experts in the field of Communication for Development. The dominant policy spaces denied access to developing countries both physically and epistemologically, except for the last moment of adoption. What is deduced from this analysis is that the pre-programmed UN system policy space structure constrains developing countries from accessing relevant policy spaces, which makes these countries passive receivers instead of producers of discourses. Each of the policy spaces discussed above represents interests and those of their political constituencies (cf. Brock et al., 2004). The outcome of such a hierarchical 'privatised' policy structure leads to an imposition of discourses on Malawians and Zambians through the process of endorsement of the MDGs and the subsequent alignment of nation plans to them. Given that these discourses are conveyed from the top to the bottom, local level decision-making is undermined or confined. Weiss (1986) and Baker (1996) have postulated that policy-making at the local level is not a once-and-for-all activity but an ongoing process as people adjust to their local realities. In the next section, I discuss how interests are enmeshed with power, highlighting the ways in which this serves to frame and control knowledge.

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[36] The Guardian newspaper, 16 November, 2012 (Mark Malloch-Brown: developing the MDGs was a bit like nuclear fission)

[37] The Guardian newspaper, 16 November, 2012 (Mark Malloch-Brown: developing the MDGs was a bit like nuclear fission)

6.3 The knowledge parameters

The discussion so far has illustrated that policy spaces are arenas for discourse production. It has also demonstrated how interests conspire with power to impose ideas, thus conditioning practices and behaviour (cf. Leysens, 2008). In this section, I discuss how powerful interests impose preferred modes of knowledge and how that knowledge constrains alternative ideas. As a starting point, the knowledge resulting from the texts under study constructs a notion of a global collective when viewing poverty and its possible solutions. However, it can be noted that by doing so, it is discursively imposing thinking parameters on what ideas are acceptable or not. Firstly, the MDGs framework is born out of a context of pre-defined knowledge tools, which set these parameters through frames of thought. These frames of thought, which come as tools, are a composite set of concepts, formulas and explanations, which prescribe how poverty should be understood and addressed. In my analysis, I consider knowledge parameters to be information that attempts to define poverty and its solutions (cf. Brock, et al., 2004). From the documents under study, I will focus on four knowledge categories: 1) the eight goals (setting the agenda); 2) the economic income as a measure of poverty (the indicator); 3) the logical framework (the process), and 4) PRSP (the enabler).

The eight goals are a constellation of several assumptions regarding the poverty problem, which in the case of the MDGs, set out a global agenda on priorities of how to address it on behalf of developing countries including the two countries which are the focus of this study (cf. Entman, 1993). As noted earlier, Malawi and Zambia were not involved in the formation of the MDG idea, even though they were part of member states who adopted the MDGs at the UN General Assembly. The notion of adoption needs to be understood within the context of power relations. By being member states, Malawi and Zambia succumb to and cede their decision-making powers to the UN system. Secondly, as explained in Gordenker and Weiss (1996), the UN system possesses global governmental power and exercises authority over its member states, especially on matters of global importance such as poverty. Thirdly, Chapter 3 illustrated how the UN system has been hijacked by capital interests since the rise of neoliberalism in the late 1980s. The net effect of these, is that Malawi and Zambia and other developing countries have limited or no choice in formulating policies relevant to their local context as they are forced to align with global policy positions. By adopting the MDGs, Malawi and Zambia agreed to comply with the requirement of the MDGs and the conditions mentioned above.

The second category of knowledge frame is $1.25 a day as a benchmark for assessing poverty against which countries measure their poverty reduction efforts. Collocating income and poverty prohibits alternative dimensions of understanding poverty and wellbeing in different cultural contexts. In Chapter 3, it was noted that the dollar-a-day indicator of poverty is both archaic and is not generalizable to the current and different contexts. Chapter 7 explains this indicator of poverty from its historical origins in the 19th century labour relations discussions context which is not applicable to different contexts such as Malawi and Zambia, most specifically in the villages under study.

The logical framework is the third knowledge frame. This is a tool adapted from USAID[38] by the World Bank and IMF during a period when neoliberalism gained momentum in the mid-1990s. While the logical framework assumes a neutral and scientific character, it was a tool invented to correct the political conditions influencing the flow of aid. In essence, it hides the neoliberal agenda inherent in it. What the logical framework does as a scientific tool is prescribe on behalf of donors, how poverty should be quantitatively addressed, and constraining participation because of pre-set goals in a pre-designed template. Participation from the view of the logical framework is the operationalisation of institutional goals, and not anymore the realisation of local realities. In a context where the logical framework is used, it draws from several laboratory-like epistemic assumptions, in a linear cause-effect model presuming that this scenario will lead to predictable results. The aim of the project officer charged with running such projects is to ensure that the behaviour and activities of those targeted by development projects are adjusted in line with the development goals. It is thus fair to infer that the logical framework works as a poverty reduction script in which individuals act according to prescribed roles and neglects those ideas that have sustained villagers' lives over the years. By bringing individuals into the logical framework project goals, the tools are actually indirectly coercing individuals to dump their lives for that introduced by the project activities. The logical framework is thus exercising agency.

The researcher also considers the PRSP as the fourth set of knowledge frame because it lays out developing countries' macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programmes over

[38] The Logical Framework is a goal-oriented tool developed for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). It has been adopted by donors and NGOs, for purposes of designing, monitoring and evaluating international development projects.

a period of time on how poverty must be reduced through inducement of external funding (PRSP Sourcebook, 2001). The PRSP imposes an obligation to conform to policy positions as a condition for accessing aid funding (cf. Entman, 1993), while determining the way in which poverty must be reduced and collocated within the narrative of locally-driven participatory approaches (cf. Driscoll and Evans, 2005; Piron and Norton, 2004). The PRSP places so much emphasis on participation to the extent that the participation concept used or referenced in Malawi and Zambia national plans mirrors the PRSP. It dangles the funding carrot that any country in need of debt relief under the HIPC initiative needs to comply with PRSP conditions, but specifically through a broad-based participatory approach according to its prescription. In addition, it sets the discursive parameters on which concepts such as broad-based national participation are supposed to be operationalized. The next section presents findings of the critical discourse analysis of the key themes emerging from the documents under study with particular focus on poverty definition, participation and communication for development.

6.4 Poverty, definitions and solutions: a critical discourse analysis

The researcher approached the MDG framework as a text, which contains discourses. It largely dictates a particular understanding of poverty. This text consists of words and phrases, which convey ideas within a particular political context, from which the meanings of poverty are derived (cf. Tuchman, 1978). As will be illustrated later in this section, words and phrases surrender their definitional meanings to contextual meanings thereby advancing the interests of dominant actors in a particular context. Following on earlier discussions, I argue in this section that the MDG texts convey the political and economic positions of dominant actors. Knowledge arising from such a confluence of interests has implications on the way individuals construct meanings from the implications (cf. Chomsky, 2002; 1988). The schematic structures represent ideologies combining beliefs, norms and goals of poverty. Hajer (1995), Foucault (2003) and Fairclough (1989) provide a basis for this theorisation suggesting that meaning formation is an outcome of power and discourse production which provides “specific form of ideas, concepts, and categorisations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed to give meaning to physical and social relations” (Hajer, 1995, p. 44). In undertaking this analysis, the researcher also reflected, through a historical discourse analysis, on the International Development Strategy (IDS) (1970) to deepen the understanding of how the MDG resolution came to frame poverty. While narrative variation exists, the two documents remain conceptually similar.

a) Poverty as lack of economic income

In the MDG text, poverty is signified by lack of economic income – a dollar a day[39] - required to sustain a certain way of life (MDGs, para. 19). This is the main narrative that has been historically advanced by the UN system in its commitment to reduce "the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day (ibid)". By adopting the MDGs resolution, Malawi, Zambia and other countries have thus agreed to facilitate "productive employment and decent work for all"[40] as a means of increasing income. This is translated as poverty reduction in the MDGs. Terms and phrases such as "income", "poverty reduction", "economic growth" and "private sector" converge to form logical storylines, which together form a discourse that both defines a problem and prescribes a solution. These storylines are coordinated and collaborated through each of these words and phrases to establish actions and ascribe actors to each storyline directly or indirectly. For instance, poverty is a hyponym for lack of economic income while poverty reduction is synonymous with economic growth. Sequencing of these concepts through semantic relations paves way for interests to exert their influence on how poverty is understood (cf. Fairclough, 1989). By promoting economic income as an ideological foundation for understanding poverty in developing countries, the MDGs texts contradict their own narratives, especially the UN system's commitment to the diversity of societies and the equality of its member states.

A similar conceptualisation of poverty is found in the PRSP where it is described as "an unacceptable deprivation in human well-being" with the word "deprivation" linked to and signifying people's economic inability to "secure the goods and services to meet basic material needs" (PRSP Sourcebook, 2001, p.2). These narratives deliberately neglect the importance of assessing individual's capacity to improve their own well-being. This is perhaps, in the PRSPS' view of poverty, not the responsibility of such individuals to address their poverty. Be that as it may, this causal narrative subtly lays out a logical order of how poverty is caused, suggesting that the solution is not locally available hence the need for creating a "conducive environment"

[39] The dollar a day as an indicator of poverty backdates to the European industrialisation era of the 19th and 20th century in London and New York respectively often used to determine minimum wages (Booth, 1887; Rowntre, 1920). Booth (1887) and Rowntre (1920) defined a poverty line by approximating monetary requirements for nutritionally adequate food requirements including other needs such as clothing and shelter for labourers during the period of industrialisation on the assumption that everyone then depended on employment income or government welfare.

[40] See http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/poverty.shtml [Accessed on 28/07/2014]

(MDG, para, 12) “for private sector-led economic growth” (MDG, para 20). These narratives collaborate to form a relationship of dependence, with the MDG operating as a textual device, reconciling several of these narratives into one new discourse.

This linear sequencing of concepts enables power to use language to present economic growth as central to meeting the MDGs[41]. In addition, within this collusion of power and language, economic income and growth blur the spaces for Malawians and Zambians to define their own well-being (cf. Wodak and Meyer, 2009) while securing and obscuring the central role of the private sector as the sole actors needed to reduce poverty. Para 30 of the MDGs resolution illustrates this when it indicates that developing states must give “greater opportunities to the private sector ... [which] will contribute to the realization of the [development] goals...”.

b) Poverty as an outcome of comparison

The second construction of poverty refers to economic income, and compares African to Western lifestyles to form a narrative that discursively positions economic income as the referent “truth” of how poverty must be understood. For example, in the IDS, poverty is signified by the phrase, “the level of living of countless millions of people in the developing part of the world [which] is still pitifully low” (IDS, para. 3). The word “low” has two connotations; first, a comparison to Western lifestyle and second, the dollar-a-day as baseline. On top of that, the language presents poverty as an absolute rather than a relative condition.

In such an intricate context, poverty becomes an outcome of social and economic construction and not a reflection of local realities in Malawi and Zambia. For example, this model simply implies that Malawi and Zambia are poor since they live on less than a dollar a day. The dollar-a-day discursively represents the socially constructed “truth” of measuring well-being (cf. Foucault, 2003; van Dijk, 1998a; Fairclough, 1993). It can thus be inferred that, if economic growth had not occurred in Western countries, then what is defined as poverty in Malawi and Zambia would not have occurred, thereby creating a narrative thread which suggests that Malawians and Zambians are poor because the West is rich.

With the poverty of millions of people left in the hands of the Western private sector-led economic growth (MDG resolution para, 20, 30; IDS, para. 3), resemblance, representation and

[41]Primary schooling, Reducing maternal, Reducing child mortality, Halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS and malaria, and others

comparison combine to discursively construct a poverty identity of “others” such as Malawi, Zambia and other developing countries. By positioning the discourse of western lifestyle as a referent for Malawi and Zambia, the MDG discourses reproduce a hierarchy of social relations by suppressing these countries’ ability to define their own development. Cox (1987) wrote extensively about how hegemony operates through identity construction. Such an identity subordinates and impoverishes Malawians and Zambians because of comparison while simultaneously imposing a burden on them to catch up with the West. This facilitates the hegemony of neoliberalism. Local knowledge on well-being is displaced thereby denying Malawians and Zambians the opportunity to know anything outside of what is prescribed. Ironically, this is another occasion in which these countries are called upon to lead their own development (cf. PRSP, 2001; Rosenau, 1999).

Two key implications of this discourse are that global identities cannot develop in a sequence, simply because the developing identities cannot be matched with the developed because of their different contextual backgrounds. The MDGs text demonstrates how different narratives can co-exist in the form of a hybrid discourse even though the neoliberal discourse presides over others. This accommodative discourse struggles to establish the collectiveness needed to co-opt the developing countries, as the discourse seeks to promote and preserve a global identity which can be transformed at the whim of capital’s interests (van Dijk 2001). The western lifestyle remains the prototype, which calls into question the notion that through actor representation, policy narratives can construct developing societies’ identities. What is clear is that the MDGs were written from the position of power, where the authors were trying to construct or re-construct hegemony.

6.5 Participatory development

This section examines how actors and discursive contexts are drawn out in the MDG discourse. I consider in this section, that those whose roles or identities are defined or represented in the MDGs’ storylines within the poverty reduction discourse are actors. I rely on van Leeuwen (1996) who extensively explores the discursive representation of social actors as acquired from descriptions and linguistic constructions. I start from the *UN Human Development Report* (UN HDR, 2010) which revitalises the people-centred participatory development models of the 1980s to achieve the MDGs targets. Integration of communication for development to strengthen community engagement and dialogue arises from the same report (2010: 116). In this section, I present how the MDG resolution captures the notion of participation of the state, government, individuals, villagers and the private sector from the narrative in the MDGs.

The MDG framework proposes several, sometimes contradictory forms of participation which are both discursively allocated and implicitly prescribed, while setting out the context from which roles of those different actors emerge from different storylines. Earlier discussions revealed how the MDG discourse establishes storylines into a sequence of a cause-effect relationship, with each narrative thread suggesting the roles of each particular actor. I consider in this study, these actions to mean roles which signify participation. Drawing from the MDG text, "participation" is positioned within a broader global arena, where member states interact with the UN system, and where states are assumed to be in dialogue with their citizens. Earlier discussions have illustrated dialogic relations and polemical tensions between global and local discourses, especially where globalisation is textually collocated with the global economy (MDG, para, 5). For instance, where local problems are supposed to be matched with local capabilities in Malawi and Zambia, the MDG framework discourses evasively opt to generalise poverty in order to universalise its reduction. The same text mediates in a persuasive and yet coercive manner demanding "other" countries to be part of the global "we", as the first form of participation.

The word "we" which represents a new discourse in line with the global discourse and shift in development approach from the IDP (1970) appears 49 times in the 32 paragraphs of the MDG resolution. The "we" discourse is used to convey a sense of equality, collectiveness, shared responsibility, coalition building and universality of thought (cf. Wodak, & Meyer, 2009; Waisbord in Hemer and Tufte, 2005), and to hide the power imbalances in a context that presumes equality of member states in the UN system. This discourse contradicts the MDG paragraph 11 which states that "we will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected" (MDG para. 11). Power relations determine the way that the MDG resolution deploys linguistic devices at state level in establishing a universal entity within the hegemonic majority, concurrently constructing its members as appalling, while seeking to pressure them to adopt the ways proposed in the MDG discourse. The co-location of poverty reduction as a right (para, 11), when linked to non-compliance (para, 9) criminalises the right to be different (cf. Cox, 1987) and subsequently undermines the right to self-determination (para, 4). The next discussion focuses on three main actors whose roles are prominent in the MDGs.

a) The state government and the facilitation role

Developing states, in this case Malawi and Zambia are my first category of actors whose duty of care for their citizens is well defined in the MDGs. Their main role is to create a conducive environment for economic growth (MDG, para, 12) by reforming governance policies to ensure "an open, equitable, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory multilateral trading and financial system" (MDGs para, 13). Critical in this analysis is how participation is configured by the MDG discourse. Its focus is no longer on what states must do but why they must do what needs to be done for development to happen. Of particular interest is the way power is hiding behind the "we" discourse while emphasising the open market and creating the conditions for a conducive environment for the private sector-led economic growth. The primary focus is not on what the states must do to improve the conditions of their people. Three hidden and yet critical ways in which power is deciding the role of the state are evident, especially where discourse seeks to weaken the state and submit it to the whims of the private sector, purportedly to develop their people. Already, developing countries are presented as recipients of global orders and beneficiaries of private sector-led growth.

Firstly, the behaviour of Malawian and Zambian governments as member states is governed by the UN system, inherently constraining their independent agency. Secondly, compliance to demands to create a conducive environment is set as a pre-condition for accessing international aid and, thirdly, these two combined are necessary for states to achieve economic growth. Compliance to the above constitutes part of the "special measures [which developing countries must adopt] to address the challenges of poverty eradication and sustainable development including [...] improved market access [and] enhanced Official Development Assistance and increased flows of Foreign Direct Investment, as well as transfers of technology" (MDG, para 28). Of what use is this aid to these governments, especially if their role is limited to facilitating a conducive environment for the private sector? In the absence of a narrative that defines their role differently, the only logical conclusion is that such funding is provided to facilitate the open market and to keep developing countries subservient and indebted to the international finance institution. Configuring the role of governments in such a way leaves them with limited access to resources and incapable of meeting the needs of their empowered citizens through private sector donor-funded civil society who hold them accountable for service delivery.

b) The citizen and the vulnerable identity

My second category of participants are individuals who are part of the social actors but are translated through the MDGs text into global citizens. The concept of participation in the MDGs is largely built around the citizens or individuals as actors whose poverty should be addressed and need to "participate"' to improve their well-being. The HDR proposes that human development is about people exercising their "individual choice and to participate in, shape and benefit from processes at the household, community and national levels— to be empowered" (2010: 2). This builds from the HDR (1990) which emphasised that development is about freedom, both human choice (opportunity freedoms) and a participatory process (process freedoms).

To assess if the proposed participatory development model leads to improved well-being, I draw from Confucius'[42] popular quote: "…if what is said is not what is meant, then what must be done remains undone". Analysis proceeds by focusing on three factors – first, the performative and semantic effect of words and phrases surrounding the "people"; secondly, how discourse constructs identity of "the people" and their role; and finally, how these establish power relations between "the global arena" and "the people" is extensively discussed in Cox, (1987). Assessing how the MDG framework constructs the identity of people is vital here. The MDGs text establishes the identity of an incapable citizenry. For example, the word "people" is mentioned 13 times, ten of which create an identity of vulnerability – a powerless people – in desperate need of the global "we" to access "greater opportunities" offered by the private sector (para, 30) to enable them to determine their well-being. This identity does not signify a lack of local needs by citizens of developing countries such as Malawi and Zambia but an imposition of socially constructed shortages through a socially constructed identity. The following extracts illustrate how the people are described in the MDG resolution.

Global leaders are sparing "no effort to free … peoples" (para, 8) from poverty, "halve the world's people whose income is below a dollar a day… who suffer from hunger" … and ... "unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water" (para, 10). "[G]lobal leaders have a duty" (para, 2) to "fight for all the people of the world" (para, 29) and globalization is "a positive

[42] The Chinese philosopher whose ideas and sayings were collected after his death and became the basis of a philosophical doctrine known a Confucianism (circa 551-478 BC).

force for all the world's people" (para, 5) to be best assured their "right" to development (para, 6).

These words and phrases characterise the 'people' through linguistic devices in the service of power, to impose a social hierarchy of subordination and domination. Individuals are translated into a global collective, making it easy to manage their poverty, while constraining their ability to see their realities from their own standpoint (cf. Scott, 1998). In that fashion, language is uniting different discourses in the same text and context. For example, the vulnerability identity relates to lack of capacity (MDG, para, 28) for self-development and to use locally available resources. It is also a discursive tool prohibiting individuals and communities in Malawi and Zambia from being part of the private sector economic growth and therefore incapable of utilising locally available resources. This means that the goal of capacity building is not about making the people part of the private sector's economic growth but rather linked to the dialogic processes of interfacing with the institutions of development while holding their governments accountable. The MDG resolutions are both mediating and rationalising social power imbalances by "representing and constructing a society" of unequal relations of power (Wodak, 1996, p.18). They are playing the ideational role of negotiating realities through texts by creating a worldview which is constituted and constituting itself at the same time. A single and universal way of addressing poverty is made possible once the "people" are discursively constructed as a vulnerable and homogenous group – thereby enabling conditions which frame the course of action. Such framing creates conditions that hold the dominant discourse in the MDGs together on the assumption that people are helpless in the absence of globally supported intervention. A similar construction of the vulnerable "people" and how it is used to justify social transformation as part of the empowerment agenda will be addressed later in this chapter.

Diminishing individual agency is not the only consequence, but the new vulnerable identity of the people may result in a loss of local knowledge, autonomy of thought and confidence among Malawians and Zambians at the expense of the dominant thought system in the MDGs thereby creating a dependent individual. As the "original identity" acquires a "new" discursively imposed one, possibilities of altering the mind-set are high, especially one that ceases to see the importance of utilising locally available resources and capabilities to meet their individual needs.

c) The private sector – the miracle maker

The role of the private sector in stimulating economic growth as a panacea to poverty is elaborated on in this chapter. While so far the most dominant actor in the poverty reduction discourse in the MDGs is the private sector, it is not foregrounded in the text. It is only mentioned twice where it is collocated with the narrative of economic growth and civil society partnership, with the text preferring to focus on the process of and not the actors on economic growth. They are however, the major beneficiaries in the MDGs resolution. Most of these benefits have been discussed in earlier sections of this chapter. For example, in the MDG resolution, member states are compelled to ensure "greater opportunities to the private sector… to contribute to the realization of … goals" (para, 30) and it is further indicated that they are the only credible partner for civil society and other development institutions in "pursuit of development and poverty eradication" (para, 20). These narratives foreground the private sector as central to economic growth and as the sole actor. Everyone else's participation is couched under the civil society organisations which are also discursively linked to partnerships with the private sector. The private sector is conceived of as both a stimulator of growth and the funder of civil society's participatory development.

The MDG text's silence on the role of the private sector in the whole document is of particular interest. The role of the private sector can only be explained within the storylines that construct the MDGs discourse. The silence by the MDGs on the role of the private sector casts them as invisible, innocent, uninterested and not members of the global "we" while constructing a developing world incapable of addressing poverty without the private sector. In short, the developing world is constructed as dependent on the private sector to address poverty. Both poverty reduction and globalisation are presented as dependent variables of the private sector discourse. In my analysis of discursive context, Fairclough's (1995, 2003) views were useful in examining how texts derive meanings from the contexts of their discursive production and dissemination within a particular political order. Language is used as a textual device to influence policy directions and practice at national level by prescribing who does what within the domain of discourse production and who occupies the position to send or receive texts.

How the MDG discourse prioritises poverty reduction and lays out the storylines of how it should be addressed without directly mentioning and allocating the private sector as the lead actor, illustrates a curious discursive paradox. The private sector is dependent on governments creating a conducive environment and yet the same government depends on the private sector for development. The MDGs resolution text relies on the communicative discourse to allocate roles without necessarily mentioning the actor but instead, builds on the shared understanding of the context. Understanding the role of power in configuring social relations is revealed when discourse is broken into these elements and storylines. In this context, that is one way of exposing the active role of the private sector whose identity is not specified but plotted behind narratives and texts (cf. van Dijk, 1993). Breaking down these storylines enabled a detailed analysis and examination of the actors' roles drawn from a context which shapes the representation of social actors, including discursive and social practices and formations. According to van Dijk, (1993) it is through storylines that roles define actors and therefore the private sector need not be necessarily mentioned in order for them to be seen to be active in constructing, reproducing and articulating a discourse. What is important to note is the repeated interdependence between poverty reduction and economic growth. In the next section, I discuss the social transformation agenda, presented as a precursor to addressing poverty through the UN Communication for Development strategy.

6.6 Communication for development: global transformation agenda

Before discussing the third theme - communication for development - a summary of the above discussion will provide a vital platform for deeper analysis. The factors, processes, actors and spaces that gave rise to the MDGs constitute discourse production and therefore a message package. Earlier discussions showed that neoliberal interests influenced the MDGs despite having passed through several policy spaces such as the Utstein group, World Bank, IMF and the UN system. The interests behind the MDG resolution are evident in the discourse. I consider the convergence of the MDG discourse with communication for development to be setting an agenda whose goal is not necessarily to fast-track poverty reduction but to co-opt developing countries into the neoliberal fold.

Despite lack of consensus on the effectiveness of media messages to change behaviour, there remains hope that communication as socialising agent can transform society (cf. Blummer and Katz, 1974; Fiske, 1987; McQuail, 1983, 2010). Buoyed by some success stories in "disease prevention, protection of ecosystems, good governance activities and improved agricultural practices," (The 10th UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development 2007, p.4) the UN system justifies the integration of Communication for Development strategy as an implementation tool to achieve the MDGs by calling on "effective use of mass and community-based communication" (ibid). In this section, I take a look at three approaches proposed in the

UN communication for development to be used in MDGs, exploring how words and phrases frame and justify certain functions of communication for development.

a) To speak and to be heard is to develop

The first approach is modelled around the democratic participatory theory of Habermas (1989) which predicates participation as “speaking” and “being heard”. It assumes that when people are capable of being spoken to and when they are heard, it reinforces other aspects of their freedom and their ability to be involved in society. The media and communication are positioned as central agents in facilitating dialogue between “the people” and institutions responsible for addressing poverty, but is also used as a tool to transmit knowledge (The 10th UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development 2007, p.15). The knowledge transmission model will receive further attention later in this section, but it is vital to highlight that phrases such as “speaking” and “being heard” set a scenario of power relations where the speaker signifies an empowered people to engage with institutions. While “the people” and the institutions are expected to equally collaborate in addressing poverty, they are in this model not equals because, as portrayed, one is in a position of authority, while the other is a beneficiary of services from institutions.

This conceptualisation of communication has laboured, albeit unsuccessfully, to present development institutions as passive listeners and active implementers of the wishes of the supposedly “empowered” speaking people as its point of departure. In doing so, it allocates the duty to address poverty solemnly to development institutions under the guise of responding to the wishes of the people. However, this approach is betrayed by a restrictive and disempowering environment arising from the power relations – one which limits participation to speaking to institutions, rather than seeking to foreground dialogic communication within the context of differing diversities and pluralities of well-beings in Malawi and Zambia (cf. MacBride et al., 1980). In earlier discussions on identity, this study explained that when an identity is created as incapable, individuals with such identities cease to see opportunities around them as possibilities to improve their lives. Everything around them acquires value through the presence of institutions or the private sector. This because the poverty problem is limited to democratic participation in planning and decision-making only confined within institutions (cf. Servaes, 2006), to which the strategy suggests the “increased prevalence of communication media and the democratic” mechanisms (ibid).

b) A dialogue in inequality

The second approach emerging from the UN Communication for development strategy is an attempt to embrace Freire's (1970) model of dialogue where knowledge sharing is assumed to be between equals. The point of departure is to understand that the definition of well-being is a process by the people in dialogue with their local contexts. Freire proposes participation within a context of self-development of the local community, while acknowledging that society can depend on others for scarce resources, both in form and in degree and in a context where there is no centre or periphery but a mutual inter-relationship and interdependency. However, from what can be observed from the UN Communication strategy, poverty reduction is aligned to behaviour and social change (pp.13,16, 20) nuanced by using prefixes and suffixes such as "access", "exchange", "inclusive", "sharing", "open and non-exclusive", "participate in the global knowledge economy", and "build knowledge societies". These words and phrases recapitulate more than they convey. They define social positions according to who needs to be empowered by being included and given knowledge which should enable them to overcome their poverty. In their assumed neutrality, these words mask power imbalances in which the diffusion model is used (cf. Rogers, 1983) by presenting a scenario of equality and impartiality where everyone leads in defining their well-being. By presenting development knowledge as central to participatory poverty reduction, the discourse is justifying the use of communication to transfer knowledge to alter behaviour and practices of those perceived to be in poverty (p.13 – 41). Again, poverty becomes a problem of lack of knowledge. Knowledge and power combine to assume the same currency necessary for the "voiceless poor", who are implicitly signified as knowledge-less and hence cannot address their poverty if they cannot engage in public debate with their governments on decisions that affect them.

c) Disempowering by empowering

The third approach arising from the UN Communication for Development strategy is linked to empowerment whose central theme is the broader social transformation agenda discussed earlier. The convergence of the above two positions resonates with the main MDGs discourse which suggests that the inclusion of the excluded social groups is the only way out of poverty. The link between knowledge, communication and power as a process where "ideas change minds" is summarized by Vandemoortele (2004, p.2) in his postulation that the convergence of ideas with universal power leads to a universal identity. The use of ideas to change minds resonates with the MDGs (para 25) which call for global intervention "to strengthen the capacity ... to help Africa build up its capacity to tackle" poverty (MDG, para, 28). From a theoretical perspective, this narrative places the UN system in an agency dilemma, one in which it speaks to Malawi, Zambia and developing countries as a global authority and the other in which it is supposed to be listening to member states as its citizens. However, the category of Malawi and Zambia as member states implies a low position of influence within the UN system.

The UN positions itself as an "agentive self-constructor" (Bamberg et al, 2010; p.6) with the power to instruct member states to "to take special measures to eradicate poverty and [achieve] sustainable development in Africa" (MDG, para 28). The narrative of developing countries being at the forefront of "shaping their development… and the lives they value" (UNDP, 2010; p.6) achieving the "nationally owned development strategies" is contradicted by its link to the support by "international development partners" (UN MDG report, 2010, p.3). Social transformation which is signified as unsustainable "patterns of production and consumption" in the MDGs (para, 10) is used to justify the need for national "policy coherence" to the MDGs in order "to achieve a fully coordinated approach to the problems of development" (para, 30).

In the next section, I expand on the global social transformation analysis of the UN Communication for Development strategy and the MDGs. The analysis is largely informed by neo-Gramscian scholars such as Cox (1981, 1983, 1987), and Robinson (2005) who discuss social power in relation to social change within the framework of a nation-state relationship. The focus of analysis here is how the power of the MDGs discourse has influenced Malawi and Zambia's national planning policies (cf. Gordenker and Weiss, 1996; Rosenau (1997a). I use the national "policy coherence" to MDGs as the point of departure as it arises from the UN Secretary General's report (2010) and as part of strengthening communication for development to expedite and localise the MDGs. While the UN Communication for Development strategy is not directly referenced in both plans, there is a significant usage of the participatory phrases such as "community involvement", "empowerment", and "participation." For example, in both five-year national plans for 2011 to 2015 for Malawi and Zambia, the word participation appears 134 times and 29 times respectively.

6.7.1 Localising the MDGs in Malawi

Malawi launched its Growth and Development Strategy II (MGDS) in 2011 laying out its development course under "economic growth" model which set the tone for wealth creation as a key ingredient to achieving the MDGs, food self-sufficiency (p.18), reducing poverty (p.ii) and transforming Malawi to a manufacturing and exporting economy (ibid). The localisation of the MDGs, except in Goal 8, in the context of the national plan, is one of its priorities. The use of the media and communication strategies reflected are under theme 4: *Infrastructure development* (MGDS). The MGDs aptly capture the discursive convergence of poverty reduction and the participatory model by deploying words, language and texts allowing for the operationalisation of these at national level.

The use of media is captured under two models. First, the diffusion model (cf. Rogers, 1962) where the media is assigned to ensure "that the population has access to timely and relevant information" and second, to the participatory model (Freire, 1970) where the role of the media is to increase "popular participation of the citizens in development, governance and democratic processes" (ibid, p.153) through a variety of social change media (ibid, p.154). As shall be demonstrated in Chapter 7, the views of the Malawians are not taken into account, because the objective is to make them passive receivers of knowledge who act on what has been diffused to them. This is despite the fact that in its national plan, the Malawian government has made a commitment to strengthen the regulatory framework to facilitate the free flow of information on topical issues and decision-making for everyone.

Dominant storylines in the MGDS single out economic growth and democratic participation as central to reducing poverty by clearly identifying the private sector as a key player because without "growth, it will be impossible to deliver … the vision of creating wealth and employment for all the people of Malawi" (MGDS, 2011, p.13). The national plan goes further to state that poverty reduction requires action on multiple fronts including "maximizing the contribution to economic growth through the potential growth sectors, … putting in place an enabling environment for private sector led growth … and empowering rural communities to be part of economic activities" (p.18). The capabilities of ordinary Malawians are side-lined in favour of the government creating a "conducive environment for the private sector to stimulate economic growth" (xviii). The participatory narrative is reconstructed by the texts on empowerment to create an image of Malawians playing a leading role in their wellbeing. In fact, they too must take interest in advocating for economic growth in order to be empowered. The use of the enunciation discourse in this context distinguishes what is said and the act of saying it, with the texts organising the act of addressing the poverty problem.

The discourse of economic growth imposes compliance on Malawians concerning policy reforms to create a conducive environment purportedly to deliver development. Individual differences among Malawians are summoned and ushered into a global identity under the discourse of social cohesion. The MDG (para 2 and 30) articulates these discourses together by using words which combine different categories of discourse into a compelling and inspiratory semantic relation. “We recognize that, in addition to our separate responsibilities to our individual societies, we have a collective responsibility to ... the most vulnerable...” (para.2) and therefore must “give greater opportunities to the private sector ... to contribute to the realization of [MDG] and programmes” (para.30). In the case of Malawi’s national plan, possibilities of participation are limited only to employment opportunities offered by the private sector-led economic growth. The inequalities imposed by these narratives are neglected at the expense of facilitating a free and open market system to create opportunities for multinational corporations (see Chomsky 2000; Foucault, 1992).

Development indicators in Malawi however, contradict the prominence given to the economic growth proposal. For example, Malawi improved its national food security[43], reduced malnutrition and achieved 50 per cent reduction in the prevalence of HIV in the absence of a vibrant private sector industry (Country programme document for Malawi, 2011). These achievements are acknowledged in MGDs as partly due to the role played by the media and communication in promoting the appropriate farming methods, behaviour change targeting HIV and AIDS and promoting inter-communal marketing for farm produce as part of the success story. An overview of the media landscaped in Malawi and its role in development is offered in Chapter 8. The disconnection between what the MDGs have prescribed and the realities in the village in Malawi illustrates how the power of discourses swayed Malawi’s local and national priorities to address the neoliberal interests rather than empower the population to control their own development processes (cf. Cox, 1987). The need for promoting the factors that influenced these success stories is obscured by the pressure to comply with the dominant discourse.

This dissonance is severally repeated in the MGDs (2011). For instance, more than 80 per cent of Malawi’s population is said to depend directly on natural resources for livelihood. Above 80

[43] During Bingu Wa Mutharika’s first term in office, he introduced the Greenbelt project which saw Malawi exporting and to donating food to its neighbouring countries in Southern Africa by 2009 in a short period of time. (http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/wsfs/Summit/Statements_PDF/Monday_16_PM/02_Malawi_Speech161109.pdf. Accessed on 13 September 2015)

per cent of them live in rural areas, while 95 per cent are involved in subsistence agriculture. Instead of taking these factors into consideration and as baseline for understanding their well-being, the national plan opts to allocate the previously locally-driven agriculture sector which was behind the successful production mid-2000s, and hand it over to foreign private sector-led economic growth actors. This is done under the assumption that to transform 80 per cent of Malawian population into "workforce, [would] contribute to over 80 per cent of foreign exchange earnings" (ibid, p.18). The rest of the population is turned into prospective labour, because as the plan suggests, "the private sector is [the only] engine for growth and wealth creation" (p.28) and a source of "foreign exchange earnings" (ibid, p.18).

6.7.2 Interpreting the MDGs in Zambia

Like Malawi, Zambia launched its Sixth National Development Plan (SNDP) 2011–2015, a successor to the Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP), under the theme, "sustained economic growth and poverty reduction" towards becoming "a prosperous middle-income nation by 2030". Within the same framework, stated in its Vision 2030, the Zambian government makes a commitment to improve "economic infrastructure and investing in human development" (p.1). The SNDP builds on the gains of the FNDP 2006-2009 when economic growth is said to have improved[44]. Media and communication in achieving the SNDP is linked to the diversification of opportunities, framed as opening up new income-generating activities whose role is to disseminate information on socio-economic development, and also to stimulate participation. A detailed overview of the Zambian landscape and the role of media in development is offered in Chapter 8. However, the goal of the private sector, apart from economic growth, is to create employment which is required to reduce poverty.

Just like in Malawi, creating an enabling environment is positioned as central to supporting "private sector growth and ensuring that the country has good infrastructure, a supportive macroeconomic environment and skilled human resource" (ibid). Participation is framed severally in different policy narratives. First, it is defined through the Broad-Based Wealth and Job Creation through Citizenry Participation and Technological Advancement policy document. This is an appendage to the 2011- 2015 plan, aiming to create wealth and reduce poverty. In some section of the same document, participation is framed as citizen involvement

[44] Averaged 6.1 per cent per annum compared to 4.8 per cent during the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)/Transitional National Development Plan (TNDP) period.

in civil society, NGOs, and the private sector. In other sections, participation refers to human resources development as labour supply to the private sector, and does not look at local capacity of people to reduce their own poverty within the context of locally available opportunities. The views on participation and wellbeing are influenced by how the MDGs define poverty and its proposed solutions. The same view is communicated to Zambians encouraging them to imagine their own well-being from the same perspective, so that in playing their participatory democratic role of holding the government accountable, they use the same view on poverty as a frame of reference. The conjunction of different textual devices sustains hegemony by concealing the presence of power and domination while providing coherence in imagining development.

In several passages, the Zambia national plan refers to the disparities that emerged during the period of economic growth in the 1990s, a period when poverty was believed to have deepened among many Zambians. The Zambian government draws from this experience to caution in its plan that prioritising multi-national private sector-led economic growth at the expense of local empowerment is risky. During the SAP period, Zambia suffered heavy capital flight[45] as multinational companies exported most of their earnings to their home countries. Zambia was among the countries that were unhappy with the international finance institutions because of their experience with SAPs. The multinational companies had, as part of the SAP, promised to use their earnings for local investment in exchange for favourable conducive conditions such as tax exemptions, cheap labour and several other concessions (cf. The Forum Syd report *Bring the Billions Back,* 2011). After multinational corporations reaped huge profits, they reneged on their promise while continuing to insist on policy reform for the country to qualify for further meagre financial aid, leading to a de facto cycle of aid and debt (cf. Claessens and Naude, 1993). Capital flight hugely outstripped aid to Zambia.

The economic growth recorded during that period did not lead to poverty reduction but rather, left millions of Zambians in a worse off situation. Even with the benefit of this hindsight, the Zambian plan has not drawn lessons from this experience to foster a people-driven approach. Instead, it has given in to neoliberal pressures to create a conducive environment for the private sector in place of creating opportunities for a locally driven development approach. The inconsistency between economic growth and poverty reduction is blamed on the concentration

[45] During SAP capital flight was estimated to be between 140% and 150% of Zambia's Gross Domestic Product, resulting in Zambia becoming among the Highly Indebted Poor Countries in the world.

of private-sector-led growth in urban areas and its inability to create sufficient employment. That being the case, the plan argues that, "if the country continues on such a trajectory, it will not advance the development objectives identified in the Vision 2030 as well as progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) objective of halving the 1990 levels of poverty by 2015" (p.20).

The SNDP acknowledges that Zambia is "endowed with vast and diverse natural resources that form the basis for economic activity" (SNDP, 2011-2015, p.10). These include "fertile land, wildlife, forest, minerals, natural heritage and wetlands" (ibid). The value of these resources is not linked to the national poverty reduction agenda but to foreign exchange earnings, considered a primary requirement for national development. How discourse constructs subordinate identities and how such identities cease to see value in locally available resources and opportunities but instead focus on demanding services from development institutions, was discussed earlier. Such discussions demonstrated that instead of these subordinate identities applying their productive energies towards available opportunities to achieve their well-being, they tend to rely on institutions for their well-being. "Effective and efficient management of these natural resources can … contribute to … foreign exchange earnings and employment creation" (ibid, p.10). The absence of foreign interests in the available natural resources means that they are of no value to Zambians. By extension, these resources derive their value from demand by the multinational corporations and not by Zambians' desire to utilise them to meet their needs. This contradicts the assertion that Zambia is "a nation with capacity to promote and provide sustainable security against constant or periodic critical levels of deprivation and extreme vulnerability by 2030" (ibid) through empowering "low capacity households and provid[ing] social assistance to incapacitated households and support to vulnerable people to live decent lives" (ibid, p.30).

Empowerment is not aligned to access and utilisation of locally available resources but its ability to respond to social problems, and social transformation is linked to improving skills to service the labour needs of the private sector. The discourse positions the private sector at the helm of economic growth, assumed to create benefit for all. This narrative construction chimes with the push to empower the poor by increasing their income as an "effective approach in addressing their plight … than the often unsustainable subsidy programmes that tend to destroy the very financial and human resource bases that are expected to facilitate positive growth through productive investment" (ibid).

6.8 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to answer the sub-questions of this study by critically analysing the global governance context in which the MDGs as an international development policy are formulated, adopted and implemented. It has also elaborated on how the MDGs and UN Communication for Development strategy were conceptualised, the narratives and discourses that frame them and their implications for Malawi and Zambia's national poverty reduction strategies.

The discourses underpinning the MDGs and the UN Communication for Development strategy betray the participatory approach proposed in the UNSG's report (2010) as they largely deliver a neoliberal agenda through a diffusion model to co-opt different societies into the global village. Starting from the global to the national level, the MDGs and related national plans demonstrate semantic coherence of policy directions. Texts, in the form of words and language, are crucial in establishing a poverty reduction discursive context within which actors derive their roles, while creating a false sense of participation which contradicts social difference. This paradox is illustrated in the three main approaches to communication which are conspicuous in promoting a mixture of participatory approaches – the democratic participation, the diffusion and the social transformation model. This study has further expanded on the discussions that texts are linked to historical ideologies and that both discourse and contexts influence linguistic devices in promoting narratives and story lines. The critical discourse analysis of the MDGs has demonstrated that their text and contexts are products of power and interests which together configure what, why and how identities of developing countries are at play. Problematic in these models is that they are operating from a global discourse established elsewhere. The "beneficiaries" such as Malawi and Zambia consequently become vulnerable to the whims of neoliberal interests that control the UN system.

This poverty discourse arising from such constructions comprises the lenses through which Malawians and Zambians are viewed as lacking capacity. This is the narrative that has been used to justify external intervention to build capacity in the form of social and behaviour change. The private sector is portrayed as not just the source of this capacity, but as the only actor capable of utilising available opportunities and resources in Malawi and Zambia to stimulate growth needed to ensure participation. The relationship between these two positions does not add up. The use of communication in this context in fact weakens local capabilities, including altering their mind-set and displacing the self-confidence of Malawians and Zambians. In presenting economic growth as the single means to achieve poverty reduction in Malawi and Zambia, the assumption is that only the private sector, largely western multinational companies, can actively lead the global poverty reduction agenda, thus making everyone else a follower.

Chapter Seven: Participation, spaces and power

7.1 Introduction

This chapter complements Chapter 6, providing an empirical practical application analysis of participatory approaches in policy formulation and implementation spaces in Malawi and Zambia, all as part of the MDGs and PRSPs requirements. It partly seeks to examine the implications of the UN Communication for Development strategy on participatory approaches to poverty reduction practice in the two villages, including analysing how the villagers understand participation within their context. The first part is a critical analysis of the complex patterns of policy formulation spaces in Malawi and Zambia. This includes examining how they are discursively constructed. The second part of the chapter magnifies the different dimensions of power and knowledge, including how these play out in spaces and processes available for citizen participation from village to national level. The objective is to assess the level of influence by different actors, from the stage when citizens' views are collected, to the final national stages where decisions are made. As a working assumption, this chapter considers public policy spaces and processes, firstly as open to citizen participation and secondly as arenas of discourse production informing policy narratives. Drawing on the responses from different respondents, the chapter argues that available public policy formulation spaces in Malawia and Zambia are drained of their decision-making power by the presence of external knowledge, power and rules which govern how the spaces operate. The government's ability to empower its citizens to influence national decision is also diminished.

7.2 Background and context

a) Malawi

Malawi, with an estimated population of nearly 16 million people, according to the World Bank (2014), is located in southeast Africa and borders Zambia to the northwest, Tanzania to the north-east, and Mozambique to the east, south and west. Like most Southern African countries, Malawi fell under British colonial rule in 1891, and then changed hands to the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1953. In 1964, it became independent under the presidency of Kamuzu Banda's single party regime for three decades. In 1964 Malawi became a member of the United Nations (UNSC Resolution 195, 1964) and the then Organisation of African Unity (now Africa Union) the same year. In 1971, Banda declared himself 'President for Life' (Heyn, 2013). With the rise of neoliberalism in the late 1980s in the West, civil society organizations funded by western donors and the UN system took centre stage in Malawi exposing the autocratic leadership of Banda’s regime leading to his downfall in 1992, which paved the way for a participatory process of developing a new democratic constitution in 1994. His downfall was orchestrated by an amalgam of global forces and partly triggered by the rise of neoliberalism in the late 1980s. Malawi only faced its first serious demonstration on 17 July 2011. As Heyn (2013) notes, before then, Banda’s repressive regime earned praised from Western countries and finance institutions for instilling discipline and loyalty in his government to the global institutions. The World Bank and IMF used Malawi as an example of fiscal and monetary responsibility. All these developments fits into Lukes’ (1974) theorisation of power and its ability to influence behaviour and their parameters. In the context of Malawi, it was evident how neoliberalism, through the UN system as a global governance structure, approved, reviewed and rejected behaviour patterns of what should be sovereign countries. As Edwards (2014) notes, with the rise of neoliberalism, Banda’s leadership became a barrier to the new ideology under which states and markets began to be seen as essential elements to achieving capital interests. Freedom of society became paramount, civil society, operating under the global neoliberal hegemony, became a relevant driver of change towards achieving the desired conducive environment to maximise profits. Harnessing of the power of citizens became a crucial ingredient under the ideology of participatory democracy, to push for policy reforms needed to achieve economic growth (Edwards, 2014). After the 1994 elections, Malawi adopted constitutional democracy, under the neoliberal ideology. Power shifted from Banda’s Malawi Congress Party to the new President, Bakili Muluzi’s United Democratic Front Party who ruled the country from 1994 until 2004. With the new form of global ideology predominating, Malawi politically began to open up, and has thus far held elections every five years. Mr. Muluzi was succeeded by Bingu wa Mutharika who was in turn succeeded by Joyce Banda, following his death in April 2012. In the 2014 elections, the incumbent, Joyce Banda lost to current President Peter Mutharika, the brother to late Bingu wa Mutharika. Malawi, post-1994, has operated on a participatory democratic and multi-party government system. The three main branches of the government include an elected executive, an elected legislative and the judiciary. The executive includes an elected president who oversees the management of government affairs (Kayuni and Cloete, 2006). According to these authors, in theory and on paper, the country has a system to support citizen participation and representation from the grassroots, districts and regions up to the central government (cf. also Hussein, 2003).

b) Zambia

Zambia is a Southern African country, which borders the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the north, Tanzania to the north-east, Malawi to the east, Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe to the south, and Angola to the west. Zambia shares cultural and historical similarities with Malawi. It, like Malawi, was colonized by the British in 1890 and attained independence in 1964 before joining the United Nations and the Africa Union that same year. Kenneth Kaunda became the first President of Zambia in 1964 until 1991. In 1972, just a year after Malawi's Banda declared himself 'President for life', Zambia became a single party-state under the motto 'One Zambia, One Nation' until 1991. The fight for democracy in Zambia started much earlier than in Malawi, with civil society organisations mobilizing against the Kaunda regime as early as the 1970s (Maitra, 2011). Consequently, what has emerged in Zambia as civil society today is a history of authoritarian regimes from the colonial era, to the post-independence one-party rule. The rise of neoliberalism during the late 1980s and early 1990s meant that civil society organisations enjoyed more financial backing from western donors and the UN system who were pursuing economic policy reforms through mass movement of organizations and individuals. By February 1990, civil society organisations gathered momentum, led by two trade unionists advocating for a referendum on the one-party state. It must be noted that because western donors were funding civil society organisations including the two trade unions, they were viewed with suspicion by the government leadership, who accused the civil society of undermining its sovereignty and destabilizing the government. During the Kaunda period, there was a policy of devolution of power to local authorities, which never materialized as it was tampered with by political considerations. It has though, remained on the agenda of all governments, including the current one (Simutanyi, 2013).

Parliament convincingly voted, on 30 November 1990, for a constitutional amendment, which led to the introduction of multi-party system. Following the election victory of 31 October 1991, the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy, a labour backed movement, led by Frederick Chiluba came into power. Chiluba, who was a social democrat, subsequently took over power and ushered in a new phase of participatory democracy, social-economic growth and government decentralization echoing the tenets of neoliberalism (van Donge in Wiseman, 1995). Levy Mwanawasa succeeded him, from January 2002 until his death in August 2008. Rupiah Banda took over in acting capacity until 2008, then as an elected President until 2011 when he lost elections to Patriotic Front party leader Michael Sata. Sata died in October 2014, paving way for Guy Scott to serve as interim president until the January 2015 elections won by the current President, Edgar Lungu. Despite having served briefly, Guy Scott became the first white President in a post-independent African country.

The democratisation process in Zambia takes the form of a presidential representative and democratic republic, with the President of the republic acting as both head of state and head of government in a pluriform multi-party system. The government has executive power, with the legislative power bestowed on both the government and parliament. Since the ouster of Kenneth Kaunda in 1991, the role of civil society organisations has continued to grow (Fiedler-Conradi, 2003). One of the major examples of civil society participation was in the formulation of the PRSP, which is believed to be an outcome of input from a cross-section of actors. While the country embraces a participatory approach in its national business, planning has remained focused on the allocation of national economic resources. The unfolding democratic governance system in Zambia has largely relied on the civil society organisations such as the trade unions, NGOs, social movements, churches, the media and others. These engage with different arms of the government, from ministries, members of parliament and the parliament, cabinet and government structures at all levels on various policy issues, including poverty reduction. However, the effectiveness of democratic participation is undermined by the existence of a dual system of local government. The elected local council serves the political interests of its parties, while the local (regional and provincial) administration reports directly to its parent ministries in Lusaka (Simutanyi, 2013).

7.3 Multi-layered national policy structures

To assess possibilities of participation in different levels of policy making processes for villagers in Kamaila, Zambia and Mwandama, Malawi, this study draws, as stated earlier, from the policy space analysis methodological approach. This follows Brock et al. (2004) who postulates that each policy space is an opportunity to assess participatory possibilities, discourse formation and decision-making power across different decision-making levels. Discourses arising from or influencing policy spaces introduce changes or sustain a certain mode of thinking and behaviour and these shape courses of action. It is the same discourse that informs the role of communication for development in fostering participatory development (cf. Cleaver in Cooke and Kothari, 2001). Here, I present findings of the policy spaces analysis and significance of such to the formulation and implementation of national plans.

As a theoretical baseline, this chapter considers every policy or decision-making space as shaped by power. Spaces refer to any situations, opportunity or platform where policies or plans are deliberated, and where decisions are made or decision-making processes occur (Brock et al., 2004). Thus the term entails the broader spectrum of the policy hierarchy from the individual, as single entity and as part of a social group, through to different structures and levels of national governance. Except for the media, each respondent in this study interacted with or belonged to a policy space, notwithstanding their varying degrees of influence. Data for this analysis was collected from the Ministries of Planning, Millennium Project in Malawi and Kamaila water project in Zambia (hereafter referred to as NGOs), the UN system, the media and the Kamaila and Mwandama Villagers in Zambia and Malawi respectively.

7.3.1 Participation within structural context

As mentioned above, Malawi and Zambia are half a century old. Notwithstanding some challenges, both countries claim to be participatory democratic states, often characterised by holding elections at the end of each five-year term. The participatory ideology runs across the national planning processes. In Malawi, the process occurs in three administrative stages of the national, regional and district level. Much of the government interaction with more than 16 million of its citizens is presumed to occur in 28 districts in the three regions – Central, Northern and Southern. An appointed governor heads each regional office, with districts led by commissioners (Heyn, 2013). Mwandama Village falls under the Zomba district in the Southern region of Malawi. Each of these administrative layers, in theory, represents spaces for citizen participation in policy formulation and implementation. These administrative layers implement the central government policies. Malawi's unicameral national assembly, made up of 194 seats is another important political space, enabling citizens to dialogue with their members of parliament on policy matters. Parliament, as a legislative policy space, is constitutionally empowered to approve and endorse key national decisions (Edwards, 2014). District commissioners and regional governors are charged with implementing government policies. In theory, Malawi has the minimum infrastructure required to meet the participatory requirements of the PRSP and the MDGs.

Unlike Malawi, Zambia is divided into ten provinces which are subdivided into 103 districts. Districts interface with the nearly 15 million people in the country. Kamaila Village lies in Chibombo District, within the Central province, 50 kilometres from Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia. The legislative, executive and judicial branches of government are located in Lusaka.

The provinces are led by an appointed Provincial Minister who is also a Member of Parliament, with each district led by a district commissioner charged with implementing national policies at grassroots on behalf of the central government (Marcia, 1988).

Local authorities in both countries are presumed to connect the central government with the grassroots. Because of their proximity to the people, they are better placed to collect, reflect and represent grassroots voices in a typical Habermasian public sphere for the villagers to be heard and to influence national decisions. The Habermasian model has been criticised by Cox (1983) for limiting decision-making to institutional structures, which in turn constrain well-being to problem-solving models. True to Cox's concerns with Habermasian thinking, these layers of government in Malawi and Zambia set up channels of communication and command from top-bottom, and from the bottom to top, with the top having the final say on national decisions. At each level of the layers and spaces, there is a hierarchy of positions and authority, which represent the lines of command. It is only at village level where such lines are blurred with local government authorities subsuming the traditional administration systems led by chiefs, headmen and village heads. This is an interesting space, because it dove-tails into national policies, but it also enjoys its own epistemological and cultural autonomy, hence allowing a different version of participation. More on this is discussed later in this chapter.

Over the past half a century, Malawi and Zambia have faced leadership and governance issues to which their poverty is generally attributed (cf. UNDP Poverty Report, 2000). The tenure of President Kamuzu Banda is described as a dictatorship responsible for impoverishing millions of Malawians, while Zambia suffered an economic downturn during President Kenneth Kaunda's last years in office. In both cases, poverty is linked to a lack of democratic participatory space, bad economic policies and poor governance. Since then, Malawi and Zambia have made some crucial policy adjustments in line with the global community to gain access to credit lines needed to address their poverty. Part of these efforts include aligning their national plans to the PRSP and the MDGs. Ministries of planning[46] attested that, since the adoption of the MDGs in 2000, their governments had complied with the UN system's planning requirements, including embracing the PRSP participatory model. From these ministries' points of view, compliance with the PRSP has two objectives, addressing two types of audiences. First,

46 Ministries of planning in Malawi and Zambia are charged with the responsibilities of formulating development policies aimed at achieving economic growth and reduce poverty. In Malawi, it is called the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, while in Zambia it is the Ministry of Finance and National Planning.

it is a sign of good governance in the eyes of the global community, despite it being not relevant to the contexts of these countries. Second, compliance is a conduit to access donor funds and incentive to lure private sector investment which is considered in the PRSP as vital to poverty reduction.

At the time of collecting data, both Malawi and Zambia governments expressed satisfaction at having aligned their national plans with "what needs to be done to reduce poverty", (interview conducted on 29 April 2015) including ensuring that every layer of governance facilitated democratic participation by a cross-section of actors at different levels, as well as ensuring national priorities were communicated back to the grassroots for informed participation in project implementation. Some of these actors included NGOs, private sector and grassroots. The process of collecting views and disseminating national priorities was seen as dialogic participation. Satisfaction was measured by the presence of structures at all levels from national, regional, district to village level, thus conforming to global norms. Governments in both countries used this as evidence to demonstrate commitment to the democratic participatory model. The Ministry of planning in Zambia for instance, indicated that the government had "strengthened its provincial, district, ward and village commitment to ensure easy communication and transmission of development ideas between the government and the people" (email interview 29 April 2015).

The existence of a wide array of participatory spaces can be deceiving as the actual planning process takes place in three layers – the district, regional and national spaces. These are responsible for arranging the planning process according to the PRSP themes of collective and national ownership, inclusive and integrated plans. Like most successful ideologies, these themes do more than convey collectiveness and local ownership of plans. They coerce every actor to be part of this glorified process (Althusser, 1971) and which must be taken as a given (Cox, 1976). The discourse in the PRSP works through these themes to convey a sense of togetherness within spaces assumed to allow equal participation for everyone and one bestowing decision-making powers. It also portrays governments as capable of leading the planning processes in addition to emotionalising poverty (cf. Brown, 2003). These themes, together stigmatise difference by summoning all actors to commit to a process that enables them to act to alleviate poverty. Not being part of these processes is considered one of the reasons people are suffering. Realities in Malawi and Zambia reveal some contradictions to the sense of equality portrayed by the PRSP, most specifically with the planning process taking a top-down model within the same context where governments are assumed to lead national planning processes (cf. Cornwall and Brock, 2005). Interviews with governments revealed numerous interpretations of the concept of 'taking the lead'. For Malawi, participation meant locally-driven planning processes which however must, at all costs, comply with a pre-set results-oriented logical framework in the PRSP (cf. OECD, 2006). In Zambia though, it meant a national plan that was collectively decided by stakeholders in the country. The notion of stakeholder will be discussed later in this chapter.

Attempts to portray a bottom-up approach within this top-down model are betrayed by a national planning process which is initiated and managed from central government level down to the grassroots. During interviews, none of the governments indicated that villagers could initiate the process up to central government level, implicitly suggesting that decision-making that obtained at village level was either not recognised as important or had no room in the existing policy spaces yet it was what represented individuals and the villagers as a collective in their local contexts (cf. Jenning, 2000). Such contradictions ruled out possibilities of an empowered villager who could effectively lead their own life and influence national decisions because national planning processes in Malawi and Zambia were centralised.

NGOs working in Kamaila and Mwandama followed a similar pattern. Their goals and objectives of plans were developed from their head offices both nationally and abroad. They were only sent to the villages to fill in the forms with what is perceived to be the villagers' views, making them appear as community-led. Village consultation by project officers was used to secure consensus and entice the villagers to commit to being part of the project activities. The bottom-up model has its discursive role here, but it was subordinate to an agenda that promoted the opposite order or model. In both countries, the role of the bottom-up model was limited to facilitating the flow of villagers' views towards NGO head office, instead of establishing ways of understanding the local realities in the villages as a basis for response, and their participation in a grounded model. Application of the bottom-up is mainly for political correctness, rather than an honest response to poverty according to local needs. In a way, the PRSP discourse finds itself in a paradox, where it seeks to empower the same villagers which it acknowledges as empowered to take the lead in their lives. For instance, the fact that structures and spaces in which the bottom-up occurs are controlled by the centre is not acknowledged or highlighted as contradictory and problematic.

The dominant top-down model in both governments and NGOs in Malawi and Zambia was weakened by a lack of coordinated policy processes at each level and varied interests among each group of actors. For example, on the one hand, the NGOs ran different processes, individually, and parallel to those of the local governments in pursuit of their interests. On the other, the private sector had a completely different process catering for the interests of its private sector constituencies[47] and did not see reason to dialogue with the grassroots. The three streams of policy formulation confluenced at national level in the national consultative forums, the dynamics of which will be addressed later. What needs to be noted here is that these policy spaces, which served to facilitate the villagers' participation by contributing their local perspectives, were either limited, remote from the policy spaces where decisions were made, or were inundated by interests of other policy streams holding decision-making powers. Paradoxically, the PRSP neglects these power imbalances, preferring to portray the entire process as part of its broad-based consensual stakeholder engagement, leading to national ownership of plans and policies. Critical theory scholars such as Cox (1981) view this troubling co-option of the subaltern into a centralised system, in this case, where the villagers' participation was limited to expressing views without guarantee of those views influencing decisions.

Both Ministries of planning confirmed that national priorities were decided and finalised at national level and largely determined by available resources and funders, a situation which further compromised the bottom-up model and ran the risk of simplifying an otherwise complex pattern of spaces, actors and power from the village, middle-level, and up to the national level. It also throws into disarray the widely-held theorisation by scholars such as Chambers (1997), Habermas (1989) and others that to be included is to be empowered to participate and reduce poverty. Whereas it can be the basis of involvement, findings from both countries suggest participation in institutional structures and poverty activities created a wrong impression of inclusiveness which was in contrast to realities in the villages. Existing capabilities and opportunities in the villages were not acknowledged as a foundation for understanding and addressing poverty. In a context where poverty is understood from one external perspective, its

[47] The private sector in Zambia mainly consists of mining, farming, manufacturing, energy, telecommunication, tourism and small-scale business. In Malawi, the private sector is mainly comprised of agriculture, manufacturing, construction, and wholesale and retail trade. In each of these countries each sector is represented by an interest group such as farmer's union, business forum, or mining associations, which together with others, form of the national consultative forums.

knowledge also becomes centralised. For example, by including the excluded villagers in project activities, NGO projects create the impression that power operates in a neutral model when the reality is that such projects usher individuals into their structures of control, thereby disempowering individuals (cf. Fraser, 1992). Chapter 6 noted that being a member state comes with ceding power to the UN system as global authority. Contradictions between how empowerment is implied in the PRSP and MDGs versus where power lies in reality, challenge the notion of sovereignty of states and their ability to take the lead in national issues, given that Malawi and Zambia's national planning was clearly scheduled along and dictated by the UN system.

Diminished power on the part of the Malawi and Zambia governments might seem to be an outcome of voluntary occasion when states join the UN system, purportedly at their own choice. However, whether a state is a member or not, the global norms imposed by the UN system do not provide room for these choices. Donor funds and private sector investment were cited earlier as the main driver of compliance to these norms and priorities to national plans. Added to that, the fear of sanction for non-compliance was palpable in Malawi and Zambia, that is, if they chose to divert from the global norms, the consequences were cited as frightfully catastrophic. Thus, centralisation of funding in the hands of a few and its critical role as a key determinant in the discourse of poverty alleviation aided the nullification of alternative ideas to the extent of threatening national sovereignty. The main actors on poverty reduction are socially constructed as the only solution to reduce poverty, when in fact, this is another discourse that creates and perpetuates socio-economic inequalities and imbalances. For example, in Malawi, the Ministry of Planning cited an example where a donor who had funding for HIV and AIDS programmes instructed the government to adjust its national plan and ensure all poverty reduction projects fell under the HIV and AIDS programme in order to access the available funding. Funding sustains the erroneous ideology that it is linked to alleviating poverty. In reality, it is a form of social control relying on social facets such as knowledge and capacity to define vulnerabilities and justify the intervention of neoliberal ideas.

In addition, the autonomy of both Malawi and Zambia as sovereign states and the villagers as individuals was reduced by monetization and internationalization of lifestyles especially when analysed from Cox's (1981, 1987) argument that effective participation must derive from the government's and the villagers' ability to govern their lifestyles by making rational, informed and un-coerced decisions to fulfil their aspirations. The Coxian Critical Theory, somewhat concurs with Foucault in viewing the purported inclusion of the villagers into projects as a smoke-screen and failure or unwillingness to view villagers' lives as a self-constituting living project. There was consensus among all respondents, except for the villagers, that poverty is caused by lack of autonomy due to their deficit in decision-making power, which culminates in inequality, denial of choices and opportunities and exclusion of individuals from decision-making processes.

As part of addressing these shortfalls, governments and NGOs prioritised empowerment, inclusion and participation which were glorified as the most effective way of addressing poverty. Incontrovertibly, the top-down model drives the capacity building agenda to empower the disempowered by transferring knowledge and development projects to them. Three knowledge transfer streams were observed. The first one was a government-led process where views were collected from and disseminated to the villagers. In this case, the government acted as a channel of information. The second was the supervisory role of the UN system to governments which included providing financial support and technical expertise to the ministries of planning to align national plans to global norms. And the third stream included donors, NGOs, private sector and civil society organisations and others. As will be discussed later, these policy positions are contradicted by the villagers because the perceived lack of autonomy had not taken into account local power dynamics and neglected the primary fact that the villagers too exercise agency. They are not passive participants in their lives. Most of the assessments, as noted by the villagers, were cursory, with the majority being done through village meetings, inter-personal and mass media, consultations and community planning sessions. These platforms, on the surface, served as open spaces for discussions and decision-making – in short, a free market of ideas. The sub-text however, revealed such platforms to be where NGO goals were presented and villagers taught how to implement them, at least according to Mwandama Villagers. Such platforms were controlled, moderated and facilitated by project officers. Interaction was described, most ironically, by a project officer as "dialogue" because the villagers' function was to be "neutral and only there to listen" (face to face interview on 2 May 2015). Consultation was discursively used to portray the process as villager-driven to which villagers had to consent and commit.

At national level, the PRSP participatory framework is also a decisive tool that determines how resources needed to implement governments' programmes are to be allocated. A national poverty reduction plan that meets all the PRSP requirements secures donor funding and attracts foreign private sector investment. For example, Zambia received debt relief for being "on track" by adhering to similar World Bank and IMF prescriptions, while Malawi continued to receive donor funding for the same reasons. However, in both cases, allocation of funds to projects was also decided by the donors who determined priorities. The power of money was deciding priorities and preventing the grassroots from influencing such decisions. The manifestation of money and its links to interests, typifies the cunning nature of neoliberalism in pursuit of a universalized lifestyle. For example, in Malawi, the national consultation forum, a platform that decided national planning priorities, was organized by the UN system on behalf of the government, and in Zambia it was hosted by the government but funded by donors or the private sector. These actors held interests and the concurrency of their generosity towards the consultative forum pointed to a deliberate agenda to preserve their interests.

7.4 Local spaces, external knowledge and rules

The discussion above unpacked the intricacies of a participatory model within different policy formulation spaces in Malawi and Zambia. It highlighted the contradictions between what was said by the different respondents and what actually subsisted. For instance, bottom-up was in practice top-down and villagers' views, as in the Habermasian (1989) public sphere model, were not part of decision-making and they did not have meaningful access to decision-making spaces. Yet "deliberations" of this sort were couched as consensus and its net effect was the homogenisation of citizens and their poverty through well designed hegemony. Difference or alternative ideas were either stigmatised or discounted, with the villagers losing their power and beginning to rely on NGOs. Governments, too, lost their power to donors and the UN system, curtailing their ability to empower their citizens.

In the following section, I zoom into how knowledge, power and rules control the cross-section of policy spaces ranging from open, legislative, public and NGO, from village level to central government. We noted earlier that when villagers' views were collected and fed into the goals and objectives of national or NGO plans, the ideas transmitted back to the villagers were presumed to represent the villagers' development needs. This characterises what are commonly described as community-owned or driven projects. Indeed, the paradox between the village-led plans highlights a theoretical confusion arising from merging a top-down with a horizontal model of fostering participation. The assumption drawn here was that through their views, the villagers could only be more effective when their views are taken and refined by NGOs through their project officers to change their behaviour in order to alleviate their poverty. Thus, in the absence of the listening NGO project officers, the same villagers were unable to generate and communicate the same ideas among themselves on how to address their problems. The net effect of such discursive context was the establishment of an imaginary democratic space where participation was seen as occurring organically, without being induced by an ideology.

The presence of multiple spaces within the government structures, NGOs and civil society in Malawi and Zambia epitomises the above but also appeals to and legitimizes the democratic participatory approach to poverty reduction. Such legitimisation is deliberately established to mobilise individuals while creating a sense of openness from which consensus is derived and used to neutralize the presence of power and interests in different policy spaces. It is in Foucault (1977) where the notion of consensus is linked to the generalisation and homogenisation of the subaltern such as Malawian and Zambian citizens, and the channel through which global knowledge and power are exerted and reinforced in a continuum. For example, Malawi national's budget has been 40 to 70 per cent donor funded over the past decade (Ware, 2014, p.117), and Zambia has succumbed to the whims of the donors after debt relief by World Bank and IMF.

The link between consensus and participation is problematic, especially in a context where the dominant hegemony is the source of the problem. Chapter 6 discussed the collocation of the notion of consensus and the 'We' discourse. A similar scenario plays out where the 'We' discourse is a rallying point to position the UN system, donors and private sector as the only credible voices and effective actors on matters related to poverty reduction. These global actors are speaking subjects occupying a position of power which sustains social imbalances and subjects and converts villagers into listening objects. For instance, the participatory model the UN system advocates does not seek to understand the villagers' way of life as a basis for intervention, but rather prefers a co-option model which, as discussed earlier, constrains their ability to autonomously exercise their agency. Findings from the two villages, also revealed a close link between knowledge, power and capital interests hidden behind the 'We' discourse.

In this study, the footprint of external knowledge and rules was found to be present and dominant in the hierarchy of all public policy spaces (including village committees, regional governments, parliament and the national executive). All these policy spaces, even though nationally constituted by local laws, were largely governed by western knowledge, rules and norms. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Malawi and Zambia adopted "constitutional democracies" upon which the notion of democratic participation is founded. However, these are borrowed concepts from the West for which both countries still rely on western consultancies for their effective implementation and interpretation. Interviews with government representatives demonstrated that both Malawi and Zambia still depend on western funding which brings with it, its own knowledge in the course of implementing projects through the participatory democratic processes. The most important aspect to highlight here is that the constitutional democracy model these two countries adopted suffers similar limitations as the Habermasian (1989) public sphere theory where participation is limited to citizen dialogue with governance structures and not the practical utilisation of available resources and opportunities.

While the participatory democracy model speaks of the rights of citizens as a basic unit of society, the interests of the grassroots, especially the villagers are constrained by the centralised focus on the private sector to secure economic growth. Once the economic growth model assumes centre stage within global priorities, it follows that national priorities which must mirror the global, also neglect or even violate the participatory spaces for the grassroots in the interests of pursuing economic growth. Neoliberalism is known for securing the interests of the multinational corporations rather than of citizens of the developing countries (Cox, 1981). Discrimination of the views of the grassroots on the basis of lacking economic power is not highlighted but hidden behind the narratives of capacity building and social movements. It was noted in Chapter 6, how Zambia sacrificed its own assessment of development priorities over the concern to comply with PRSP and some of the World Bank and IMF prescriptions to secure economic growth.

It is vital to highlight here that the adoption of constitutional democracies in Malawi and Zambia, as stated before, occurred at the same time as the proliferation of the NGOs and civil society in Southern Africa and that of neoliberalism in the late 1990s. The liberal democracy governance model, now promoted through the UN system, is rooted in neoliberalism, which was a response to the need to reinvigorate changes in the global market economy by promoting free market and managerial efficiency (Osborbone and Gaebler, 1992). While both neoliberalism and civil society rose from the west with the goal of limiting government involvement in private sector activities, some authors such as Osborbone and Gaebler (1992) have argued that the global recession of the 1980s and the crisis of governance in Africa justified the support for civil society to push the neoliberal agenda in Sub-Saharan Africa. For example, the World Bank report of 1989 argues that the poverty problem in Africa is due to lack of governance, hence the need for governance reforms by financially and politically empowering civil society in Southern Africa as the countervailing power to their governments. However, a closer analysis indicates a lack of relationship between neoliberalism, civil society and poverty reduction. In fact, there is yet a country to develop through aid and reforms. Instead, neoliberalism has successfully prioritised economic efficiency over democracy by using civil society under the guise of participatory democracy to check on underperforming or rather non-complying governments.

The UN system has embraced the neoliberal values and champions the advancement of economic growth led by western multinational corporations as the only panacea to poverty reduction. This supervision of developing states, including Malawi and Zambia, by the UN system, has consequences on the extent to which national and local policy-makers, including the villagers, can effectively participate and influence decisions. For example, the Malawi Constitution (1995) gives power to civil society organisations[48] more than government ministries and structures because it was born out of civil society advocacy (James, 2005). Citizen participation is subsumed under the civil society umbrella as prescribed by the PRSP and yet the civil society organisations[49] in Malawi survive on donor funding. In Zambia, civil society is increasingly active on issues related to governance, democracy, human rights and the rule of law and was instrumental during the drafting of the current draft constitution (Abdi, et al, 2010). Their active involvement in political issues stems from what they perceive to be inequality and poverty and their work is driven by major donors' funding policies (Fiedler-Corradi, 2003).

Where local spaces are occupied by external knowledge and where their governing principles are outsourced, achieving a locally-driven and participatory poverty reduction planning becomes an impossible venture unless the villagers' freedom can be guaranteed and secured to enable them to self-determine (cf. Strange, 1988). The presence of external knowledge and power in what should be local spaces for decision-making, has the net effect of diminishing

[48] Prior to 1994, Malawi did not have a significant civil society. However, the Catholic Church is credited for spearheading efforts to expose the ills of President Banda's regime in a pastoral letter, in 1992. That formed the beginning of serious civil society organisations and led to the development of a participatory process of developing a new Constitution, guaranteeing the basic rights of all Malawians, including multi-party elections in 1994. (James,2005)

[49] Civil society includes, among others, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), professional associations, community-based organisations (CBOs), philanthropic and religious organisations and both society's élite and ordinary individuals.

Malawi and Zambia governments' ability to empower their citizens to self-determine. This is because, spaces available to citizens (such as governments, parliaments and the executives), are drained of their decision-making power as they are reduced to facilitating the planning process and adoption of external ideas. Governments too, take the less assuming role of arranging planning processes, thereby severely diminishing their power and sovereign role.

In a situation where the governments of Malawi and Zambia who, according to the UN system have a responsibility to empower their citizens are also weakened, the villagers' views, which are solicited at the early stages of the planning process, are rendered less or not influential to the national priorities. This is not for their lack of relevance but rather lack of political and financial power to back them in the mainstream. For example, due to the global attention brought by the MVPs, Malawi is among the 50 countries selected to undertake inclusive consultations leading to the Post 2015 Development Agenda – a new global policy framework to succeed the MDGs. According to the UN system, by having gone through several participatory and consultation processes, it is assumed that voices of ordinary people in the villages have influenced the global planning policy space for Post- 2015 Sustainable Development Goals. There are also some examples cited by the governments, NGOs and the villagers to illustrate and justify these forms of dialogic participation between the villagers and the government even though realities show that donors who financed the projects, remain influential to the outcome.

The connection between power, actor interests and national priorities converges in the national consultation forum. Consultative forums are important policy and planning spaces in Malawi and Zambia. They form a confluence of all policy streams and hold decision-making powers on national priorities, notwithstanding that they are not statutory in nature. Consultative forums and the actors who occupy them wield more power than parliament and the executive. The concept of consultative forum is an offshoot of the UN system and the PRSP policy recommendation to establish a national broad-based planning platform to purportedly represent the interests of all stakeholders. Governments, as explained before, are rendered less powerful, despite being considered an equal stakeholder, just like the private sector, civil society, donors and the NGOs.

Nonetheless, both governments in this study boasted well organised consultative forums whose function was to "refine the views collected from all stakeholders at all stages in deciding national priorities" (email interview on 29 April 2015) according to one respondent from the Ministry of Planning in Zambia. Since these were organised by the government, I viewed them in this study as public and open policy spaces. However, the realities from both countries were rather conflicting. Actors who occupied consultation forums assumed a different label, that of stakeholders because they exercised agency and exerted influence on priorities. According to the ministries, a stakeholder is an actor who wields power, represents a constituency of other actors and holds interests ranging from ideas, funding for the projects and economic interests. Whereas a participant and stakeholder may seem the same, in reality these terms represent different levels of power to influence. A participant can be anyone from a villager to one who decides on priorities and commits resources to ideas. On the other hand, a stakeholder, who often represents a foreign or private sector constituency, possesses the power to influence decisions.

Ministries of planning attested that stakeholders exercised agency both on their interests and those of the country. The word 'stake' is used to refer to interests from which power to exercise agency is derived. Stakeholders come in two categories – economic growth and social actors. Growth actors in Zambia included the private sector, charged with economic growth for which the government owed a conducive economic environment to address poverty. On the other hand, social actors included donors, development and humanitarian agencies, and civil society actors who were catered for through various legislative provisions (mainly human rights) to preserve their operational space. Within such a discursive context of the consultative forum, the villagers' views disappear from the table as discussions are dominated by the growth and social actors both of whom are foreigners even though the ministries of planning insisted that the villagers' views were subsumed in government submissions, civil society and the NGOs. Despite their insistence, they were unable to give examples in their national plans of contributions by the grassroots.

Once again, the power of money is observed to conspire with ideas in local and national policy spaces at the expense of villagers. The presence of several policy spaces in Malawi and Zambia count for nothing if such spaces are pre-occupied by stakeholders' interests. Ultimately, what was presented from the consultative forum to parliament for approval and endorsement by the executive was not a reflection of the villagers' interests but those of the stakeholders. Even if the Kamaila and the Mwandama Villagers were to climb up to the top of the planning ladder, the structure is incapable of empowering them because the villagers are not the primary target for influencing such decisions. The UN system confirmed its epistemological supervisory role on Malawi and Zambia regarding national planning and the ministries of planning corroborated this by highlighting how it was a requirement for them to adhere to the UN system's planning schedule. This scenario was apparent in Zambia. Their national planning process was dictated by the United Nations Development Framework (UNDAF), a strategic programme framework that lays out the collective response to national development priorities after every five years, and ensures alignment of national plans to the MDGs framework. The UNDAF mirrors the PRSP principles of national ownership, inclusiveness, involvement of specialized and non-resident agencies, national partners, and mutual accountability for development results. Within the UNDAF framework, the capacity development and results-based management are presented as key drivers of transformation. Transformation here represents change from a situation seen as poverty to one seen as development, therefore change is the main determinant. The implications of these knowledge frames are discussed in Chapter 6. However, it is also vital to highlight once again, that the power of money enables the reproduction of a discourse and the cognitive process that manufactures consent, judging by how proud the Zambian government was of how its Sixth National Development Plan (SNDP) 2011–2015 effectively aligned with the MDGs without addressing the notion of a people-driven national plan.

The discussion above has demonstrated two important factors. Firstly, that availability of participatory policy spaces does not always imply the ability of citizens to influence policies. Secondly, that external political and financial power controlled nationally and locally available spaces in Malawi and Zambia. I deduce from these two factors that different modes of participation such as expression of views and consultations are just mere smokescreens that conceal the neoliberal agenda that hides behind poverty reduction. External power and knowledge have subtly usurped the sovereignty of Malawi and Zambia governmental spaces. Brock et al. (2004) have highlighted that power and knowledge can remotely exercise agency in local spaces through conditionalities that impose rules and knowledge at the service of dominant interests. Narratives about community-driven planning, villager-owned plans, evidence-based planning, village empowerment, participatory approach to development planning, including the dominant bottom-up approach are caught up in the service of dominant ideas of the elites. The current conditions of available participatory policy spaces in Malawi and Zambia are therefore deeply flawed and encapsulate unsustainable assumptions about the level of influence the government and the villagers have on national and local policies.

7.5 Participation: A tale of two worlds

Participation is a central feature at both national level planning and project implementation since the MDGs were adopted in the year 2000. Inspired by the desire to reduce what is perceived as human suffering, Malawi and Zambia joined the world in the fight against poverty. Although there is a global convergence of efforts to address global poverty, this chapter has revealed that the global worldview of poverty and that of the villagers are worlds apart. One worldview is propagated by the development institutions, while the other, the villagers', has remained unexplored and therefore not understood. With these differences, the UN system and its MDGs continue to promote the global mode of lifestyles neglecting that each set of a group of people has its own ways of viewing lifestyles. The two worlds remain apart from even though they co-exist because Malawi and Zambia are members of the global consensus and commitment reached in New York when adopting the MDGs. It was noted earlier how global commitment comes with the saturation of local and national policy spaces with external knowledge and rules, and at village level by externally-funded project activities as part of the capacity building drive.

The link between the development projects, material supply and interests, especially in Mwandama Village, has been extensively covered, echoing Cox's argument in Leysens, (2008, p.3) that hegemony is established by a combination of "ideas, institutions and material capabilities" to foster transformation towards a certain social order in the villages through consensus and coercion. For instance, consultation by the NGOs as a form of participation was used to legitimize consensus and village ownership of project plans to which each individual was indirectly coerced to participate as a matter of public good. But both were cosmetically designed to legitimise the narratives of 'giving people a voice' as they sought to co-opt the villagers into the NGOs' project activities. Discussions with NGOs highlighted how poverty reduction plans that were assumed to be community-driven were sent back to the villagers as reflecting their voices, at the same time, prescribing the NGOs' courses of participatory actions to achieve goals. Dressed up as innocent and neutral charities, these NGOs were found to be fronting power and hegemonic interests, concurrently preventing the villagers from exploring their identities and capabilities.

By creating opportunities and spaces for villagers to express their views on project activities, the NGOs and government were using that as evidence of participation, even though it undermined the same views by excluding the local capabilities of villagers to utilise available opportunities. Views on lifestyles cannot be limited to the spoken words but a whole way of life of a people. Power exposes the villagers, through communication, to adopt and adjust to the neoliberal intentions articulated via the MDGs and NGO project activities. The UN communication strategy, as shall be illustrated in the next chapter, aims to infuse neoliberal ideas into local practices in order to convert the villagers into consumers of its culture, regardless of its unsustainability and inconsistence with local context. For development institutions, poverty reduction is a laboratory-like, time-bound budgeted project cycle. For the villagers, however, well-being is an inductive process characterised by lived-experiences and its evaluation, capabilities and self-worthiness and decision-making comprise an organically ongoing process influenced by individual aspirations, reactions and context.

Similarly, the disparities highlighted earlier stand between the power of communication to influence social participation in the villages, largely because the communication messages seek to re-create a new identity of the villagers from the conventional development discourse, without giving due consideration to the historical and cultural factors that shape their current identities. Redefining identities via communication by adjusting the villagers' social cognitions is described by Cleaver in Cooke and Kothari (2001) as a tyranny that regulates the villagers' relationship with the NGOs and governments, the outcome of which subsumes the individual villager's capacities and characteristics into a homogeneous NGO-induced identity.

Responses from both villages suggest that the effects of communication messages were largely limited to raising awareness on issues related to poverty, but did not influence behaviour. Individuals in Kamaila Village, for example, were clear that their mode of life-style and how they performed it was shaped by their historical and current context from which they drew their social relevance, thus contradicting the capacity building narrative in the MDGs. These attributes were enacted at both individual and village level, including how they maintained a dual identity. Of these two identities, the first is fixed, giving permanence to the social identity, with the fluid and functional identity enabling flexibility to cope and adjust to new situations. In the context of Kamaila, the fixed identity facilitated participation in the NGO projects, with the fluid identity remaining grounded in the villagers' traditional and cultural ways of life. In fact, local culture remained a key referent in the way they interpreted their lifestyle. Their silent resistance was evidenced by the existence of parallel community structures – ones that engaged with the NGO on development projects and another which was charged with the traditional and spiritual administration of the village. Each of these held and exercised different levels of power and influence. In Kamaila Village for instance, the community comprised of a mixed group of different profiles of villagers, interfaced with the NGO but had limited or no decision-making powers. Before decisions were made, the community group consulted with the traditional community leadership who approved or rejected ideas. Villagers participated in the NGO projects at the instruction of their community leadership, instead of the benefits of the projects. Once the village leadership endorsed an idea, the community group then allocated duties to villagers on behalf of the villager leadership and not the NGO.

There are several reasons why the villagers chose to adapt the dual system of administration. These two structures enabled them to live ‘double’ lives and enact the two identities – one for the NGOs’ project activities and another to maintain their own lifestyles. According to their responses, they considered the NGO as a visiting entity whose projects did not require full time attention. For example:

> *We have seen so many NGOs come and go and therefore we consider NGOs as visitors who come and go. Sometimes, when NGOs come to introduce their projects, we get involved for the sake of making them and their project officers happy (FGD, Villager in Kamaila on 2 May April 2015)*

They confessed that in some instances, they dramatized involvement, participation and signs of empowerment, to appease the NGOs and donors without really changing how they perceived their lives. Being part of a project did not always imply belief and commitment to it. The main reason for this was that, as one informant commented,

> *Some NGOs came and tried to change our ways of life and some requested us to dump some of our traditional practices which we find useful to our lives and those NGOs disappeared once funding dried up (FGD, Villager in Kamaila on 2 May 2015)*

Secondly, there had always been fear of the outsiders who were suspected of having bad intentions to either change the villagers’ ways of life or to displace them from their current location. Therefore, staying away somewhat empowered the village leadership to deny any form of consultation by the NGO, in case decisions go against their wishes. In a way, they were practicing empowerment as the ability of individual villagers to exercise who they wanted to be without being constrained or defined by others (Freire, 1970).

In addition, there was an attempt to keep the village free of external cultural contamination. This point calls for further analysis, especially on the social intricacies of how identities are ascribed, acquired and maintained vis-à-vis social communication and its relationship with external discourses such as the MDGs. Within development projects in Kamaila and Mwandama Villages, communication was positioned to achieve identity transformation in order for villagers to participate in project activities. Chapter 6 offered a detailed analysis of the counterfactual construction of the poverty identity.

The existence of parallel structures raises a curious question about the degree to which the media messages have an influence on decisions and behaviour change. As noted in Kamaila Village, the effect of media messages was limited to raising awareness on project ideas. Even where personal communication was involved, the villagers needed to consult in their own spaces before decisions were made. The position of the Kamaila Villager conforms to Freire's (1978) postulation that in order for empowered participation to be achieved reasonably, a communicative interaction must be dialogic, balanced and not bullying. It must be in a context where each individual enjoys the ability to be different and such cannot exist in a context where consensus on lifestyle is obligatory. It is the same view projected in Habermas (1984, p.392) who conceives of an environment where each member of the village has an equal opportunity "to participate, to criticize, to express personal aims and attitudes, and to perform these acts without regard to power or ideology." It was clear in Kamaila Village, that individual and village identities were habitually operationalized to preserve identities while consciously accommodating an external poverty identity. This demonstrates that villagers were both locally empowered, conscious of themselves and their aspiration unaided by external influence.

Focusing on identities to understand participation is vital in this context. Firstly, at village level, it was noted that identities were closely linked to how each villager viewed their lifestyle and its practical operationalization as theorised in Goffman (1969). For example, village farmers in Mwandama viewed their world in terms of crop farming and animal husbandry, while drummers in Kamaila Village planned their lives based on available opportunities to play drums. Secondly and linked to the above, identity construction ascribes the participatory function in achieving such a way of life. However, we learn from Cox (1979) that identity is the characterization of the self, which in itself is an effect of participatory performance. To establish their identities, individual villagers, in the absence of NGO projects were able to express their identities verbally and in practice through certain characteristics such as their day-to-day roles including their traditional roles. In Mwandama Village, for example, a farm labourer in the MVP project during the day was also a drummer in their own time and wished to be known more by what they did during their own time than what they were forced to do during the day in project activities. The point to be emphasized here is that although both were forms of participation, one was an expression of being part of an NGO project and the other, action characterized by commitment and personal choice in fulfilling a self-identity. Given a choice, the villagers would rather choose the former than the latter because the latter is forced and former represents the choice of what they wanted to be.

Lived-experiences and a myriad of other traditional modes of knowledge sources were cited by both villagers. Several forms of cultural practices play the role of producing and reproducing local discourses, including the transfer of traditional knowledge from one generation to another in a process that facilitates identity construction and reconstruction, to replicate their parents' or ancestors' cultural values. Though identities, especially in Kamaila Village, had shifted from those of older generations over time, the villagers severally referenced their connection to their ancestors and spiritual mediums. There was a strong belief that their identities and how they were operationalised were partly inherited from their ancestors. Their sense of traditional identity had remained somewhat intact and fixed because, *"life is lived to fulfil the wishes of ancestors by retaining and maintaining the family or clan identity"* (FGD, Kamaila Village, 2 May 2015).

The above view was further confirmed in Kamaila Village, especially how villagers had resisted pressure to be co-opted by conventional development.

> *Due to short-term nature of projects, we find it relevant to maintain our culture, while at the same time ensuring that we are part of development projects in our area* (FGD, Kamaila Village, 2 May 2015).

However, their present lifestyles showed a mixture of both traditional and modern day life styles in their attempt to maintain collective and individual differences in pursuing self-worth and individual pride. This concept is explained in Foucault (1995). The social position of the villagers in relation to the NGOs' mode of lifestyle, stood in contrast to other types of identities such as traditional and other social affiliations. Similarly in Mwandama Village, it was noted that identities were partly produced from local cultural contexts but dialogically disseminated through various traditional forms – from folktales, traditional ceremonies, initiations and inter-personal communication between children and their parents, close relatives, including community elders. Assessing these claims against realities, we can only draw on the assumptions that when the villagers were exposed to another mode of life, they assumed a new functional identity, but had not necessarily altered their identity.

From the Kamaila villgers' response it can be inferred that participation was ideally an outcome of voluntary consciousness to one's aspirations and a response realities. It is the combination of their aspirations and response to the realities which then constitute individual identity and shape their behaviour adjusting to their needs and their context. Individuals are their centres and spaces and not centred by externally or institutionally constructed spaces or ideas. In the process they enable their own agency, organically (Burkey, 1993). In this view, participation is the exercise of the individuals' capabilities and capacities in meeting their needs and aspirations.

The limited effects of communication messages on participation however, cannot be generalised, as it can be inferred from both villages that their identities had shifted with changing contexts. To understand why participation is not a commitment, it was noted that the villagers' way of viewing life, albeit varying in degrees, was a complex combination of traditional and NGO orientation, but traditional forms of transmission are predominantly part of the psychodynamic processes where knowledge is inter-generationally transferred to humans from birth as they form their identities. In Kamaila, it was noted that identity construction was an ongoing process which began at birth, through to adulthood. Traditional forms of social orientation are at the centre stage in inculcating an individual and a communal identity, both of which are grounded on shared cultural values system (cf. Giddens, 1984). Constructing an identity and deconstructing or changing behaviour, is thus not a short or five-term project-based communication for development venture as stated in the MDGs and other project activities.

Mwandama offers a different scenario. Due to the massive capital investment in the project activities and the use of communication by the MVP project, the villagers there had adopted modern farming methods which had led to deforestation as the villagers cleared land for farming, triggering soil erosion in the process. This factor, combined with an erratic rainfall pattern and privatisation of water sources by commercial farmers meant that the newly adopted way of life had become unsustainable and therefore rendered the villagers incapable of depending on their traditional ways of life, resulting in high vulnerabilities such as food shortages. The MVP justified its relevance and introduction of the farming project based on food shortages. As this chapter has demonstrated elsewhere, identity is the main source of pride, power and knowledge. Yet in the Mwandama Village, identity had been turned into the target of communication for social change, to transform it into a preferred being that behaved in line with the expectations of the MDGs. Participation by the villagers became the projection of this new way of life from which the individual villagers conveyed and performed tasks in project activities, with a strong belief that this way of life was the only way to a better life.

As highlighted in Chapter 2, the Mwandama project, which is divided into two five-year phases employed a broad package of activities which included farming inputs, school construction, HIV prevention, donor funding, infra-structure development and others, with the goal of breaking the poverty cycle, consequently mapping the way forward for sustainable development. Prior to and during the Millennium Project, the villagers provided employment for $0.50 to the surrounding commercial tobacco farmers, who were linked to the private sector in Malawi and abroad. The project was built on several assumptions, the first being that the people of Mwandama were poor and food insecure because they were unable to produce enough cereal to sustain their consumption needs, despite cereal never being part of their staple food. Lack of these newly-introduced cereals or the low harvest thereof signified poverty and not their capabilities or available opportunities. The NGO in Mwandama Village thus credited itself with increasing the average maize yield five-fold, from 0.8 to 4.5 tons per hectare, which resulted in a surplus and a contract to supply maize to an international organisation, thus earning its members more than $50, 000 in 2010 for the entire village. A co-relationship of narratives is sequenced to form a discourse, where increased production is linked to increased economic income, which is attracting other economic services such as banking facilities for the villagers to save their earnings, as well as a telecommunications system. For the Mwandama Villagers, these factors have configured their lives, even though not completely. For instance, lack of food due to erratic rains, is used to justify the MVP in which villagers must participate to avert hunger.

7.6 Conclusion

Unlike Chapter 6, this chapter has drawn from views of various respondents in Malawi and Zambia and some theoretical frameworks highlighting how the notion of participation within policy spaces and project activities were either stifled or controlled by the presence of power. External power and knowledge dominated policy spaces available to Malawians and Zambians from village up to national level. Behind these are capital interests pursuing the neoliberal agenda. The role of communication for development, contrary to the calls by the UNSG to empower citizens to participate, had the opposite effect of weakening the villagers and co-opting them into the streams of neoliberal power. Traditional tools of communication which had been part of the villagers' cultural ecosystem had been heavily institutionalised and taken away from the grassroots.

The convergence of interests, power and knowledge, sustained the neoliberal discourse partly by attempting to marginalize, stigmatize and exclude the villagers' ways of life, seen as unwanted and therefore barriers to development. This proved to be a means by which hegemony was placing the villagers into the perpetual fear of a constructed poverty and ushering them into the preferred way of life (Foucault, 1995). Fear was induced through communication to re-orient the villagers into dumping their own culture and adopting the neoliberal culture despite the fact that it was not sustainable within their local context as both the knowledge and material requirements were external. These observations in this chapter, reinforce the widely held view that developing societies are under an information hegemony siege from the western countries (UNESCO, 1980). Although this may be true, it is not adequate to explain poverty in African countries, given Foucault's (2003) assertion that power is everywhere. As this chapter observed, the villagers were not passive receivers of media messages. This scenario is echoed by Cox (1996; p.377) who sees opportunities of transforming power "relations both within and among nations in the direction of greater social equity." Kamaila Villagers illustrated the strength of subaltern power, even under a dominant discourse, despite the lack of direct co-relation between communication, participation and behaviour change, even when awareness was high. This proved that it is the symbiotic relationship between identity, behaviours and the context that are more at play in deciding participation than media effects. The next chapter presents the findings on the extent to which communication for development had been used in the two villages under study.

Chapter Eight: Knowledge and Communication for Development

8.1 Introduction

What emerges from Chapter 6 and 7 so far is that the flow of knowledge is skewed from the centre to the periphery – from the knowledgeable West to the unknowledgeable, underdeveloped South. In providing the historical accounts of the MDGs, Chapter 6 observed and concluded that the knowledge and ideas that frame both the MDGs and the UN Communication for Strategy are influenced by western ideas, most specifically aimed at changing the minds of the South, without the appetite to explore existing knowledge and ways of life of villagers. On one hand, Chapter 7 demonstrated that the discourses and narratives that frame these policy documents transcend actor interests and also bring ideas, knowledge and norms that structure the operation of local policies, including undermining the individual villagers' ability to make decisions relevant to their local context. This construction of policy spaces shapes how participation, exchange of ideas and communication for development are interpreted at policy formulation and implementation levels.

This chapter continues with the same line of inquiry of examining the implications of the UN Communication for Development strategy on participation in the villages vis-à-vis how the villagers derived and perceived their participation in addressing their problems. It has three objectives. The first is to argue that the Kamaila and Mwandama Villages exist in a specific social context, shaped by both local and national communicative and knowledge ecologies from which they derive their view of life (cf. Altheide, 1995). The second objective is to highlight that the villagers in Kamaila and Mwandama, contrary to the widely held view that they are poor due to lack of knowledge, are not unthinking as they possess valuable knowledge from their local context and lived experiences. Thirdly, and building on the two objectives, is a critical look at the extent to which the UN Communication for Development strategy is used to implement the MDG-related projects. Findings in this chapter demonstrate that, firstly, there are two sets of poverty knowledge, namely the village and the conventional knowledge. Secondly, that communication for development in MDG project-related activities has used both modern and local modes of social communication to privilege conventional development knowledge over local knowledge. In concluding, this chapter argues that portraying poverty in the villages as a consequence of a certain type of knowledge, the UN system through the MDGs is complicit with neoliberalism whose aim is to absorb the local into the global. But as Chapter

7 has demonstrated already, local knowledge is stronger because of its grounding in local culture and context.

8.2 Communicative ecologies of the villages

Before addressing the extent to which communication for development was used in the Kamaila and Mwandama Villages to implement MDG project activities, it is imperative to take a closer look at the communicative ecologies of these two villages. This is necessary in order to establish an understanding of the villagers themselves and how they saw themselves (cf. Altheide, 1995). According to Tacchi, Slater and Hearn (2003), a communicative ecology is a particular social system comprising many, but different people, social communicative activities and social relationships. In its traditional use and in this study, the communicative ecology approach is relevant to understanding the villagers within their social context and forms of media as well as communication tools available to them (cf. Foth, 2003). Slater and Hearn (2003) and Foth (2003) define communicative ecologies in terms of three layers – technological (radio, television, ICTs), social (community meetings, informal networks, institutions) and discursive (themes or content of both mediated and unmediated communication).

While this approach is relevant to this study, I choose to provide a critical look at the communication ecologies in the different strata in which these manifest. In taking this approach, my baseline assumption is that prior to making contact with the outside world which consists of the NGO project activities, the villagers in Mwandama and Kamaila had other ways or factors shaping how they viewed themselves. They were not blank slates but a people with a thriving social ecology. Thus, communication for development must not be concerned with the effectiveness of message delivery in fostering the desired participation, but rather, seek to establish and understand local views on poverty as a starting point. During focus group discussions in Kamaila and Mwandama, the villagers commented that their identities and worldview were derived from and grounded in their history. Common forms of media and social communication tools used in these villages can be categorised into five groups.

8.2.1 Internal communicative ecologies

The first category of communicative ecologies in both Kamaila and Mwandama is at inter-personal level, where communication is characterised by direct, face-to-face dialogue, often between and among families and people of different age groups, classes and genders. The villagers' social system can be characterised as an outcome of a shared value system, using traditionally constructed cultural signifiers to make sense of their lives (cf. Katz and Rice, 2002). These shared values and the villagers' ability to use shared cultural signifiers such as a common language, in both cases the Chewa language, enabled them to interact as their primary means of social communication, thus confirming Katz and Aakhus's (2002) postulation on social communication. Instances of such social communication included the way fathers in Kamaila taught their sons to carve wood or how aunties and uncles taught teenagers how to be adults as they prepared to undergo initiation[50] in Mwandama Village. These sessions were either pre-planned or ad hoc.

The second category is the family level, in most cases the extended family, where the elderly used folklore, didactic traditional riddles (similar to quizzes), songs and dance to transfer family values and traditional knowledge to the young generation. These sessions, in most cases carried out in the evening or at night after the day's work, were led by grandparents in transmitting knowledge to their grandchildren. These also included interpreting the meanings of natural phenomena. For instance, in Kamaila Village, an overabundance of natural fruit signified possibilities of a drought, thus families are required to harvest and dry the fruit for storage and for future use. In Mwandama Village, the interpretation differed but animals, creatures and vegetation were highlighted as vital indicators of climatic forecast. This is because, as stated in sections of this study, riverine and forestry ecosystems were the main drivers of their livelihood system.

The third category is the traditional media and village communicative systems. These include traditional village gatherings common in both villages. They were either organised by the village heads, requested by the spiritual media or other ceremonies. The format of these platforms differed. In most cases, proceedings were led by the village leadership, who occupy traditional positions to interpret spiritual messages (policies) to the villagers. The process of communication was top-down, from either the spiritual media via village leaders, as in Katz and Lazarsfeld's (1955) two-step, to the villagers segmented by song, drums, dance and sermons. Each of these has an important role in imparting knowledge, reinforcing old values and disseminating new messages. Therefore, culture in the villages was dynamic, but driven by local communication ecologies.

[50] Though not any more common in the Mwandama Village, girls used to undergo *chinamwali*, a traditional girl initiation process.

These first three categories are internal communicative ecologies, which are major parts of the cultural production and reproduction system in these villages. Each category has a different audience and content. The knowledge transfer at each stage gives the audience a heterogeneous identity at individual, family and village level. They are interwoven by shared cultural values, which in turn make the villages different from others, even though they belong to the same nation in a geographical format, and not cultural tradition (cf. Tacchi, Slater and Hearn, 2003; Seton-Watson (1977). The forms of discourse that emerge out of these are discussed later in this chapter, but what is vital to highlight here is that this shared cultural ecosystem is part of the villagers' ways to self-organize and take action through communicative processes on issues of mutual interest such as well-being, livelihood, entertainment and others. The main defining factor in these villages was not the physical place or their geographical location. Villagers' identities were defined by shared cultural traditions and sociological conditions which Anderson (2006) describes as imagined communities.

8.2.2 External communicative ecologies

The other two categories are external communicative ecologies. The first is a communicative system whose discourse is conveyed by NGOs. It is the same discourse which makes the villagers – through how their poverty is assessed by the global policies – to be viewed as poor within an imagined global village. The concept of imagined communities is described in Anderson (2006) as culturally shared values. According to Allison (2007), the nation-state or global village, are powerful metaphors, empowering the NGOs to apply a universal knowledge on poverty through various forms of communication. Thus, the poverty, which the NGOs seek to address, arises from the imagined poverty. The role of the NGO in defining poverty on behalf of the grassroots is discussed extensively in this study.

Conventional mass media, as the fifth category is an important player in the communicative ecologies of Malawi and Zambia in general, and at village level in particular. This especially relates to radio because of its ability to overcome literacy and language barriers. While media freedom and access to information have been largely determined by who is in power, the democratization of Malawi has seen the rise of several radio stations including state, private and community-owned broadcasters and print outlets across parts of the country. The most accessible media, with the most reach remains radio, as literacy in English remains low. *The Daily Times* and *The Nation* are the only two daily newspapers in Malawi. Both are in English and privately owned. Five[51] privately owned weeklies were in circulation at the time of conducting this study. The growth of newspapers was constrained by viability problems, low literacy rates and distribution challenges (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2012). There was only one national television station and three religious television stations, which had very small reach.

Unlike print and television, radio continued to be the most popular means of transmitting and accessing information in Malawi because of its wide reach and availability in local languages. By June 2013, there were at least 34 radio stations operational in Malawi, 14 of which were community radio stations, eight privately owned and commercial in content[52]. This was a significant improvement, considering that Malawi did not have any private radio stations in 1998. The Malawi Broadcasting Corporation's (MBC) Radio 1 and 2, were owned by the state and had the capacity to reach 95 per cent of the country if all transmitters and equipment were working (ibid). The government of Malawi and numerous NGOs relied on state-owned MBC Radio 1 whose content targeted rural communities such as the Mwandama Villagers on development issues such as poverty, agriculture, education, and health among other matters. Chanco Radio Station, attached to the Chancellor University in Zomba, covered the district and its peripheries, including the Mwandama Village. Due to these radio stations' proximity to the Millennium Project offices and the village, they were able to collect information (in the form of interviews) from the project officers and the villagers for broadcast. This formed part of participatory communication techniques that supported agricultural efforts using local languages and voices to communicate directly with the villagers.

Despite a diminishing media space, several information sources existed in Zambia, including print, radio and television, and growing internet and mobile phone platforms (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2013). There were four major daily newspapers in Zambia, which included *The Times of Zambia*, the *Daily Mail*, (both government-owned), the *Post* and the *Daily Nation* (both privately owned). The government also ran the Zambia News and Information Services agency (ZANIS). These papers published in English and their distribution was limited to urban centres, not reaching villages such as Kamaila despite its proximity to Lusaka city. Occasionally, however, old newspapers found their way to the village through visitors or NGO staff. There were also six national weeklies, two of which were state-owned (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung,

[51] The Business Times (English), Malawi News and Weekend Nation (both in English and Chichewa) the fortnightly Fuko Nation (Chichewa and Tumbuka), The Weekend Nation (English).
[52] http://www.osisa.org/other/malawi/malawi-media-landscape (accessed on 9 September 2015)

2013). Compared to Malawi, Zambia had made some strides in opening up space for television. In addition to the two state-owned Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) television stations (ZNBC 1 and ZNBC 2), there were other privately owned stations such as Muvi TV, North West TV, TBN, Prime TV, and Copperbelt TV. Television viewership was limited by transmission challenges and limited television-set ownership as only an estimated 45 percent of Zambian families owned a television set (Ibid).

According to the Africa Media Barometer report for 2013, an estimated 60 radio stations were operating in Zambia, reaching every corner of the country. Of these, only three national stations were state-owned with the rest being private and community radio stations. Radio is the most accessible medium, with an estimated 87 percent of families in the country owning at least a radio receiver. Rural radio coverage accounts for 84 percent. At least 16 community radio stations were available in Zambia, covering specific geographical locations (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2013). Most radio stations had embraced technology and social media to significantly improve their reach. Mobile phones, aided by solar energy, had also increased radio listenership. The government-owned broadcaster, the ZNBC ran three radio stations. ZNBC Radio 2 and 4 broadcast in English while Radio 1 which was multi-lingual focused more on developmental issues using different tools such as drama, comedy and songs. This was the radio station the Kamaila Villagers highlighted as their source of information on the MDGs and other developmental issues.

The goal of setting out these communicative ecologies is to situate the assumption that the ideas and messages emerging from them somewhat shape the characteristics of the individual villagers in line with both local realities and the global village's imagined commune norms. They create power relations, worldviews and courses of action. While there is no consensus on media effects on behaviour change, there is yet to be more focus on how different types of communicative ecologies project individual behaviour in relation to being a member of a group or imagined community. Such studies would take away the burden on media effects by providing insights into the communicative ecology of different categories.

8.3 Understanding poverty from the village knowledge ecology

This section focuses on how and why villagers became aware of their own ways of life. To respond to these questions, this study draws from theories of knowing (cf. Longhofer, Winchester and Baiocchi, (2012), informed by Foucault's (1991) ideas on knowledge and its omnipresence. The goal is to establish if the external knowledge provided by the NGOs and the media on poverty, was the only relevant form of such knowledge. Also highlighted in this section, is the contrast between local and global knowledge, setting the scene for explaining why the notion of poverty is evasive unless local views are understood and appreciated.

Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) methodology approach enables this study to apply interpretive inquiry from the villagers' narration of their lived-lives in order to unpack factors that shaped or have shaped the ways of lives outside the NGO projects in Kamaila and Mwandama. Narrative inquiry was relevant to capture local wisdom. It is an approach to understanding identity construction by placing the villagers in a position of power as the speaking subject, storytelling and autonomous entities. As a starting assumption, the villagers have led storied lives. In the same vein, the stories characterize the history and experiences of the villagers in relation to their ways of life. This enables a juxtaposition of their lived lives against that of the MDGs project activities. Thus, I use narrative as both a phenomenon and a method of inquiry. The next section presents findings of the narrative analysis from the villagers.

8.3.1 The Kamaila Village

According to the people of Kamaila, the village started in 1963 and had since grown to over 4,000 people, spanning almost four kilometres long. The village started from a group of charcoal burners who traded with surrounding commercial farmers and farm workers. As commercial farming activity diminished, the villagers diversified their means of livelihood. Livelihood, poverty or wellbeing in Kamaila Village was characterised by different dimensions remote from that promoted by the MDGs. Self-worth emerged as one of the key factors defining their view of life and well-being, where each individual villager evaluated their worth in relation to their capabilities, available opportunities and aspirations.

> *What makes us happy is our ability to do what we aspire, to meet our daily needs and achieving our long term goals. For a young man growing up in the village, they need to be known beyond just their names or those of their families by what value they add to themselves and the village…, a young man who goes to town and bring sugar is equally acceptable as one who goes to hunt or who beats the drums during ceremonies. They are all important differently* (FGD, Villager in Kamaila Village on 2 May 2015).

The link between the concept of self-worth and power is captured by Foucault (1980, p.30) who describes it as a manifestation of power when it "reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives."

The villagers' responses to how they understood their lives suggests that the Kamaila Villagers derived their knowledge of well-being from the individual villager's own value to oneself before being part of the village. This confirm Foucault's idea (2003) that the same power from which knowledge is derived decides the 'truth'. Here we see that the notion of truth on well-being is not limited to the manifestation of social collective but rather, individual judgement based on their assessment of life against their benchmark of self-worth. This perspective discounts the notion in the UN Communication strategy that when knowledge is transmitted to the villagers, it changes their minds and regulates their behaviour. The approach here should be to explore and promote existing potential than change people. In addition, the way well-being is conceived, indicates a relocation of power from structures of governance to an individual's aspirations on achieving self-worth. Therefore, the effect of the power wielded in the NGOs knowledge, transmitted through different communication channels and tools, is reduced, unless it speaks to the contextual factors that determine the individual's aspired self-worth (cf. Foucault 1977). Attempts by individual villagers to maintain and retain individual autonomy echoes Freire's (1970) referencing of the non-formal activity occurring outside the dominant domain as a form of cultural action. In the case of Kamaila Village, it was noted that the cultural action occurred in their traditional, individual and community spaces, outside the NGO and government structures. Here we see a curious scenario where the individual, by being able to make decisions and choices, becomes an empowered actor in their own policy space to make decisions and choices, unconstrained by institutional pre-set norms. But the same individual is also part of other village spaces whose role is complementary to others. Aspiring to achieve self-worth was the vehicle by which individuals coped and resisted the social contradictions of the NGO discourse which threatened to subordinate them.

The second factor that came out of the interviews with the villagers in Kamaila was that self-worth is not an outcome of comparison as in Luke (1974) and Abrahamson, (2004) or 'othering' as in Miller (2008) but a construction of each individual's unique value. These social attributes had constructed the different individual's social identities in relation to their different environmental and cultural contexts in the village. The way villagers enacted their identities is considered in this study as a form of locally informed and driven participation which defined each individual villagers' social status in their social order. In addition, these attributes gave them gratification and value in the lives they cherished. Skill sets that arose from these and other modes of participation were unsurprisingly not taken into account by the NGOs' water project because its goals were linked to those of the UN MDGs and backed donor interests and not of those of the villagers. Some of the individual activities highlighted during the discussions included gardening, farming, hunting, weaving, carving, playing drums and other musical instruments at traditional ceremonies, singing, constructing and thatching houses and trading in charcoal.

The third factor is that self-worth was referenced severally, including the skills mentioned above. For example, if an individual villager were talented in playing certain musical instruments relevant to the traditional ways of life, it would earn them both respect, social status and a living, and therefore a source of gratification and contentment. Responses from the Kamaila Villagers suggested a strong link between gratification and well-being. Unlike with the MDGs, gratification and well-being did not derive their meanings only from the presence of material resources or funding, but locally available resources and capabilities. In fact poverty, in the villagers' view, was when they were displaced from their cultural and epistemological context, including out of their available resources and capabilities which largely shaped their ability to achieve self-worth. For example, playing traditional instrument was linked to several modes of gratification such as appeasing the ancestors, social appreciation, income earning, and promoting a dialogic transfer of knowledge.

The fourth factor that emerged from the responses in Kamaila Village is that gratification and well-being form the symbiotic cultural ecosystem of their lifestyle largely shaped by their lived experience and self-worth. Foucault's postulation of power perhaps pertains to this level of individual autonomy, which in the case of the Kamaila Villagers operated as part of social and individual relations to their contexts, factors which together shaped behaviour. It was the same individual autonomy which facilitated the reproduction of the villagers' identities and culture through coping with and adjusting to changes (cf. Foucault 1977). Several theories of participation, especially that of Chambers (1997), have advocated using power as a course of empowering the poor, but that has resulted in diminishing the power of the excluded as well as stigmatising the same individual should they seek to remain autonomous. Through the NGO project, power insidiously attempted to regulate and re-channel the villagers' capabilities into a certain mode of production and consumption. A key question arises on why skills found in Kamaila Village, big money earners in the western world, were only used by the NGO for social change to achieve their goals instead of converting them into high profit-making ventures.

8.3.2 The Mwandama Village

The Mwandama Village, located in the southern region of Malawi's Zomba district, has become a recent laboratory for testing external development ideas (cf. Chapter 2). The villagers too had either become willing customers or just opted to be converted objects of laboratory testing. When asked about the history of their own ways of living, they were quick to divert the discussion to demonstrate how knowledgeable they were about poverty, the importance of the NGO projects in their lives and the meaning of the MDGs. It took a lot of effort to convince them that knowing their history was also an important part of this study. It was later established that they used every opportunity to convince every visitor to the project site of the need to continue funding the project.

However, their narrations of their history and cultural practices revealed that part of what remained of their lifestyles was drawn from their past and ancestors, most specifically, on how decision-making was based on each individual's ability to comprehend their local complexities. Contrary to what is proposed in the MDGs, the spaces where decisions were made at both individual and village level were influenced by personal factors and priorities. Narrative accounts provided by the villagers suggested that the people of Mwandama were, even though now mixed due to migration to the area, largely of Yao[53] tribal origins who had occupied the land since the 19the century. They are descendants of traders who plied trade between the inland tribes and the Arabs on the east coast. They have remained a fragmented group along kinship but under the same traditional chieftainship since the beginning of the 20th century. Their livelihoods and lifestyles were shaped by their proximity to the Lake Chilwa basin, where villages have historically practiced fishing and a riverine livelihood system. In addition, the Miombo woodlands have until recently, been part of their other major source of livelihoods[54].

[53] The Yao people are one of the major Bantu ethnic and linguistic groups, largely occupying the southern part of the Lake Malawi. (Mitchell, J. C.,1971)

[54] Miombo woodlands were the source of their basic needs such as shelter, tools and free fuel. Small forest animals, birds, insects, fruits, tubers, medicines and fodder for livestock were among the by-products that were harvested from the woodlands.

> *A long time ago, we used to survive on fishing for both family consumption and trading with other tribes. During times of drought, our forefathers traded fish with cereals from other areas. Fish were dried, stored and sold"* (FGD, Villager in Mwandana, 28 April).

Responses from the villagers suggest that colonisation introduced cash trade, and the villagers started earning money from selling fish, firewood, charcoal, poles, thatch and fruits. This is corroborated by Sheldon (2013) who states that during the colonial period, indigenous people lost power and economic autonomy with the arrival of cash crops, farming and villagers' exclusion from economic activities.

One of the villagers commented, *"During the same days, our ancestors traded sorghum from Mozambique areas."* (FGD, Mwandama Village 28 April 2015). Maize farming, such as the one under the MVP, was a new concept introduced after colonialism and had largely altered both the environment and livelihood culture. The villagers were forced to clear the woodlands to pave way for farming activities as part of embracing a new way of life. Even though dependence on the woodlands had changed over time, it remained one of the main sources of subsistence livelihood, especially its ability to retain healthy water catchments for Lake Chilwa while reducing soil erosion, an important factor in farming (cf. Mvula, P. et al., 2014).

Colonisation and modernisation have also meant a loss of access to natural resources, ownership of land and water resources as they were commercialised by foreign farmers (Sheldon, 2013). Villagers were pushed to the fringes of water sources and fertile land and their only involvement was limited to providing labour to the farmers. At the time of data gathering for this study, they partly relied on markets for consumption as they had abandoned their non-monetary traditional ways and sources of livelihood. One villager complained that even though they were also farmers under the MVP project, they were not allowed to use the nearby water source owned by a local commercial farmer because it had been privatised. Overall, riverine and forestry were the main sources of livelihood for the Mwandama Villagers (cf. Mvula, P. et al., 2014).

Cox's (1981) argument that neoliberal ideas carry with them interest and have a target audience resonates with life in Mwandama Village. To understand the relationship between the Mwandama Village and the Millennium project, Giddens' (1984) sociological view on the complex relationship between human agency and social structures becomes handy. Giddens examines the institutionalization of power relations, especially that which arises from external structures but impacts social action on local culture in producing and reproducing hegemony and sustaining inequality. While the Millennium Village project is seen from both humanitarian and poverty reduction angles, as a project affiliated to different national and global structures, it represents invisible power. Giddens (1984) is by no means discounting the existence of power and structures; he views participation as a self-reproducing phenomenon which is an outcome of recursion. This is acknowledging that the Mwandama Villagers did not come into existence because of the presence of the MVP but had persistently re-created their way of life by expressing themselves individually and collectively.

Notwithstanding these contradictions, the MVP, heralded as a typical operationalization of the MDGs, represents the global status quo which caters, in this case, for the interests of the commercial farmers, the suppliers of agricultural inputs and those who purchase the harvests, with the villagers being part of the processing system. We learn from the above that the Mwandama Villagers, before colonization and modernization, possessed their own power which derived from their local realities and cultural context and these determined their lifestyles. The prevailing order in Mwandama contradicted and undermined this historical configuration as the source of rules had shifted to the hands of the surrounding commercial farmers, the NGO operating in the area, and somewhat weakly, the government. These rules were not only designed to control and manage the now privately owned natural resources but were also used to suppress both the alternative order and pre-existing ways of lifestyles of the Mwandama people (cf. Neufeld, 1995). While I acknowledge that culture by nature is dynamic and so is lifestyle, I argue that this historical context, if not contained by external impositions of new ways of life, should therefore be the baseline for understanding and responding to poverty in Mwandama Village.

The power of the Millennium Project Alliance over the villagers placed it in control to serve the interests of varied actors. Cox (1983) describes this social re-organisation within the context of hegemony, and how it thrives on social ordering in which the NGO in Mwandama, in this instance, was acting as the provider of material and knowledge, and villagers reduced to passive receivers of both. With this social order in place, the villagers became less empowered but dependently acquired access to the NGO spaces where they could express their views. This is not to suggest, however, that achievement of autonomy or participation is an outcome of, or a credible basis for changing behaviours. Notwithstanding, the wealth of history of capacities and capabilities, explained earlier, was discarded as the MVP proceeded to build a discourse based on farming, justified by a purported lack of food, due to drought, erratic rains, lack of knowledge and technology. This ignored the fact that the current mode of farming was in the first place not the villagers' source of livelihood and that the current situation was a deliberate ploy to give prominence to the NGO's ideas.

The new way of life introduced into the village by the MVP gradually replaced the villagers' local lifestyle in the name of poverty reduction through a constant supply of ideas that sustained neoliberalism. Western ideas were deployed to control the villagers' minds through indirect coercion which when analysed from a social transformation theory that dominates the UN Communicating for Development strategy suggests persuasion predicated on fear of either sanction or suffering on the part of the villagers (cf. van Dijk, 1987). The function of communication for development, especially how it exercises power becomes critical in understanding how privileging neoliberal domination is not only limiting possibilities for empowerment but also dis-empowers the villagers by ignoring and annihilating local knowledge and local modes of lifestyle. As noted in some sections of this chapter, the objective of communication in promoting participation in the NGO projects was firstly to reduce the social distance by bringing the villagers closer to NGO projects. In addition, the aim was to subject them to a linear process where the villagers shift from the perceived state of under-development to development through observable social and economic development indicators defined by the NGOs (cf. Servaes and Malikhao, 2004). It is against this rise of neoliberal hegemony that Freire's (1970) ideas on critical literacy and the emancipatory discussion become handy. Freire conceived of democratic participation, dialogical approach and a cultural circle emerging from a discourse context that allows for critical analysis as passage to empowerment and participation in decisions that affect individuals and the grassroots. The starting point for his proposal is a context pre-configured by an uncontaminated historical background and a cultural circle from which a local vision is constructed. This constructed vision is internally conceived by villagers both individually and collectively, and characterized by equal dialogue, participation and a critical understanding of both the inner world, and outside world in which the process of progress occurs.

Freire's (1970) ideas are pertinent given that the poverty being addressed by the NGO in Mwandama was not informed by the realities of the villagers but constructed by the discourse of conventional development. Inputs and knowledge were both outsourced and their availability was dependent on external funding and global factors. While arguing that the poverty reduction model in the MDG is controlled by neoliberal interests may appear conspiratorial, we note, for example, that the World Disaster Report (2011) cautions that, “the last half of the 20th century saw an ever-increasing economic concentration of power among the providers of agro-chemicals, machinery, seed and other inputs to farmers…. Today, four or five grain traders control most of the grain moving around the world” (IFRC[55], 2011. p.29). Similarly, the seed sector in Malawi is controlled by multinational seed companies linked to the four or five mentioned above (ISSD, 2012)[56]. Local seed varieties and other local farming inputs are no longer in use as a result.

> *Traditionally, we used to store and recycle seed for the next planting season. After every harvest we would select the best seed for use the next planting season. We learnt from our forefathers how to store seed and create manure for the next season. But with the arrival of western seed, we all have been forced to dump our traditional methods of producing and storing seed. This means that every season we need to have cash to buy new seed or wait for NGOs to give us seed* (FGD, Mwandama headman, 28 April 2015).

The village headman’s concern with the imminent end of funding was testimony to the above but also exemplified how unsustainable external projects that are not grounded on local capacities can be.

Again, the power of money proved to be a deciding factor on poverty reduction priorities and their implementation. Adopting such priorities come at the cost of ceding power to those who fund the projects, thus exposing the Mwandama Villagers to the whims of commercial actors’ profit making interests. These actors, who form part of the private sector network, control the funding system, the supply of inputs, and the marketing of the produce. This construction of narratives into a poverty reduction discourse follows similar actor segmentation. The donor provides the funding; the NGO implements the idea whose inputs are sourced from the private sector, part of whom are the buyers of the output. Both the villagers and the government are reduced to bystanders or passive beneficiaries in the vicious cycle of capital interests. The connection between charity and economic interests, especially on food production, was discussed earlier in this chapter. This is by no means reducing the relevance of materialism in uplifting the lives of the people of Mwandama, but it amplifies Cox’s (1983) argument that capital interests embedded within MDGs ideas have the net effect of corrupting and weakening

[55] International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies
[56] ISSD Briefing Note – September 2012: Malawi Seed Sector Assessment

the Mwandama Villagers (cf. Leysens, 2008). One example is how the villagers had lost access to their natural resources and had also been absorbed into ideological machinery that made them perpetually rely on NGO project activities. Without taking into account the relevance of local capabilities as a basis for understanding poverty, the MDGs' veracity is highly questionable especially in an environment where the presence of its project activities deepened vulnerabilities and widened inequalities.

8.4 Communication for development

Communication between individual villagers and the NGOs, including the governments, is not just a matter of employing the media to promote dialogue on eradicating poverty, but to promote ideas. The model adopted by the NGOs in the two villages of this study, is that of transmitting ideas based on Rogers' (1962) top-down diffusion model purportedly to enlightening the unenlightened villagers. While there was a wide range of communication strategies used in the two villages from face-to-face, traditional and interpersonal media, mass media, village meetings and social mobilisation tools in both villages to convey development messages and to encourage participation, involvement and behaviour change, I will only focus on those that I found to be commonly used in these villages. For example, there were a lot of printed materials used or distributed even though there were concerns that due to varying literacy levels in these villages, their effectiveness was limited. As a result, the NGOs preferred the inter-personal and edutainment approach. It must also be emphasised that NGOs see the function of communication as two-fold, i.e., to collect views for planning and to transmit ideas. These together combine into project communication activities as part of conveying 'what the people have said' even though it is evident that ideas being transmitted promote goals that have been set elsewhere. The next section discusses findings on the extent to which the UN Communication for Development strategy had been applied in the villages to promote the MDG poverty reduction projects.

This study refers to communication for development as any form of communication processes, techniques and media that facilitate transmission or exchange of ideas between and among different actors. Therefore, the study views communication as a process of diffusing, acquiring, exchanging and disseminating ideas. The UNSG's recommendation, which is the rationale of this study, insinuates that the effect of communication transcends transmission of ideas to include their practical operationalisation. We can draw from the UNSG's line of thinking, that knowledge is thus seen as the basis of decision-making, human action and social transformation. It is thus not the process of transmitting, but the ideas being transmitted taking into account Cox's (1979, 1980) caution on the link between knowledge and interests. However, as this study will reveal, the theorisation in the UNSG's recommendations oversimplifies the power of knowledge, because whereas knowledge can be seen as the power over things, its communication is not always a basis of action. Not all knowledge leads to action, nor is it always agenda-based. Participation, too, was elusive, ranging from benefitting from project activities, sitting in meetings, expressing views, involvement of the villagers in decision-making and activities aimed at improving their lives. The underlying assumption in these interpretations is that when the villagers were part of project activities or their own activities, their lives would improve.

Notwithstanding the above arguments, views from the media, NGOs and the governments reveal a significant investment and a strong belief in communication as a useful tool in creating awareness on development projects. Communication is seen as a means to lure or directly force the villagers into some form of engagement with NGOs and national authorities and to mobilize them to get involved in project activities. Traditional and modern forms of media converged to summon the villagers in Kamaila and Mwandama to be part of development projects. The use of communication tools by both the NGOs and the media, hinges on two aspects. First, to persuade the villages to participate and adopt new ways of life and second, to instil fear of sanctions or suffering that may arise as a result of not partaking in the proposed lifestyle (cf. van Dijk, 1987). Under this arrangement, the notion of consensus deliberately blurs the presence of coercive power and ideology, by using community consultation and involvement to create an impression of locally-owned project plans to which the villagers must commit. In a similar vein, the project plans are used as sources of ideas and knowledge, which inform communication strategies under the guise that they are villagers' ideas and the NGOs are doing them a favour by transferring their knowledge back to the villagers.

8.4.1 Communication, culture and social transformation

Contrary to general practice where communication for development is characterised by billboards and printed material, the most preferred media in the two village were inter-personal and group communications. Traditional occasions have always been special moments to share knowledge and exchange ideas in both villages. They are characterised by traditional dances, depending on who has requested them. In Mwandama, because of its link to the MVP project framework, the Millennium Promise NGO-initiated events tended to be a mixture of local and outsourced performances. But those by the villagers were often done at the request of the village spirit mediums or the headmen at funerals, rites of passage initiations, and the appointment of new community leadership. In Kamaila, traditional ceremonies carried different weights of importance depending on who had requested them. Where traditional leadership requested them, they were linked to the traditional and spiritual ceremonies, often to reproduce and reinforce vital elements of cultural order and to provide fixed reference points as part of villagers' cultural reproduction. Each villager bore a different identity, but they were also united by shared cultural values from which they claimed their 'original identities', contrasting them with those introduced by modernisation.

Social communication had historically existed to serve intra-communal dialogue to enrich villagers' lives, and its function had not been limited to a tool of cultural change but a vital tool of cultural dynamism and evolution. In each of the communication activities mentioned by the villagers, they were clear about the goals they sought to achieve, but largely to facilitate intra-dialogue and raise awareness among fellow villagers regarding their situation and responsibilities. This was contrary to how communication was suggested by the UNSG and how it had been used in the two villages. For the NGOs, media and the government, the communication for development was largely focused on changing minds and behaviour and not enriching what already existed. This is not an attempt to underestimate or neglect the presence of local power dynamics and their relevance to the role of communication within the villages' traditional set up by focusing only on the NGOs, donor, UN system, and neoliberal power on the villages (cf. Berger, 1985). It was noted earlier that the villagers' power was located within their traditional structure, cultural domain and spiritual realms. Within that domain, it can be deduced that the function of communication at that level was to convey messages and to sustain local discourse production and reproduction, while facilitating the pursuance of their aspirations.

The prevailing dissonances on the way communication for development is used by the NGOs and how it is understood by villagers mirrors the knowledge disparities discussed earlier in this chapter. There is specific reason for the NGO to adopt these methods apart from literacy exercise. Infusing external knowledge into local channels is seen as an effective method of transmission as it enlists all social gate keeper to rally behind the messages. In the case of the

MDGs, communication was used to fast-track NGO projects, ignoring the fact that communication was part of the villagers' cultural ecosystem. The media and the NGOs severally referenced tapping into local culture in order to influence the desired change and as an effective means to fast-track development. Village elders and their spiritual media, were thus replaced as sources of knowledge and points of reference by project officers and the NGOs. The use of communication in such a context was no longer for the villagers' cultural good but for NGO's interests. The latter becomes the only voice of reason and the source of "truth", which relying on and manipulating the villagers' traditional communication tools to achieve its goal of eradicating the villagers' cultural practices to achieve poverty reduction (cf. Fraser, 1992).

Mass media and inter-personal communication are the most commonly used channels to spread NGO ideas and encourage villagers to be part of their project activities (cf. Servaes and Malikhao, 2004). The villagers are the target audience for an agenda change, in a classical Lasswell (1948) model of 'Who says What through Which channel to Whom with What effect'. For example, the content of communication messages such as radio programmes, inter-personal communication activities, including traditional media placed huge emphasis on the benefits of being part of development projects – in a way marketing the MDGs ideas, at the same time, downplaying the existing modes of village lifestyles. The use of local drama in both radio programming and live performance in Kamaila Village, for instance, drew from externally developed scripts, which promoted the NGO's water project as the trigger to achieving the MDGs, as well as to eradicate diseases. Similarly, drama performances which had been used by the villagers for their entertainment and pedagogical value to maintain certain cultural practices and behaviours were incorporated to advance the NGO's goals. The traditionally didactic possibilities in drama were being exploited, not for the villagers' purposes, from which theatre for development drew its relevance. Use of traditional media by the NGO in Kamaila Village was influenced by the recognition of the power of influence in traditional media on the villagers.

For the villagers, and due to their strong belief in their traditional system, any message that comes via a traditional medium carries a lot of weight. These messages are transmitted or exchanged via several traditional media such as songs, ceremonies, dance drums, drama and others, which were historically used for pedagogical purposes. These specifically target the young generation as part of preserving their cultural values. Apart from the spiritual attachment, one of the reasons cited by the villagers is that they learnt better through a combination of artistic representations, graphical texts, audio and visual aids, familiar to their cultural context. But ancestors were their main point of reference. It was on account of the villagers' strong attachment to their traditional systems of communication that NGOs and radio stations had adopted the use of songs, dance, folktale and other traditional forms which captured and appealed to the villagers' mental schema. The NGO in Kamaila confirmed that traditional media had been effective as a tool for addressing some of the development problems such as a cholera outbreak, but cautioned that the same could not be said of social transformation when it came to the modern mass media which did not often appeal to local realities. In addition, the NGO also harnessed the power of traditional leadership to relay messages to the villagers, as it recognised the power and influence of village leadership in a similar way as espoused in Katz and Lazarsfeld's (1955) two-step theory. We can infer that communication can influence choices on which decisions for adopting new behaviours and practices can be made. But communication alone is not enough to change behaviours and practices because behaviours are constituted broadly by context.

In Mwandama, the villagers also spoke of traditional media as being part of their socialisation agents where story lines were infused into performances, traditional dances, and drama to convey ideas and knowledge to villagers. The use of traditional and conventional media by the NGO in the Mwandama Village resonated with observations in Chapter 6 and in Fairclough (1989) where the discourses that make up the MDG are broken down into sequenced scenes with each story line addressing or communicating different parts of the poverty problem and the solution. Each scene or story line presents a part of the poverty problem in a way that collocates with the prescribed way of addressing it. This was evident in projects where the NGOs sought high uptake of village participation. For example, one of the songs recited by the focus group in Mwandama Village consisted of verses that highlighted a problem, its cause and the solution. The underlying key message was that the villagers were hungry because they had not participated in the MVP agriculture projects; they were sick because they lacked borehole water and proper hygiene practices, or they died because they did not have access to primary healthcare facilities, therefore making the MVP the only solution.

As demonstrated earlier, hunger and suffering were not exclusively and directly linked to farming projects in the Mwandama area. Earlier discussions have shown the diversity of the livelihood systems in the two villages with some of them not linked to farming at all. Cox's

(1980) argument that ideology, politics and knowledge are linked is vindicated, especially the erasure of local knowledge by preferring the ideas imposed by the NGO, said to represent global ways of life. In the case of Mwandama where the villagers' lifestyle was historically not linked to farming, hegemony had used maize as a signifier of food to impose mental control and dependence, with communication playing a central role in cultural re-orientation. Tying the Mwandama Villagers to maize production had discarded other alternative food types.

Placing the poverty reduction concept in sequences of cause-effect logical relation through the semantic relations between poverty and participation paved way for the NGO ideas to introduce discursive lenses through which the villagers looked at both their lives and their poverty (cf. Fairclough, 1989; Cox, 1980). In that sense, the MDG discourse and communication connived to impose a social change order which carried within it an ideology. The NGO's application of traditional modes of communication manipulated traditional tools that appealed to the villages' cultural schemas (cf. Chomsky, 2002; Luke, 1974). This was done by presenting a problem through instilling fear of poverty in villagers' minds and leaving them no option but to rally behind the NGO projects as the only solution. The high maize yields in the MVP were an essential discursive tool used to prove the NGO's case and tool of mediation between the village and NGO knowledge which was presented as indispensable. Roloff and Berger (1982) have written about how some discourses rely on scientific explanations to privilege their ideas over others. As mentioned earlier, historical narratives from the villagers in Mwandama suggest that both farming and maize were never part of their source of livelihood system.

Folktales emerged as another communication tool hijacked by the NGOs and the MBC Radio 1 station in Malawi with the goal of changing the villagers' behaviour and practices. Storytelling, story lines and drama scenes were part of the semantic tools infused into the local traditional media to positively present the NGO's ideas as better than the traditional ones. This included what was commonly described in Mwandama Village as 'using local voices' to convey messages and 'transform communities'. A respondent made reference to an example of when a villager was requested to give testimonies during NGO-organized community meetings, on how their lives had changed since the development project's introduction, similar to the classical Katz and Lazarsfelds' two-step flow, and top-down re-incarnation of Rogers' diffusion model (1995). Such testimonies are not as neutral given that they are scripted 'behind the scenes' to tell a story that addresses specific issues, 'from a personal experience'. Story lines in this model were framed to respond to the MDGs by applying a 'before and after' narrative from which negative conclusions about local practices could be made. The underlying message was that if the villagers had not divested themselves of their traditional ways of life, they would not have changed for the better.

A lot was borrowed from folk tales, which according to the villagers, had been part of how they had traditionally passed on knowledge, wisdom and moulded behaviour from one generation to another. Like the western cartoon genre, in both villages, some of the folktale story lines relied on animal characters and their cultural symbolic meanings to convey messages. In the NGO projects, the preferred ideas were embedded within the story lines and themes and positioned favourably through use of animal characters borrowed from village lore. The commonly told stories involved the hare and the baboon, with the hare representing the ideal and the wise and the baboon representing the primitive, lazy and stupid and therefore a danger to the community. Even if one was satisfied with their life outside project activities, they were still pressured to be part of the project activities to avoid social stigmatisation that came with being associated with the baboon character. Once again, Miller's (2008) discussion on 'othering' becomes relevant where the village, as transpired in this study, was placed in a state of dilemma or fear to adopt the "irrelevant" lifestyle, and the fear of not wanting to be left behind and be stigmatised.

According to the hare and baboon story, the hare also assumes the responsibility of rescuing the baboon whenever it is in trouble. Invariably, those outside project activities were portrayed as weak and therefore in need of rescue by those in the projects. When adapted to the project activities, lore became part of the symbolic power of the NGO discourse where the MDGs facilitated textual reproduction legitimization. In the folklore stories used in these villages or theatre plays, the hare character represented those who were quick to adopt new ideas and to participate in project activities that were assumed to lead to benefit. The baboon however, was stigmatised and represented those who would regret not having adopted the project's ideas at the inception of the project activities. Stigmatization was also a tool used to replace existing lifestyles and to introduce a new lone which represented the ideal. Contaminating the existing modes of local communication with NGO ideas could potentially alter the villagers' judgement of life, behaviour and practice, in a situation where understanding the villagers' lifestyle should have been paramount in complementing it. This is closely linked to the key messaging in the song mentioned earlier, where villagers who did not participate in projects (metaphorically identified with the baboon character) became associated with several negative connotations such as slow thinking, thieves in other people's farms and pariahs in society. The Mwandama

Village headman was popular for chasing away from the village, people who did not participate in the development projects.

In both villages, the people demonstrated a high level of awareness of the MDGs, the definition of poverty and how it should be addressed, essentially reciting what was in the MDGs. All this was thanks to the NGOs and radio stations' programing which invested a lot in social education and mobilization. Increased awareness was considered an indicator for assessing success and was co-located with project involvement as part of a social change that would lead to reduced poverty. Knowledge acquired through radio stations, posters, meetings and theatre performance, including directly from the NGOs was seen as necessary to influence change in attitude or behaviour and therefore production and well-being. Although these narratives portrayed the villagers as consumers of institutional knowledge, they were not as passive as presented.

The next section discusses how knowledge interfaces with participation. It is not seeking to define what participation is, but rather to understand how the villagers reacted to both conventional development and their local discourses. In other words, it seeks to examine how the villagers operationalized knowledge from their traditional understanding of way of life and that transmitted by the media and development institutions. The researcher draws from Cox's (1987) critical analysis on the relationship between ideas and participation, especially when the focus is on identifying alternatives outside the structures of power. The next section builds from the above discussion where the power of communication lies in the cultural domain of the villagers. It also draws from the persuasive or coercive power of different forms of communication used, particularly those which connected with the villagers' cultural belief systems, to compel the villagers to adopt new ideas and to participate in NGO projects.

8.5 Progress versus poverty reduction

The fifteen year-period of the MDG ended in September 2015, paving way for the new framework called Sustainable Development Goals[57] to run until 2030. The time of collecting data would have presented a good opportunity to assess progress on the MDG in the two countries but the results were evasive. Responses from the governments, the UN system and the NGOs did not give tangible results, save to say, systems and processes to reduce poverty

[57] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/ (accessed on 16 August 2015)

had been put in place. The focus was no longer on reducing poverty but ensuring availability of systems. Before addressing the question on the extent to which communication for development contributed to progress in implementing the MDGs, it is imperative to point out that the understanding of poverty between development institutions and the villagers in Kamaila and Mwandama revealed curious disparities as well as elements that have perpetually been neglected by development practitioners. For instance, claims of responding to the villagers' needs by development institutions were betrayed by their strict adherence to the same poverty definition by the World Bank, IMF and what has been extensively discussed in Chapter 6.

The starting point in assessing progress is to understand the type of poverty on which development institutions are evaluated is the one discursively constructed by them and to meet the influential actors' interests. It is on the same account that all institutional actors such as the governments, the UN system, NGOs and the media claim significant success or 'are on track' in addressing that form of poverty, which is at variance with realities in the villages. At national level, progress assessment is no longer against the MDG tangible targets as the focus has shifted to processes and systems than the tangible outputs of reducing the number of people who are living in poverty. For example, alignment of national plans to the MDGs and the new Sustainable Development Goals, reaching out to people and raising awareness on development issues and the post MDG-2015 consultations over the past few years have been highlighted as having increased participation in setting up the global development agenda. Reaching out to people, raising awareness and increased participation have emerged as among the main indicators of progress. It is paradoxical that the poverty phenomenon which is quantitatively defined has its assessment evaluated by such qualitative indicators.

In Kamaila Village, where the Water for Kids NGOs worked on a community-driven water project to improve access to clean water for 4,000 people and installing banks of water taps for the 700 school children and standpipes within 5 minutes' walk of the village houses, the availability of clean and adequate water supply by the NGO was considered a trigger to village-driven projects. The Water for Kids project placed communities at the centre of its project planning and implementation, where they provided material resources for the communities to construct and maintain the water sources. While the initial project was a response to a diarrhoea outbreak in 2002, believed to have been caused by poor hygiene and unprotected water sources, over time, the project became linked to broader goals of addressing poverty, increased food production, general hygiene, reducing distances travelled by women and girls to water points, hence reducing the time used for water drawing. According to Water for Kids, increased economic activity was presumed to result from availability of water as “access to water means more food can be grown, better health means health care costs are reduced, avoiding the need to carry water over long distances means more time is available,” according to the project officer (face to face interview conducted on 2 May 2015). The time saved could then be used for other livelihood activities, which in turn could lead to poverty reduction. The radio stations too, claimed credit for their middle-role of transmitting simplified knowledge on development, raising awareness on health, sanitation, human rights and modern methods of farming, including giving a voice to the communities.

In Malawi, increased awareness had become an indicator as it was thought to have triggered policy review and adjustment, including resource mobilization to support programmes aimed at supporting the MDGs projects. In Mwandama Village, there was a combination of indicators including processes, systems and quantitative MDG outputs. For example, the NGO there claimed increased maize production, improved access to clean drinking water, reduced malnutrition and prevalence of HIV & AIDS, without elaborating on the number of people whose poverty has been reduced. The Mwandama Villagers expressed their satisfaction at having been continuously consulted. Again, this is another measure of success used by the NGO to portray their project plans as locally conceived. Sutton’s (1999) postulation bear affinities with the above in his description of how the NGO’s discourse had positioned itself as the centre of the truth and how it exercised power to adjust narratives to suit its agenda.

We noted earlier how the villagers in Mwandama had become more vulnerable to the whims of external ideas, leaving them worried about the imminent end of the project. They had been converted into consumers and objects of an externally funded and locally unsustainable lifestyle (cf. Leysens, 2008). This was true in Mwandama Village, where once the villager’s views were collected by the NGO, they were branded and copyrighted, leading to the loss of ownership of local knowledge by the villagers. On the other hand, the Kamaila Villagers, who had been able to somewhat take leadership and ownership of their projects, were less vulnerable to donor interests.

These varying perspectives on progress and poverty, in some way, are symptomatic of the existence of two worlds and ways of life. The use of communication by NGOs to shift villagers from their own ways of life to the one prescribed by the NGOs, is enough justification to acknowledge the importance of recognising the villagers' ways of life. Unlike development institutions, it is inconceivable to assume that the villagers were empty slates who were unknowing of their ways of life. Cohen's (1994) argument that institutionalised development knowledge is not the only credible one, paves the way to explore both villagers' knowledge and the existence of alternatives.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the communicative ecologies in Malawi and Zambia but most specifically, in the villages and how these shaped the way the villagers came to see themselves. Findings in this chapter illustrate that the villagers were not unknowing of their situation or blank slates but possessed knowledge on their way of life which was not taken into account in the domain of conventional development. The chapter also offered a brief overview of the media landscape in both countries, including highlighting radio stations accessible to the villages under study. While not exhaustive, the discussion on the extent to which communication was used in Kamaila and Mwandama was insightful in revealing how power and hegemony can hijack local cultural tools of communication as a channel to impose its ideas on the villagers. The researcher draws from Chapter 7 and findings in this chapter to conclude that despite the presence of power in the ideas and use of traditional forms of message transmission, communication for development faces serious limitations in fostering behaviour change and participation. By making this argument, the researcher is not suggesting a re-evaluation of communication in the current state of poverty reduction discourse, but is rather advocating for a robust approach that acknowledges that within those villages, something is happening as a foundation for building an effective response to sustainable well-being. The next chapter provides a reflection on the findings in Chapter 6, 7 and 8. It attempts to provide ways of situating communication to achieve empowerment and participation in the debate on well-being and poverty.

SECTION IV: REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Chapter Nine: A discussion and reflections

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher reflects on the findings in Chapter 6, 7 and 8 on the main themes of communication, participation and development. I expand on the themes of poverty construction, participation and the role of communication in defining these concepts. The discussion in this chapter is a follow up on how poverty is constructed by the discourse framing the MDGs and implications on identity construction and practices, particularly linked to communication in the selected villages in Malawi and Zambia.

In this chapter, the researcher starts with the findings in Chapter 6, which illustrated how neoliberal interests shape the global poverty reduction agenda. The researcher built on Chapter 7, demonstrating how the discourses arising from such agendas congested national and local spaces for participation in Malawi and Zambia. Chapter 8 showed that the neoliberal dominance transcends policy spaces congestion as it is infused into cultural streams of social orientation such as communication for development. This is done in an attempt to reconfigure the behaviour patterns and co-opt states and individuals viewed as poor, into the neoliberal mode of production and consumption. In analysing these findings, the researcher concluded that any approach to re-invent ideas on poverty reduction is bound to fail in the same way as other historical development models did, unless local human activity is predicated at the forefront of ontology. In such a context, participation would be an outcome of cultural and local aspiration, where communication is not burdened by the task of transmitting centralised ideas, but rather, facilitating dialogic flow and exchange of ideas at local level. From this conclusion, the researcher attempts to explore the possibilities of reconfiguring communication and citizen's well-being outside the realms of the existing global policy narratives and discourses.

9.2 Reflections on poverty, neoliberalism and global governance

In Chapter 1, this study promised to re-read of the role of communication for development in relation to poverty reduction participatory approaches. Findings in Chapter 6, 7 and 8 revealed how the discourse of conventional development is a barrier to alternative ideas. Western and neoliberal discourses continue to dominate the various definitions of poverty and its solutions in terms of policy processes, spaces and ideas. The words "participation" and "communication" when located in this intricate domain of neoliberal interests are fraught with numerous meanings that diminish their definitional meanings. A historical discourse analysis in Chapter

6 showed that the current poverty definition has remained fixated in the 19th century discourses and narrative of labour relations (cf. Booth, 1887; Rowntre, 1901; 1918) and is thus irrelevant to the 21st century, and not applicable to the different contexts as demonstrated in the villages in Malawi and Zambia.

The dollar-a-day indicator of poverty is also problematic as it centralizes and homogenises lifestyle by linking it to prescriptions of neoliberalism such as increased economic income, production and modes of consumption. This is despite the fact that conventional development discourse has incessantly failed to provide a quantifiable and credible connection between high economic growth and poverty reduction. This narrative discordance is evident in Malawian and Zambian national plans, where the link between economic growth and well-being of these countries' populations is not only evasive but also far-fetched and to a point, an act of faith. It was noted that both poverty and inequalities deepened in Zambia after the government provided a "conducive environment" to foreign growth actors in the late 1990s. Multinational companies, under the SAP policy, were given an unfair advantage over their local counterparts, with a view to boost the local economy. Emphasis on absolute rather than relative poverty overrides the importance of viewing different realities and dimensions that inform poverty assessments in different contexts. Neglecting these factors is one of the reasons for unwarranted pressure on Malawians and Zambians to comply with the UN system's terms and norms. Even so, the value of a dollar cannot be extrapolated to every context in the world. Findings from Chapter 6, 7 and 8 together with the absence of a credible explanation on the relationship between growth and poverty, make the researcher conclude that the MDGs are using communication and participation as a spin-off to propagate and promote neoliberalism.

In considering the above conclusion, especially its goal of increasing production, maximising profits and measuring consumption according to a prescribed lifestyle, the researcher also concludes that neoliberalism, which rose in the late 1990s has used the poverty discourse through the MDGs to weaken developing states by making them and their people consumers of western culture. The domination of neoliberalism is aided by the convergence of western capital interests, operating through global and national governmental structures to pressurise the governments and villagers in Malawi into adopting their global discourse and norms. However, the villagers, especially in Zambia, demonstrated social power by not succumbing to the whims of these pressures and had maintained their local identities, different from what was prescribed by development projects. By doing so, the Kamaila Villagers had not only shown the lack of relevance of the 19^{th} and 20th century dollar-a-day indicator of poverty, but had demonstrated that there was another wealth of knowledge on how well-being could be defined.

In Chapter 6, the researcher observed that the discourse underlying the MDGs conveys a sense of equality and collectiveness, and political power is presented as if it has no influence on the discourse. Such discourses construct, through the UN system, a universal identity of states and their citizens, in which global governance agencies such as the World Bank, IMF and other UN agencies can speak on behalf of everyone on matters of poverty and yet propose solutions that have an incontrovertible effect of constraining alternative views on poverty and participation. Drawing from Foucault (1972), the MDGs discourse thus enables the UN system to speak to its member states, while indirectly speaking on behalf of neoliberalism by concurrently imposing a global worldview on poverty. In Chapter 7, the Mwandama Villagers expressed an unsustainable desire to adopt the new life introduced by the Millennium village project instead of reverting to their traditional ways of life. Traditional means of production, despite their suitability, feasibility and relevance to the villagers' local contexts continued to be threatened by the NGO which had deliberately embraced local means of communication to convince the villagers to abandon their traditional way of life in exchange for what was imposed by the NGO, and which had proven to be locally unsustainable.

The coalescence of the two discourses of the NGOs and the villagers' created discursive conflict in which participation was constrained by governmental norms. How communication and participation depart from their definitional meanings to derive new functional meanings is an important area for further discussion. Chapter 6 provided insights into how each of the available policy spaces was influenced by an actors' or their constituency's interests. These interests in turn influenced a shift in the meanings of the word "participation" in relation to poverty reduction. The same Chapter 6 did this by examining the discourse context from which texts in the policy documents under study are produced, and from which the words 'participation' and 'communication' derive a new operational meaning. In Chapter 7, it was noted that the new operational meanings were blurring and constraining the definitional meaning of these words. The researcher views this as a linguistic device, common in the collective discourse of the MDGs, meant to conceal the presence of power as well as neutralise the social relationship and imbalances imposed between the member states, the UN system, citizens and their governments.

Two types of participation closely linked to strategic communication were observed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. First and commonly used is the do-it-yourself model, where knowledge and skills are diffused from institutions as centres of knowledge (NGOs, CBOs[58], local and national governments) to individuals who are assumed to be lacking knowledge needed to change their behaviour as part of efforts to increase their productive capacities. This approach has been commonly used in disease prevention and farming. The second type is the democratic participatory approach modelled around the Habermasian (1976) public sphere and Rogers' (1983) diffusion for social change model, where communication and participation are central enablers of poverty reduction. This type however, limits participation to state-citizen entitlements or NGO-beneficiary project activities and does not foster the productive utilization of locally available opportunities as part of pursuing local aspirations. Participation is reduced to expressing views and claiming rights and services from the governments. It was explained earlier that these governments are weakened by allocation of growth activities to the private sector, the transfer of decision-making power to the UN system as well as the pressure from the civil society to comply with global norms and further burdened by demands to create conducive environment for multinational private sector investment.

Whatever form of participation, communication conveys a model that is configured by social imbalances. This is illustrated by the focus on the perceived benefits of participation. The role of communication is to ensure dialogue between institutions and individuals and not a conversation among and between individuals and their local realities. In spite of both villages in Malawi and Zambia indicating that the presence of traditional modes of knowledge transfer from one generation to another as a means of knowing, conventional development modes of knowledge transfer remained the most preferred. Chapters 6 and 7 illustrated how stimulating individual capabilities in Malawi and Zambia was not prioritized but rather constrained by the preoccupation to ensure compliance with global norms.

In addition, the policy spaces in which participation by states or citizens is supposed to occur are the same arenas where external knowledge and norms rob these actors of their ability to empower their citizens and where individuals lose their power to self-determine. For example, villagers in Mwandama noted that pursuing their traditional knowledge and skills would make them lose the benefits from the MDG-related projects. Since the NGO in Mwandama Village

[58] Community-based Organisations.

was linked to the UN system, what should have been a global space was usurping local spaces by assuming the central reference space in its pursuit to convert the villagers into some form of global identity. When participation is configured that way, the neoliberal discourse is able to perpetuate conditions that allow member states and villagers to be discursively recycled into its hegemonic order. It was noted that the processes governing policy debates in the UN system are controlled by interest-driven rules arising from the closed spaces before they are presented into global governance policy spaces. As a result, democratic participation is constrained by pre-determined agendas, a scenario which questions the rationale for governments in Malawi and Zambia to effectively influence global policies. This includes their ability to independently develop, unhindered by the global pressure, the most effective development policies in line with the needs of their people. The researcher draws this observation in light of the pressure exerted by civil society, inciting citizens against their governments to demand certain services in a context where resources to sustain such services are not available. This is unless government borrows from international finance institutions, deliberately neglecting the importance of citizens' productive capacities. As an approach, it is not only flawed and problematic, but is also a neoliberal way of advancing its interests by pitting citizens in conflict with their under-resourced governments, forcing them to borrow from the World Bank and IMF and thus to comply with global policies.

The fact that neoliberalism sets citizens in conflict with their governments is not surprising as the UN system has historically advanced similar interests on behalf of the West. This has historically constrained developing states' ability to take the lead in addressing poverty concerns in their countries. The rise of neoliberalism in the late 1990s to the centre of global governance continues to shape conditions that hold this ideology intact, including how participation is proposed in the MDGs as an outcome of communication, neglecting power relations. Historical coincidences on how the industrial revolution, the post-African independence and SAP eras were followed by grand global poverty reduction policies were discussed in Chapter 3. In each of these, weaker social groups were summoned into a collective agenda, addressing what has been discursively described as a global problem requiring collective solutions by a system known to demand compliance than delivering on results.

What should be public policy spaces have assumed a closed private space character, most specifically where the MDGs are formulated. The discourse and narratives arising are consuming and converting the individual identity into an economic growth discourse, via communication as a socialising agent. Whereas poverty is presented as apolitical but technical, so does communication in transmitting ideas as neutral in a context where the UN system, driven by capital interests, assumes a public and neutral policy space. The public policy space character which promises possibilities of plurality of views is constrained by interests. It was noted that when the public policy space is connected with a private and powerful space, democratic participation becomes problematic.

Theorising a new mode of communication for development in order to salvage participation outside the parameters of conventional development thus requires stepping outside the parameters of conventional development. That is achievable by establishing a discourse context that recognizes the existence of both power and knowledge at individual and local level (cf. Mosse in Cooke and Kothari, 2001). Kamaila Village, and to a considerable extent, Mwandama Village, provide credible evidence from which to build this premise. Given the interconnections between individual identities, power and discourse contexts especially in Mwandama where villagers had been converted by the NGO, disentangling these identities can be constrained by hegemonic discourse. Securing a participatory approach outside the dominant discourse (Mosse in Cooke and Kothari, 2001) is significant as it first discounts Chambers' (1997) counterbalance of power (theory of empowered participation). Mosse (2001) argues that reversing hierarchies of institutionalized power through dialogue alone is inadequate to foster a participatory model outside the parameters of the dominant discourse. Pursuing that line of inquiry is tantamount to recycling the individual back into the neoliberal control thus sustaining the dominant hegemony (cf. Cooke and Kothari, 2001). How hegemony permeates through the UN system and its agencies and how it holds forth and captivates the mind-sets of the underdeveloped is discussed in Chapter 3 (cf. Rodney (1981). The proposition the researcher is putting across in this chapter derives from the same discussions in Chapter 3, which argued that the discursively weakened minds allow the prevalence of hegemony, enabling the prescription of western capacity-building activities. The way in which discourses have held the oppressed mind-set hostage together, incapacitating its ability to utilize locally available resources and opportunities is extensively discussed in Chapter 6.

9.3 Reflections on participatory communication

In this section, the researcher augments the above analysis by further addressing two critical issues. Firstly, in this section the researcher approaches the notion of poverty or wellbeing as partly a problem of the mind-set and not material inadequacy (cf. Gordenker and Weiss, 1996).

Secondly, he argues that the impact of communication on behaviour and practices depends on several factors, including the power behind the ideas being transmitted to the individuals and not necessarily the medium of transmission as suggested in many media theories. The researcher argues that the relationship between discourse and communication as a social agent, as explained in Eliot (1948) and Rodney (1981,) constrains or facilitates society's ability to control its value system and to define its wellbeing. In making this proposition, I have drawn from observations in Chapter 6, specifically on how ideas operate through texts and language to manifest into policy positions. I also draw from Chapter 7 on how policy documents, particularly the MDGs, allocate roles and translate action into behaviour and practices at different levels. With this premise in mind, the researcher considers both communication and participation to be easily re-theorized in two ways. First, is to prioritise knowledge creation on well-being before assigning participatory communication to transmit pre-defined knowledge. The second is an inversion of the first, but not as a direct counter to hegemonic ideas. It is one that places human activity at the forefront of ontology in which communication facilitates the dialogic flow and exchange of ideas. These approaches are discussed in detail in the next section.

i. Rehashing the past to present

This section discusses the first option and challenges of redefining or identifying alternative poverty reduction knowledge ahead of participation, and how it is tantamount to recycling conventional development modernization models. Redefining knowledge on poverty has perpetually led to the loss of autonomy for developing countries and resulted in their co-option into the discourse of the global collective. By identity, the researcher refers to the individual's mental content and readiness to perform certain tasks applying a mind-set that is scripted by the discourse of historical context to make social meaning. Individual identities are constituted by traits, characteristics, attributes and values which define an individual's ways of being (Fearon et al., 1999).

The first challenge arising from creating new or alternative knowledge of poverty reduction is that it occurs within laboratory-like institutionalized policy spaces which have historically been prone to political and capital interests of those who either control or fund the spaces (cf. Cox1981). Positioning communication to convey such knowledge is the same as imposing pre-set discourses to individuals, thus making them passive receivers of knowledge. This approach historically views the poor as unthinking and blank-minded. As they gain knowledge transferred into their culture, their capabilities weaken in the process because a new and external worldview on well-being has been imposed on them (cf. Waisbord, 2000). Waisbord (2000) is among the few authors to emphasise that the process of decision-making, is an everyday occasion at the individual level and by institutionalizing it, the process constrains that ability and autonomy of individuals to define and establish themselves outside the confines of institutional project goals. Effective participatory approaches must thus pursue well-being that combines local decision-making and capacities in line with local needs (cf. Jenning, 2000).

The extent to which communication for development was used in Kamaila and Mwandama Villages exemplifies how prioritisation of institutionalised knowledge neglects and undermines local epistemologies. For example, traditional mass media such as theatre and music had been converted into tools to convey conventional development ideas to change villagers' behaviour instead of viewing them as part of the local culture. This ultimately creates identity confusion or a suspended identity in which the base identity finds itself in a space of indecision under pressure to shift towards a discursively constructed poverty identity, one which is not grounded in local culture. It was clear in both villages, but most specifically in Mwandama, that individuals' identities were caught between the pressure to be modern and the desire to remain traditional. The desire to be modern did not arise from necessity but due to the stigma associated with not being part of project activities. Villagers intended to maintain their cultural identities within their traditional systems of thought. For example, lifestyles in both villages had been altered and re-organised to suit the prevailing order, while their minds, judging by their response, still made reference to their traditions.

Discourses from the PSRP and MVP have evidently re-organized systems and practices of lifestyles and structures of governance at village level. Contentment was defined by money and income even where these were not necessary. Creativity was no longer an expression of ones' expertise but confined and linked to economic activities. In both villages, communities said that traditional affluence was determined by factors such as skills, self-worth, gratification and others which enabled them to self-fulfil within their environment. Ways of life were not based on comparison, but on the ability of everyone having unfettered equal opportunities and access to available resources that enabled them to convert zero into something through their effort, craftsmanship and other productive skills (cf. Kotler, Armstrong, Brown and Adam, 2004). Findings from both villages showed that knowledge to utilize available resources had never been in short supply, and had been passed on from one generation to another through traditional methods, with skills either perfected by one generation or acquired externally. Their understanding of development was how they perceive their roles, contentment and self-worth. With individual's traditionally ascribed roles, self-worth and development represents gratification.

The difference between how well-being was defined by the villagers and how it was perceived by the NGOs demonstrates how the concept of poverty is a social construction by external agents who occupy or represent interests that are situated within powerful social spaces that influence individual villagers' personal lives. By being linked to the UN system, situated in the Unites States of America and speaking the global language on development, the MVP influenced the villagers' ability to engage among themselves and authorities. Therefore in this case, possession of power by the MVP determined how social realities, including poverty, were designed to enable the production and reproduction of hegemonic relations.

It emerged from this study that traditional lifestyles were being abandoned, lampooned as part of the cultural barrier that needed to be changed through communication for development. Devaluation of these local attributes was not only de-equalizing but also dispossessing the villagers of their epistemology, capabilities and identity and therefore power, in exchange of what they did not have and may never have. Thus, the villagers were robbed of their ability to be in charge of their well-being as it was taken over by the NGOs. At village level, in both Malawi and Zambia, the study observed that needs varied, and it was learnt that villagers and their social and environmental contexts were neither homogenous nor static social entities, even though the MDG preferred to lock them in a static 15 year-project. The dialogue between the global and local meant that the discourse of development, unless unsettled, would always remain deep-seated in the same ideological context. Extricating autonomous participation is therefore not achievable in isolation of the implication of such discourses on the mind-set to self-determine (cf. Rodney's 1981). Rodney has stated that Africans are discursively blinded from appreciating their capabilities and the value of locally available resources by the colonial discourse. Therefore, addressing poverty is about reconfiguring the mind-set towards self-determination.

The symbiotic relationship between culture and the mind-set needs to be highlighted and acknowledged to avoid viewing one as the effect of the other. In other words, how Malawians and Zambians understood their social position in relation to the proposed lifestyles by the

MDGs determined their identity in relation to their capability and ability to define their well-being. The discourse created a loyal identity that, at the onset relinquished its own power and knowledge in exchange for the "global". This is disturbing considering that identity is important for judgement, decision-making and behaviour and it also ascribes roles (cf. Leary and Tangney, 2003). When identity is involuntarily altered, shifted or lost, self-confidence diminishes. The epistemological dependence on the west, shown in both countries, illustrates how conventional development disempowers UN system member states, especially where Malawi and Zambia spent a considerable amount of resources and time on hiring neo-liberal intellectuals to draft their constitutions and national plans, precisely to ensure compliance with World Bank and IMF requirements rather than ensuring relevance to local realities (cf. PRSP, 1999).

ii. Reflections on knowledge and empowerment

This section discusses the second option, an inversion, but not a counter to the above. The proposition being advanced is that communication and participation must be placed ahead of creating new knowledge on poverty reduction in attempts to understand the well-being of a society. The link between knowledge and participatory efficiency has been explored by a number of authors (cf.Chambers, 1997; Cooke and Kothari, 2001) but its effectiveness remains a matter for further debate as it is yet to be empirically confirmed. Where knowledge and participation is discussed, it is yet to go beyond the theoretical assumptions that derive from the persuasion and diffusion models. In other words, very little exists on the link between the two. The concept of knowledge is discussed by Nueman (1986) in terms of how individuals feel that they are capable of influencing decisions in their lives, linking participation to three reasons, namely to protect social and cultural values, secondly a concern with other members of the community and third, as a function of acquisition of resources within a community network.

The role of communication in these categories varies in relation to available development knowledge, efficiency and participation. The discussion in this chapter has noted that the theorisation of knowledge in conventional development occurs in spaces of power before it is transferred to those assumed to be unknowing poor individuals. This section proposes a premise where dialogic communication occurs within a local context with the objective of revitalising what is seen in the eyes of conventional development as the subordinate mind-set and to stimulate an empowered identity within its local setting. The proposal diverts from Chambers' (1997) emphasis on involvement in projects or the state-citizen dialogue that has been criticised for recycling individuals within the same institutions of control (cf. Green, 2008; Hulme, 2007; Cox, 1987; Leysens, 2008).

Communication remains a crucial socialising agent in promoting local dialogue and cultural processes that together converge into a local form of wellbeing. The researcher draws inspiration from the period of intellectualism that spawned western industrialization in the 17th and 18th Centuries and the Lunar Society of Birmingham (McLuna, 1964) to exemplify how the media and knowledge inspired change and instigated individuals' capabilities to extricate themselves from dominant discourse. The media was productive while unhindered by external and capital constraints. Key to this proposal is placing local human activity as the ontology of well-being which grows organically, through a recursive communicative agency and the local accumulation of power (cf. Cohen, 1994).

The researcher builds on Sen's (1982, 1999) capabilities approach which theorizes villagers such as those in Malawi and Zambia as capable of exploiting locally and externally available opportunities unaided (cf. Foucault, 1980). This makes understanding village life and its social complexities crucial in situating villagers' perception of life in general and wellbeing in particular. Acknowledging that these capabilities are conditioned by their local contexts, most importantly in relation to how they meet their aspirations, drawing from available knowledge and resources is the second step (cf. Sen, 1982; Cox, 1987). In both steps, the function of communication is to pursue these capabilities to establish new and autonomous identities based on a new mind-set that can act confidently dialogically (cf. Freire, 1986). In searching for an appropriate positioning of communication, this study turns to how knowledge functions in different forms in establishing and stabilizing the mind-set.

9.4 Reformulating and re-positioning communication for development

How ideas embedded in the texts under study construct identities is considered in this study as justifying the need to reposition communication. Revitalizing the oppressed identity requires re-allocation of power to that identity (empowerment) with a view to enhancing self-determination among the villagers in Malawi and Zambia. This section unpacks the relationship between different forms of knowledge frames and how communication has been or can be linked to them. In exploring the symbiosis between these two concepts, the researcher is guided by how Cox (1997) theorized the relationship between capital's interests and ideas and its consequences on communication and practices. The discussion unavoidably turns to debate on human behaviour, especially media effects and reception theories (cf. Hall, 1982; Gerbner, 1983; Levy and Gurevitch, 1993), particularly the postulation that media messages have limited impact on behaviour.

Even though Cox (1987) might not have highlighted the link between ideas and material interests in the field of media studies, the theorisation of the message-receiver in media studies is insightful. Despite lack of consensus on the impact of ideas in the field of media studies, Said (1979) and Foucault (1972) have expounded extensively on how discourses shape representation. Behaviour scientists such as Darnton (2008) and Jackson (2005) and social marketing theorists such as Kotler and Lee (2008) also consider behaviour as partly an outcome of communicative social orientation. It was evident in the villages that ideas transmitted to villagers through various forms of media created a certain level of awareness and did not necessarily adjust behaviour. This is a view that is emphasized in Hogg and Abrahams (1988), Oakes, Haslam and Turner (1994) and Turner (1984). Despite such disjuncture, it follows that if discourse can construct a poverty identity, communication can also contribute to the reconstruction of a new identity, but doing so requires an understanding of the different knowledge frames.

Formulating a new way of using communication for development would thus require emphasis on the role and power of knowledge than media channels. To achieve this, the researcher draws from several authors such as Foucault (2002), Said (1979), Leysens (2008) and Chomsky (2002; 1988) who have categorized knowledge into three frames – the propositional, functional, and social identity knowledge. Knowledge frames, in this context, refer to how thoughts are shaped, organized and stabilized. Knowledge frames are not to be confused with Chomsky's (2002) schemas that are limited only to patterns of thought. How communication is used in the two villages can be mapped along two of these three knowledge frames. For example, the functional knowledge frames resonate with the transfer of knowledge to build the villagers' capacity and to change behaviour with the objective of enhancing functional skills and increase production (cf. Waisbord, 2000). The farming projects in Mwandama Millennium Village and the water project in Kamaila exemplify a pre-occupation with enhancing functional knowledge by placing emphasis on efficiency, that is to say, on 'how to' effectively implement certain activities.

However, as noted in focus group discussions, these two sets of knowledge frames had short term gains and were not sustainable in the absence of continuous external support. Although both villages can report some form of improvements in their living conditions, none of them were confident of self–sustaining if the NGO projects departed. On one hand, at national and global policy level, the propositional knowledge frame is modelled on the capacity building and social change agenda where technical and intellectual knowledge, including basic operational norms, are outsourced from the western countries, as well as how the reasoning towards poverty is conducted. A critical analysis of tools that constitute propositional knowledge frames and their implications on Malawi and Zambia (cf. Shannon & Weaver, 1949) is extensively offered in Chapter 6.

This study argues that one of the reasons conventional development projects that used communication in line with these two knowledge frames have not been successful and sustainable is because they lacked or neglected the third knowledge frame – the social identity knowledge frame which is the basis of all other knowledge frames and identities because it offers stability that is grounded on local epistemology. In making this proposition, the researcher draws from Tajfel and Turner (1979) who have theorised the social identity knowledge frame as a psychological basis in explaining the ways that social positions are acquired or ascribed. These authors contend that social position, arising from social phenomenon such as poverty discourses, conditions an individual's self-consciousness and identity in relation to other groups. Such conditioning becomes the knowledge base from which roles of their identities are assigned and ascribed and where the identities are positioned in relation to others (Hogg and Vaughan, 2002). In the absence of this knowledge frame, no matter how much of the functional and propositional knowledge is transferred to individual villagers, the researcher argues that they remain short of power to self-determine as they perpetually lack confidence. We see this in Mwandama Village project and ten other MVPs that recorded successes in the first phase of the MVP between 2006 and 2009[59], where they enjoyed sustained external experts and funding support. However, once that support started reducing, so did the achievements. Villagers in Mwandama expressed concern that once funding and support stopped at the end of the MDGs phase, their living conditions were likely to deteriorate again.

It follows, therefore that for Malawi, Zambia and other developing societies to achieve the required empowerment, they need to reposition communication to secure self-determination and social identity confidence. The researcher builds on Tajfel et al.'s (1971) view that

[59] http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=39914#.VQ3RWMscTIU

individuals as constituted in the present are actually outcomes of historical priori, which foregrounds their thoughts and reasoning. How colonialism and the current MDGs projects have affected the mind-sets of the villagers in Malawi and Zambia (cf. Rodney, 1981) and how conventional discourse seeks to convert individuals to objects of dominant power (Foucault, 2002) was discussed earlier. Inferentially, anyone born in Malawi, Zambia or born in any other developing country is thus ascribed the poverty identity which is loyal to the dominant ideology. Poverty is, thus, a condition of relative powerlessness where individuals lose control of important aspects of their lives. Malawian and Zambian villagers who are seen as experiencing poverty, are poor on the grounds of their discursively constructed social identities which hinder their ability to claim and control resources and opportunities available to them. It is an outcome of inequalities and unequal power relationships that are deeply ingrained within institutions and policies (cf. Green, 2008).

Countries that have recently been able to come out of poverty are those that have retained and maintained their social and cultural identity, rooted in their historical background and nationalism. The social identity knowledge frame acts as a baseline for feeling a sense of belonging, responsibility and nationalism, as part of self-conceptualization and actualization at all social levels. In this context, the social identity retains both its individual autonomy and a group identity in a shared culture. The self is defined in terms of both an individual and one belonging to a social group but as an autonomous entity. The self-esteem associated with the social identity is known to underlie capabilities needed to approach the complexities of well-being with confidence to effectively meet aspirations (cf. Brewer, 2003). Recent examples include countries such as China, Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam and other Asian countries' fast growing economies that have drawn from the same theoretical base and illustrated the important role of mind-set and identities. Although none of these countries have meaningful natural resources when compared to most African countries, their state of economies grew exponentially from imported raw materials and a national ideological mind set which draws from strong social identity knowledge frame. On the contrary, despite their abundant natural resources, most African countries survive on trading raw materials and labour or opening up to foreign investors because of the lack of confidence and what is described in Rodney (1981) as a damaged mind-set. This is the basis for this study's proposal: that if communication has to play a role in achieving self-determination and self-consciousness as a means to escape the oppressive identity, it must be positioned to address the social identity knowledge frame. The researcher is aware that such transformation is characterized by both completeness and incompleteness where the current identity acquires an absolute self-consciousness but with an insatiable mind to acquire functional and propositional knowledge locally and externally on its own terms. However, this is not new as it was noted in Chapter 7 that the villagers too opted to assume dual identities; one for the NGO project and the other to hang on to their culture. The fixed identity signifies an empowered identity while the incomplete, which is also the flexible identity, acquires knowledge to sustain the absolute. The individuals' idea of self is a significant indicator as it encompasses their ambitions that direct their internal and external social interactions in relation to the world.

The objective of focusing on the social identity knowledge frame is not to unsettle the dominant neoliberal hegemony, but to re-establish an individual who assumes a self-conscious identity that is modelled by a local or national discursive context outside the dominant hegemonic order (Cohen, 1994). Self-consciousness, in this regard, goes together with critical pedagogy as a baseline for an emancipatory process out of which the individuals not only read their 'word' but also their 'world' (Freire and Macedo, 1987). Once such an individual is positioned in the self-conscious identity, it organically acquires its own power required to make relevant decisions about its own well-being, including outsourcing material and epistemological resources.

In re-positioning the new identity within its own sphere of power, and not focusing on its relationship with the hegemony of conventional development, it is not to suggest a delinking with the global village, but to facilitate its presence within the global arena as an autonomous entity. Therefore, focusing on the individual is by no means losing sight of the bigger social and national picture, a picture that becomes the basis for a new locally constructed hegemony. The researcher takes note of Hall's (1996) view that hegemony at any level operates through discursively constructed identities produced within specific sites of discursive formations and practices that lead to a collective identity. The Asian economic success story especially Japan and South Korea, provides evidence of the importance of an independent government which can make policies independent of global governance pressures, promoted through individual, family and community creativity to instigate potential (Green, 2008; Moyo, 2009). Lessons from these Asian examples demonstrate not only the power of individual but also collective capabilities, which is a form of participation and prowess of an independent mind-set to individually or collectively be more effective in determining their own wellbeing, increasing their productivity, and determining their courses of action to achieve.

9.5 Re-constructing the social identity

This study argues that establishing individual autonomy outside the dominant discourse is not the end but provides a platform for defining or re-defining a new form of well-being. Drawing from the above analysis, and from those in previous chapters, it is clear that poverty in the MDGs is discursively constructed by dominant powers and interests and not by local realities. Addressing socially constructed poverty is therefore not about the notions of equality and wealth redistribution. Cox (1997) highlights how power swallows alternative ideas into neoliberal discourses. In this study, the researcher draws from Freire's (1973) three levels of consciousness necessary to achieve autonomous participation where communication for development is positioned to foster diverse well-beings. Freire considers the intransitive stage of communication intervention in line with what the Kamaila Villagers noted – individuals are satisfied with their self-worth, including what they possess within themselves and their environment as fundamental to the way they view their lifestyles. Social change is an organic occurrence. The relationship between what exists in Malawian and Zambian villages under study and what is ascribed to individuals as part of their past and present capabilities is the basis for establishing a co-relationship between the two variables. Chapter 7 highlighted the existence of certain aspects of life, which historically function independent of external aid.

The semi-transitive consciousness is the second stage proposed by Freire (1994), where communication facilitates individual self-awareness and one's aspirations, and is not limited to addressing problems. This was evident in Kamaila Village where villagers claimed awareness of their aspirations outside the NGO goals. This study builds from the assumption that villagers in Malawi and Zambia hold intra-communal and inter-generational dialogue, as part of both pedagogy and ontology that is not contaminated by external impositions. This is linked to the third stage – the critical transitivity in which individuals such as the villagers in Malawi and Zambia are capable of relating to their situation and use their newly acquired power to decide aspirations unhindered by external discursive impediments. The social identity knowledge, in this context, is derived from these intra social conversations, reflecting on what one knows about oneself and the unknown which incites the desire to transform and change for the better (cf. Kessing-Styles, 2003).

Discussions with the villages in Kamaila and Mwandama suggested that the process of decision-making was located in two parallel processes. The first set of space was designed specifically for interaction with NGOs with clearly defined reporting lines. The alternative was that the villagers had their own spaces reserved for traditional discussions that addressed locally pertinent issues in which the latter had more influence than the former. The traditional spaces assumed a different hierarchy whose membership and leadership followed traditional structures. The traditional structures existed to mediate dialogue, exchange of knowledge and handling various views on issues raised in the village. In fact, in both countries, villagers had more influence and were more respected than government and NGOs. This was largely because the village community included traditional leadership that mediated between the people and their culture, interpreting and implement messages from the spirit mediums. These were seen as custodians of culture and sources of social direction. Exchange of ideas among villagers was thought to generate a sense of belonging, ownership and had liberating effects which bound them together. Understanding the traditional policy spaces is relevant in order to assess the importance attached to them by the villagers in Kamaila and Mwandama.

This leads to two key questions: first, can the proposed re-positioning of communication for development occur naturally without being instigated by some form of power and interests? Second, having established the above theoretical base, is it still relevant to lay the blame of Malawian and Zambian poverty on colonialism and the psychological damage it caused on the minds of their people? The Asian examples given in this chapter, respond to the first question especially where communication relates to fostering a new mind-set among citizens. While African poverty cannot be explained in isolation of the historical factors creating it, it is equally fair to argue that Malawi and Zambia must take the responsibility to re-define their well-being. The notion of states taking the lead in addressing their poverty must be located within the objective of revitalizing the social identity knowledge frame, in a similar fashion to the way African countries successfully won independence over colonialism.

9.6 Hope for Communication for Development in Africa

Chapter 3 drew from Mda (1993) and Scrampickal (2006) to highlight how social communication and the traditional media have been part of the African cultural production. They were also instrumental in liberating, uniting, preserving, and arbitrating social interests in toppling colonial regimes. Revolutionary movements, for instance, relied a lot on traditional media to mobilise the masses to fight and sacrifice their lives for self-determination and independence (Rodney, 1981). Rodney (1981), while not a media scholar himself, called for revolution against western domination, which in part, invokes the use of mass media to inspire emancipation and re-orientation of the oppressed mind-set. The key lesson to be drawn from the use of theatre and other forms of traditional media during the struggle for independence is that its goals were linked to that liberation, independence and self-determination, but most importantly through indigenous knowledge and values which made the fight for freedom voluntary participation to those who felt oppressed.

We can draw from the above and the findings in this thesis that the fear of lacking self-determination inspires more vigour than the fear of being poor. This is an affirmation that people in Africa, have at some point of their lives sacrificed their lives to defend or redeem their identities. It is thus fundamental to think of communication for development societies from their culture by placing them at the forefront of their communication and intervention activities (Mda, 1993). Mda is not alone in calling for a link between communication and freedom as a starting point. Iorapuu (2008) also notes that people's freedom, its enhancement and a sense of self-determination are the root of their ability to progress beyond just economic growth to include other aspects of their well-being (cf. Sen, 2000). What these authors tell us is that well-being does not begin with material attributes but people's ability and freedom to communicatively interact among themselves and with their environment to get the best out of both. They place the role of communication as part of the cultural process of raising self-consciousness, engagement and participation in areas related to their aspirations within their environment. In that regard, these authors are positive that communication has a vital role to play in creating a form of participation needed to secure freedom to self-determine one's well-being. Participation is no longer a matter of exclusion or inclusion in projects, but rather an outcome of endogenous cultural aspirations linked to self-determination, where communication plays the inspirational role to invoke creative capabilities of the people, their worldview and culture.

The notion of recursive social action linked with self-determination as discussed in Giddens (1984), was partly evident in Kamaila Village, where the local traditional structures served to facilitate locally-driven response to needs. These structures also function to control and regulate behaviour in the process producing and reproducing social structures. Well-being becomes a means and an end, but most specifically a result of social practices ordered across space and time (Giddens, 1984), individually or collectively repeated, thus reproducing the conditions that facilitate the form of participation needed to meet needs. The village then creates, acquires or reproduces knowledge needed to address local needs through reflexivity of individual behaviour or social transformation as the villagers continue to reflect, assess and adjust to the new contexts or achievements. The continuous generation or acquisition of knowledge organically enables and recreates or sustains social ordering and reorganization (Giddens, 1984). However, what is vital to highlight in Kamaila Village, for example, is that the ability by individual villages to make choices and decisions show their agency, though it may be limited. Giddens (1984) concurs with Foucault (2003), that, knowledge and power are crucial in determining the direction of how villagers implement social action as agents. Archer (1995) has taken Giddens' view further by arguing that structures or spaces in which individual villagers' behaviour or social transformation is administered are produced and reproduced by the villagers' ability to exercise agency through their actions and choices. From this theorization, spaces or structures are centres of both defining self-worth and meaning and arenas to express aspirations and courses of action, informed by the villagers' lived-life and realities (Penderis, 2012). Dislocating the villagers from their spaces, undermines their power, knowledge and identities.

Therefore the choice to seek self-determination is a matter of both personal and collective decision. In such a case, when communication is used to inspire a locally-driven well-being, those considered to be poor cease to be an audience or message receivers. They become authors of their well-being, deciders of their fate and protagonists of their participatory actions. The case of the liberation struggle highlights this phenomenon where Africans no longer needed to delegate the liberation cause to others but allocated that responsibility to themselves and changed the course of their situation by assuming full responsibility for their liberation. Despite the fact that modern media then was under colonial management, traditional media proved a powerful tool which played a vital role in transmitting ideas through songs and dances, theatre and ritual dramas to mobilize individuals towards the liberation agenda. Such a social transformative process needs to be under the premise of sovereignty and autonomy. This kind of scenario obtains in Asian countries, particularly those that have managed to maintain their national or cultural identities in pursuit of achieving improved ways of life. However, what is missing in the fast growing media in Africa in general, and Malawi and Zambia in particular, are those independent ideas to spur a similar movement, given that the policy spaces and the dominant discourses on well-being are heavily and ideologically induced. The alignment of national plans to global policies is an example of how neoliberal power is unwilling to allow freedom to self-determine as that would be tantamount to overturning its dominance (cf. Cox, 1987). Breaking down the typology of global policy making gave testimony to how social relations and economic production are imposed and laid the foundation for understanding how capital's interests reinforce certain production patterns, including the erosion of the autonomy of individuals, villagers and governments in Malawi and Zambia. These intricate relationships which converge in conventional discourse have made it impossible to squeeze in communication to achieve real empowerment.

9.7 Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter points to a discourse that safeguards neoliberal interests by bringing everyone under its control. Such a discourse predominates the MDGs more than its goal of addressing poverty. While the co-location of communication for development to address poverty reduction can be considered a precursor to participation, such participation recycles individuals into an institutionalised system of control. It was also noted that despite both participatory development and neoliberalism's conceptualisation of equality, for as long as the villagers in Malawi and Zambia were marginalised and reduced to beneficiaries of development projects, they would not be self-empowered. That makes development a matter of endogenous power than an external donation by those who seek to cling to power by pretending that they can transfer part of it to the un-powered.

This chapter also illustrated that despite communication having been co-opted into the neoliberal agenda, there are possibilities to re-position it to reformulate the discursively constructed poverty identity. The approach proposed in this chapter takes into account that once communication revitalises the social identity knowledge frame, it is possible for individuals to start appreciating and utilising available resources and opportunities in realizing their aspirations. Achieving this is thus an act of power, but one that is located within the individual's social context. The next chapter provides the concluding discussion of the study.

Chapter Ten: A concluding discussion

10.1 Introduction

The goal of this study was to explore the extent to which communication for development was used to implement the MDGs projects in two villages in Malawi and Zambia respectively. The three chapters on findings have adequately answered the research questions set out in Chapter 1. Research on the two thematic areas of study – poverty reduction and communication for development – has largely focused on the discourse and narratives that frame these concepts and their influence on well-being and participatory development. The purpose of this chapter is to conclude this study.

The critical discourse analysis methodology and Cox's (1987) critical approach enabled the study to unpack the MDGs discourse and their implications for policies and practices in Malawi and Zambia. The narrative analysis placed the dominant discourses on poverty in conversation with the villagers' perception of poverty in general. Applying these methodologies enabled the researcher to confront questions on global governance, hegemony, communication and participatory theories in which international development policies are formulated, adopted and implemented, including how the MDGs were conceptualized. It also unpacked the narratives and discourses that frame the MDG and the UN Communication for Development Strategy and their implications for policies and the development practice in Malawi and Zambia. Findings on the intricacies in international policy formulation and implementation enabled the researcher to suggest a reformulation of communication for development.

While the UN system prioritizes participatory development as a crucial enabler to reducing poverty, available research has yet to provide credible evidence on how participation in development projects can sustainably transform people's lives. As this study concludes, the villages in Malawi and Zambia bear testimony that the villagers' operationalisation of their individual and collective goals was influenced by their cultural and environmental contexts, of which social communication was part. It is on this premise that this study has concluded that the link between communication for development, participation and poverty reduction, is elusive, dramatized, and an act of faith as described in Cooke and Kothari (2001). By using Kamaila and Mwandama Villages as part of the units of analysis, the researcher was able to unpack some of the challenges and tensions associated with numerous theoretical assumptions on integrating a top-down poverty-reduction model with horizontal communication and participation approaches. The ability of villagers to maintain double identity on their participatory role of being part of the NGO project, while running their normal lives outside the confines of the NGO project is one of the examples.

10.2 Global and local perception of well-being

Through the critical approach and the critical methodologies highlighted above, the researcher unpacked the global governance context in which the MDGs were formulated, adopted and implemented, as part of the first goal of this study. The researcher also illustrated how decision-making power is centralized in the hands of global governance institutions such as the UN system, World Bank and IMF, who control on behalf of capital interests, the global discourses and narratives on poverty and the form of participation prescribed to overcome it. The UN system as a global governance institution occupies international centre stage making it an arena for major theoretical tensions. According to the UN system Charter, it brings all its member states together to address global problems because they require global solutions (cf. Deutsch, 1953). This is despite the fact that member states and their various grassroots have not been consulted or understood before intervention programmes are initiated. In undertaking the global policy mandate, the UN system does that as a government authority mandated by the same member states to oversee and seek solutions to problems (Haas, 1958, 1961). However, as observed in this study, despite claims of equality of member states in the UN Charter, its policy positions and norms continue to be influenced by Western member states.

In this study, the researcher argued that the power of western countries is not limited to influencing culture, but also material and financial power. It is the ideas of those who hold the power of money which influence global decision-making processes and prioritisation of global agendas. In Chapter 6, the researcher demonstrated that the UN system still has a long way to go before it can be an empowered global governance institution that has weaned itself of depending on western financial support and ideological bondage. It will need to take into account that the principle of respect for diversity is not congruent with the market-oriented neoliberal ideas. As long as funding occupies central role in deciding lifestyle in the global discourse of poverty reduction, the UN system will continue to be driven by economic growth interests as a means to end poverty. The flow of knowledge and global policies will remain skewed against the rest of the world, within a global establishment where equality and respect for diversity are some of the key values of the UN system. How the group of western ministers conceived the MDGs idea exemplifies how these ideas hide interests, before they are snuck into the UN General Assembly for adoption.

Based on the above, the researcher cautioned that a similar scenario may have been repeated in the Sustainable Development Goals launched in September 2015 because of a tendency to build policies on pre-existing policy documents. These make participatory approaches difficult even though they are already impossible to implement within the UN system. For example, in 2014, ahead of the World Humanitarian Summit[60] to be held in 2016 in Istanbul, Turkey, the UNSG launched a consultation process from the grassroots to the high level to set the agenda to address future humanitarian challenges. This process has demonstrated that it is possible to involve different actors and sectors in the global policy formulation process largely because the field of humanitarian work is not epistemologically ring-fenced by several contentious interests and knowledge frames such as the PRSP, the logical framework, and the dollar-a-day indicator of poverty, all of which carry the goal of promoting neoliberalism.

In making the above caution, the researcher considered that the way the current development ideas are framed is closely linked to funding which is connected to capital interests. These interests in turn seek to maximise profits by controlling the minds and resources of the developing societies via their constructed poverty. Consequently, the existence and acceptance of alternative views on poverty in the UN system becomes an impossible venture. Allowing or empowering the villagers to pursue their views on poverty would unsettle the neoliberal agenda. This is one reason all the policy spaces in Malawi and Zambia are heavily dominated by external power and knowledge. Thus, whatever remains of the participatory space in the global government is nothing but both platonic and insignificant.

The researcher also demonstrated that ideas dominating debate at the global level and passed onto member states are by far inconsistent with what obtains at village level. Because global thinking on poverty is marinated by the conventional way of looking at poverty and the world, the discourses and narratives in the global ideas on poverty, makes us look at the villagers' lifestyles as strange, different and therefore poor. Thus, the response to such poverty arising from these theoretical lenses of neoliberalism is no longer about equality or empowerment but an agenda of resemblance of culture. I also highlighted that the practice of collecting data

[60] https://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/whs_about (Accessed on 4 September 2015).

purportedly to understand the villagers' lifestyles is always linked or designed to fulfilling NGOs' pre-set goals and objectives which also draw their definitions of poverty from the global governance perspectives. Short-term surveys and assessments dominated poverty reduction practice in Mwandama and Kamaila Villages as part of creating rapport with the beneficiaries of projects. In many cases, it was described as participation, consultation or involvement of beneficiaries of projects. This raises questions on the possibilities of adopting grounded theories on poverty in subaltern groups within the broader domain of global governance theories.

The researcher learnt that these villagers were knowledgeable about their lives which informed their world view. Such views cannot be ignored in exchange for a western lifestyle. Debate on both participation and the role of communication for development needs to focus on the subaltern groups such as the two villages than seek to improve message transmission efficiency of development models that have a documented history of failure. Further studies need to explore the gap that lies in the disparities between the global and local discourses and this is not to encourage another development from below model (cf. Makhoul, 1999). One lesson drawn from the Kamaila Village is that development is not a matter of climbing the ladder of progress as pursued by different development models such as the development from below or up. Neither is it about structures and diffusions as in modernization models, but is an organic process that arises from individual and communal aspirations.

As noted in Chapter 6, 7 and 8, the researcher argues that structuring poverty reduction policies is tantamount to repositioning the economic growth model as the main driver of poverty definition with private sector funding being the only facilitator of its reduction. With the collocation of these narratives of poverty as a problem, income as a solution and economic growth as the enabler, the neoliberal discourse is allowed to thrive over other views and remain unchallenged. The researcher highlighted this in Chapter 7 and how the power of capital interests has co-opted ideas on poverty to diminish the ability of global and national governments to make appropriate decisions relevant to their contexts. The chapter also highlighted how citizen participation is discursively configured and limited to expressing views, securing jobs and other economic growth fringe benefits. Allowing economic growth to be the deciding factor means that addressing the form of poverty it ascribes is at the whim of those who control it in order to exploit local resources with the private sector hand, while providing funding for projects using their donor hand. Chapter 6 highlighted how Zambia suffered as a result of the same model.

From findings in Chapter 7 and 8, the researcher was able to categorise village life in the two countries in two ways – the local (traditional) and the global (modern). At village level and from their traditional perspective, a number of variables such as self-worth, gratification and ability to meet aspirations defined well-being. MDGs derive from a modernistic discourse and assess the villagers' poverty based on indicators that do not necessarily derive from or apply to them. This erroneous assessment proceeds to put pressure on them to adjust their lifestyles from what they have been used to, following what neoliberalism is prescribing to them. For those without access to measurable economic income, even though they are content with their lives, they are placed under pressure to be part of the modern lifestyle. The economic income of the villages has implications on how they are viewed by authorities in countries where access to services is linked to economic conditions of the area.

10.3 Understanding development

One of the goals of this study was an assessment and analysis of the narratives and discourses that frame the MDG and the UN Communication for Development Strategy. The researcher identified, in Chapter 6, the narratives and discourses that underline poverty reduction knowledge in shaping its positions in the MDG framework and its implications on practice in the villages. The researcher also established that western and capital interests' knowledge dominates how poverty and ways of life must be understood which in fact stigmatises and discriminates local narratives on the same. This study found that the villagers in Malawi and Zambia were considered poor based on a constructed poverty than their lived experiences.

Based on the findings in Chapter 6, the researcher proposes that it is high time the global community redefined the concept of poverty because its dollar-a-day labour relations indicator is both archaic and irrelevant to the present world and to different contexts. It was explained in Chapter 3 that the main deciding indicator of poverty has been dominant since it was pioneered by Booth (1887) and refined by Rowntre in 1920. That indicator only makes sense in western economies, where labour wages are calculated based on measurable production earnings and general cost of living, variables that do not apply to the villages in Malawi and Zambia. Indicators of contentment highlighted by the village such as self-worth, gratification and ability to meet aspirations, are not quantifiable and yet resources to meet them are readily available within their local environment. These disparities are noted in Chapter 7. However, that both communication for development and poverty reduction, in their various models, have been part of the global agenda since the 1940s and yet the villagers remain unconverted, calls for rethinking on the relationship between communication and development.

The UN system needs to reinvigorate its position that "human beings must respect one other, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language. Differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity" (MDG, para 6). If villagers can attest achieving contentment along the lines of the indicators noted above through roles defined from their cultural and environmental context, then participation must be perceived from the same perspective. The responses by the Kamaila Villagers to the NGO project are another reason highlighting the need to revisit the current development thinking. It was noted that the role of each individual was defined by their local aspirations within a specific context. They were also cognisant of the need to protect their space while ensuring they were part of the NGO project activities. From the villagers' views, there were two types of development, their development and that by the NGOs. The point that needs to be raised here is how villagers remained closer to local than NGOs' knowledge. Access to local free knowledge and natural resources gave each villager an equal opportunity to explore their potential, even though they felt, especially in Mwandama, that modernisation and colonisation had robbed them of their access to natural resources. Without taking into account how different communities perceive their well-being, the researcher concludes that development, in its current theorisation, is an extension of ideologically induced western capital interests. In addition, these interests seek to use poverty to pave way for fulfilling their profit motives as they enjoy free reign under the guise of providing opportunities to address poverty.

10.4 Communication and behaviour change

The researcher was able to highlight the extent to which the UN communication for development strategy was implemented in Malawi and Zambia and its implications in Kamaila and Mwandama Villages. Starting with a discourse analysis, this study has shown that the UN Communication for Development strategy is preoccupied with transferring knowledge from the centre to the periphery on the assumption that villagers, whose lifestyles are not like those of the west, are poor and need knowledge. The application of the strategy resembled Rogers' (1962) diffusion model and is anchored within the MDG narrative of capacity building by transferring knowledge and resources to the villagers in Kamaila and Mwandama even when there was no tangible historical evidence to sustain this approach. However, it was noted that social communication has always been an integral component of the villagers' cultural ecosystem, responsible for local discourse production, exchange of knowledge, maintaining traditional practices and sustaining certain notions of community identity. The researcher also noted that it is through social communication that the villagers regenerated themselves and their identities by reproducing their culture. Not surprisingly, the NGOs operating in Kamaila and Mwandama had adopted the villagers' traditional mode of social communication to propagate their neoliberal ideology on poverty and the way it should be eradicated. In Mwandama Village, for instance, there was evidence of the villagers dramatizing the adoption of new ways of life because of increased awareness. However, it was not clear whether their being part of the project was an attraction to the benefits or a belief that that was the right way of life.

Kamaila Village was a stark contrast to Mwandama in that increased awareness had not translated into significant changes in behaviour. Villagers' behaviour was largely influenced by their aspirations and local context than external NGO influence. They had remained more inclined towards their traditional ways of life than those of conventional development. Thus, it was ideas within their tradition that had a much larger influence on their behaviour and their reading of their context in relation to their world. In making this conclusion, the researcher challenges several assumptions in the field of media studies, especially on the power of media to change society. In the same vein, the researcher is questioning whether media studies scholarship must concern itself with analysing channels and messages instead of the power that drives them. In addition, pursuing that line of academic inquiry, would face challenges unless the villagers' local context in which they receive such messages is understood first. Within that span of discussion, the main question this study raises is: why were the Mwandama Villagers more receptive to development ideas, while the Kamaila Villagers retained their lifestyle, despite pressure on them to adopt the same ideas? Could the difference be in the power of ideas or the magnitude of the problems faced? If the latter is true, then fear of suffering becomes another factor to take into account when analysing media effects. Perhaps, it explains why communication has been effective in responding to disease outbreaks than other areas. Alternatively, was maintaining a local identity more important to the Kamaila Villagers than the benefits brought by the NGO? Moreover, why was it the opposite in Mwandama Village? It was noted that in Kamaila, it was the symbiotic relationship between identity, behaviours and the context that was more at play in deciding participation than media effects. By media effects, this study is referring to radio and other external and institutional forms of communication. As it was noted in Chapter 8, the villagers in Kamaila had high respect for their own traditional channels of communication, of the link to their spiritual and ancestral reference points.

10.5 Understanding participation

The fourth goal of this study sought to critically examine the implications of the implementation of the UN Communication for Development strategy of MDG related project activities on participatory models. The researcher used the UNSG's recommendation that to fast-track poverty reduction, communication is necessary to steer community participation, as the entry point to this study. In the process of analysing the assumed cause-effect relationship between communication, behaviour and practices, he interrogated different sets of theories such as hegemony, knowledge, power, and ideology. The researcher also used theories of media effects and participatory development to engage with the topic of this study. Through these theories and qualitative methodologies, he was able to demystify the widely held view that knowledge and communication lead to participation and therefore poverty reduction.

It was also noted that communication might not have a direct impact on participation, behaviour or practices even though there may be remote and indirect influence on each other. How the villagers performed their roles within their local context highlights the operationalisation of their lives according to how they viewed it. The characterisation of their participation is directly linked to how they perceived contentment, from which they derived their locally set goals and ambitions. Hence, lack of progress on the MDGs as acknowledged in the UNSG's report (2010), which justifies strengthening communication for development is not necessarily lack of participation or localisation and involvement in MDG-related projects. Involvement in the context of the projects means that villagers renounced their own locally sustainable lifestyles to partake in externally funded project-oriented lives. In Mwandama, for instance, for project officers, participation meant involvement in project activities, while for villagers participation had two meanings. First, participation was part of how they lived their daily lives and participation meant being part of an NGO project. The difference lies in that the first is voluntary and endogenic, while the second is coerced directly or indirectly by the perceived threat of hunger and poverty or the fear of losing the benefits from the NGOs. As Cohen (1985) opines, couching participation in such a context is an insidious form of inclusionary control that ensures easy management of those considered poor, while excluding them from real economic and political issues. While the goal of participation is to uncover local knowledge, communities that have been excluded, marginalized or disqualified by conventional development discourse become more controlled and subjects of the socially constructed definitions of poverty. In drawing this conclusion, the researcher raises concerns, especially considering that despite some challenges, the villagers' local ways of life were more sustainable than those externally funded. Future studies on participation for development need to pay attention to the importance of understanding the two different types of participation and examine why the village participation is more sustainable than the NGO participation even though the latter wields more economic and political power than the former. This is necessary to inform thinking on participation and poverty reduction as it was difficult to deduce if the villagers believed in or bought into participating in project activities by the NGOs. Only the Kamaila Villagers confirmed that in some cases, their participation in projects was only to impress NGOs and the project officers, because they viewed projects as part-time and passing, hence did not need to give them full-time attention.

10.6 Implications of poverty reduction discourse

A critical discourse analysis in Chapter 6 yielded insights on how power constructs the poverty problem before it summons the UN system's member states to rally behind its ideas. These implications go beyond imposition of ideas via the global governance arena to include how member states are coerced to comply by aligning their national plans with the global policy positions. In the case of Malawi and Zambia, compliance meant that their national and local policy spaces were occupied by foreign knowledge and governed by external rules, resulting in the loss of power by the governments. Once governments lose their power to make decisions, it becomes impossible for the same government to empower its own people. In addition, in that context, participation is framed according to the whims of those who control the discourses and narratives, no longer those who are viewed as poor and underprivileged. The sovereignty of states and the ability to live alternative lifestyles is diminished.

As highlighted in various chapters in this study, neoliberalism is at the centre of the poverty reduction discourse at all levels. This is notwithstanding that this discourse did not speak to the local realities in the villages in Malawi and Zambia. The narrative analysis methodology was instrumental in complementing the critical discourse analysis but most importantly, demonstrating that modernization models and neoliberal discourse were only successful in achieving their goal of pushing through their agenda of profit making and not addressing poverty. Zambia for instance, after several years of SAPs, found its people poorer than before and yet the economic dashboard looked viable.

Unless local knowledge on well-being, including the grounding of communication within the same local knowledge, is viewed as part of local, national and global policies, the researcher concludes that the current poverty reduction framework as it is in the MDGs is nothing but a myth that is serving the interests of neoliberalism. As observed in this study, inclusion in formal project activities and structures of governance displaces people from their cultural economies. In addition, traditional communities are not traditional from their view but to an external world that assesses communities through neoliberal lenses. Thus, what has been referred to as traditional in this study is to the villagers their current way of life. They are a dynamic and different group who do not passively wait for external intervention to address their local problems. They are not unthinking.

Villagers have their own means of communication which they have historically applied to acquire knowledge. The researcher demonstrated that the transfer of knowledge using whatever technology does not naturally lead to behaviour change. The villagers' local forms of knowledge, which define their well-being even though they are not acknowledged by the NGOs, are more sustainable and adaptable. Grounding of the local practices in the conceptualization of well-being makes it different from what dominates development theory. The strength of local well-being lies in its grounding on local context and the flexibility to maintain individual and communal heterogeneity, making it more adaptable and adjustable to new scenarios while maintaining ties with social networks for purposes of social cohesion. It is on this account that the researcher was able to propose a reformulation of communication for development as an important corrective approach to what is encapsulated in the UNSG's recommendation on the implementation of the MDG-related projects. Understanding of local well-being and how it is organically constructed, with a focus on the individuals before they are members of the community, is the platform from which the role of communication must be derived. Therefore, consultation with the villagers or collecting their views may not be adequate to understand their lifestyles.

10.7 Challenges of communication for development

The first challenge communication for development faces today is its inability to be a standalone theoretical discipline unattached to other fields of study. When we consider Freire's (1994) view on dialogic communication, social communication remains a crucial socialising agent. It therefore remains the duty of the leadership of states, communities and individuals to play their role in decision-making and driving locally relevant policy-making processes. While within the UN system, Communication for Development strategy in the MDGs is configured to ensure inclusion, it was observed that the very act of inclusion reinforces control over states and individuals and creates an exclusion from their own local context, as they became part of economic growth (Cohen, 1985). The use of communication for development to alter behaviour as a way of bringing the excluded into poverty reduction projects, is thus reinforcing control of those seen as poor.

Among the key challenges facing communication for development in Africa is that most of the literature is written from western perspectives. There is still very little literature that looks at communication for development from a non-western perspective. Secondly, communication for development as a field of study has not been able to detach itself from facilitating institutional ideas in the field of development studies, health and human rights. It is noted in Chapter 3 that lack of funding continues to inhibit academic studies on communication. This is to the extent that most of the recent literature on communication for development is either commissioned by donors or NGOs to improve project efficiency, largely to integrate diffusion models into project goals (cf. Mefalopulos, 2003, 2006, 2008; Servaes and Malikhao, 2006; Waisbord, 2000); Hemer; Tufte, 2005). This consequently makes it difficult to disentangle participation that is delivered by this model of communication for development from conventional development, especially when we consider the pressure from the civil society organisations who demand states to comply with global norms. Chapter 6 highlights the difficulties in pursuing goals relevant to local realities as they are largely constrained by global norms, social and cultural practices and structures that mainly safeguard economic interests. The Communication for Development Working Group is simply a technical group comprised of employees of different UN agencies and a few NGOs who wield little political power, and yet are in a position to set a global policy agenda. In addition, very few, if any, academic institutions offer training on Communication for Development in Africa.

One of the barriers facing communication for development research in its role of promoting participatory development is its over-reliance on the assumption that poverty is addressed when there is balance of power and equitable distribution of wealth. Such an illusion has occupied central stage in the UN system since its formation. It has only served to strengthen an otherwise theoretically and practically weak claim, that those who wield little power have limited or no opportunities to achieve their wellbeing, because they are excluded from key governmental decision-making processes, and that their knowledge is considered insignificant. Addressing poverty through communication for development as a result, has oscillated between knowledge and power transfer, while neglecting the importance of understanding local realities as a starting point. The notions of behaviour, social change or inclusion at whatever level, are still significant exercises of external power whose function implies some form of control over groups and individuals (Kothari in Cooke and Kothari, 2001). As noted in earlier chapters, radio programming on poverty reduction in Africa has largely depended on western donor funding, compromising its ability to be objective, independent and autonomous. For example, both radio stations interviewed during data collection for this study indicated that their poverty reduction radio programming was either funded or provided by donors and NGOs. Radio stations that should be promoting different views of issues related to well-being are handed over to donors and NGOs.

One of the key recommendations from this study is that addressing poverty in Africa should not be left in the hands of the global policies, but must be initiated from the grassroots. In making this recommendation, the researcher draws inspiration from the rise of China since 1979, when the country chose to transform its communist ideology. Under the communist ideology, the Chinese government promoted the values of a classless society and common ownership of the means of production. However, between the 1980s and 1990s, family-based business models started emerging out of what were thought to be cooperatives in the field of agriculture. As James Kynge, (2006) writes, communities secretly subdivided the land allocated to a community cooperative into family plots. And each family made a decision of what they wanted to plant and how they wanted to use their land. Illegal as it was against the constitution, this marked the birth of the family-based business model which during the time comprised 85.4% of the private sector in that country, making China one of the fastest growing economies in the world[61]. While the government was aware of these developments as illegal and inimical

[61] http://china.org.cn [Accessed on 19 October 2014]

to government policy, they allowed them to proceed as they economically contributed to individual, family and national development. Today, family businesses contribute significantly to China's economy and have freed more than half a billion of its population out of poverty (p. 14-15). In this context, communication goes beyond just communicating. It becomes an instrument that facilitates the reconstruction of realities and opportunities for different stakeholders. The researcher takes from Mefalopulos (2006) who posits that participation resides in the multiplicity of realities which need to be considered instead of ignored or corrected by imposing 'proper' perspectives. The assumption that there is only one correct reality is a major barrier to development (Anyaegbunam, et al., 1998).

10.8 Contribution to media studies

In this study, the researcher has touched on the contentious questions on media effects, most specifically assessing the link between communication and participation. Communication is understood in this study as channels that enable the transmission and exchange of ideas within a particular setting. In whatever ways communication is understood, what was revealed in Chapter 8 is that it is the power behind the message that makes it more powerful than the channels that convey it. Several media scholars have made loose arguments that media messages can effectively alter behaviour when conveyed in the right context and space (cf. McQuail 2010; Livingstone 1996; McDonald 2004).

The current practice of communication for development has lagged behind especially in its analysis of media-effects (cf. McQuail 1983). The theoretical position encapsulated from the UNSG's call for integration of communication into the MDG-related projects mirrors that of Lasswell's classical model of communication of 'Who says What to Whom in Which channel and to What effect' (Lasswell, 1948). However, behaviour scientists and social marketing theorists may have a different take on this debate, especially when considering how the Mwandama Villagers have adopted the MVP projects. In addition, it is not clear whether they are part of the project activities because they are communicatively convinced or due to the perceived benefits of the project.

Regardless, Katz's (1980) discussion of communications theory, especially his postulation that media studies is tied between active and passive audiences, though weak, gives a useful grounding for understanding how individuals consume messages in different contexts. In

Kamaila Village, the researcher concludes that mass media such as the radio station had little or no effect, but local ideas through their local media forms impacted behaviour. Chapter 7 and 8 elaborated on this and it was noted that villagers viewed national radio stations as foreign to them. Again, the emphasis in Kamaila was on attachment with ancestry, spiritualism and traditional authority, which together, formed the broader idea of villagers' culture. Drawing from the above arguments, the researcher proposes that local culture and how it is operationalised must be the ontology where communication for development occupies the role of facilitating the exchange and transmission of knowledge with the agenda of promoting progress and not change. In discussions on ontology, the researcher borrowed from different knowledge frames in which the social identity knowledge is identified as an entry point for positioning communication for development. In making this proposition, the researcher takes the view that communication is an inherent part of the cultural ecosystem from which individuals derive their behaviour.

10.9 Areas for further research

The three areas discussed in this study still need further research. First, the notion of poverty or well-being needs to be addressed and understood from local perspectives and through local lenses before conclusions are drawn. Doing so is not a matter of basic assessment or surveys but rather, through comprehensive academic research. Second, regarding the notion of participation in achieving local well-being, it may be useful to conduct further research on how individuals in village settings action their well-being and aspirations, including how these and local contexts configure human behaviour within the context of communicative ecologies. In the field of sociology, there is significant literature on how environmental and social context shape behaviour (Gidden, 1984; Haralambos and Holborn, 2008) but there remains little or no research on how different modes of local social communication can form part of communication for development at grassroots level. Another area of study is how communication for development can be implemented outside international development policy, taking into account progress made in the field of post-development studies. That would mark the beginning of a policy shift on communication for development, towards revitalizing subaltern groups to reclaim their social power and rely on their knowledge to meet local needs. There is need for further critical studies on global poverty reduction policies such as the MDGs, as they tend to be taken for granted and regarded as given, holy and therefore left uncriticised. So far, there has been very little literature critically looking at the MDGs and their implications on culture, production and consumption. Due to lack of studies questioning the relevance of global policies, the UN system has proceeded to conceive the Sustainable Development Goals to succeed the MGDs in a similar fashion and under the same discourses and narratives.

Chapter 8 raised a pertinent question on the relationship between media effects and behaviour as well as between policy ideas versus practices. Further research in the area will benefit the field of media and policy studies. The numerous reviews and critiques of media effect theories have evaded the point that the power of messages lies in ideas that are being transmitted and the power of the actor behind them which calls for analysis of the embedded intentions in ideas being transmitted. The power of the media messages, or lack thereof, is determined by several factors, including the political power behind the messages.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of interviews

Malawi

Dr. Rodwell S. Mzonde, Ministry of Finance and Planning, Government of Malawi, 28 May 2015 (email interview)

Patrick Kamwendo, UNDP Malawi, 25 May 2015 (email interview)

Dr. Andrew T. Daudi, Millennium Promise Alliance, Malawi, 28 April (face to face interview)

Mr. Joseph Chibwe, Millennium Promise Alliance Malawi, 28 April (face to face interview)

Mr. Mzati Nkolosa: Development Broadcasting Unit, Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, 19 June 2015 (email interview)

Mwandama Villagers 28-29 April (face to face and focus group interviews)

Zambia

Ms. Rekha Shrestha, UNDP Communication Specialist, Zambia, 10 June 2015 (email interview)

Ms. S Banda. Ministry of Finance and National Planning, Zambia, 28 May 2015 (email interview)

Mr. Edmund Chilanzi Mulwanda, Water for Kids 1 May 2015 (face to face interview)

Radio one, Zambia Broadcasting Corporation, 28 May 2015 (email interview)

Kamaila Villagers 1-3 April 2015 (face to face and focus group interviews)

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1.1 Questions for United Nations Resident Coordinators in Malawi and Zambia

Question 1: Describing development/Poverty reduction

- How does the UN system in this country describe poverty and development?
- What are the key factors that influence this description of these two concepts?

Question 2: Planning process

- Can you describe the poverty reduction planning process by the UN system and how it compliments Government poverty reduction plan?
- To what extent does the UN policy formulation process ensure participation of member states in terms of accessing policy and planning spaces?
- To what extent does national and local knowledge from this country influence the UN system's thinking on global poverty reduction planning? Can you give examples where possible?

Question 3: Understating participation

- To what extent is both the UN system and Government processes in this country inclusive and participatory?

- What is the UN system's understanding of participation?
- What extent are views of individuals and communities taken into account?
- What is your assessment of this form of participation?

Question 4: Linking communication with participation

- The UN system adopted a Communication for Development Strategy in 2007 which is aimed at promoting community participation in implementing the MDGs. Can you describe how the UN expects communication to promote participation?
- What communication for development methodologies, approaches and programmes have been used to ensure communication promotes participation?

Question 5: Assessment of progress

- Since both the MDGs and UN communication for development have been in place, what is your assessment of the progress thus far?
- As the MDGs period comes to an end this year, what is the post MDGs plan?
- If there is a new framework, to what extent is the UN system going to ensure or has ensured participation of member states, especially developing countries, in developing the new framework?
- In your view what are the opportunities and challenges faced by developing member states in participating in the formulation and implementation of the UN global poverty reduction plans and their own national plans?

1.2 Questions for the Governments (Permanent Secretaries in the Ministries of Finance and national development planning)

Question 1: Understanding poverty reduction/development

- How does the government describe poverty and development? What influences the description of these two concepts?
- How does the government think development should be achieved?

Question 2: The planning process

- Can you describe the poverty reduction planning process by the government?
- How does the government planning process relate with the goals of the UN system?
- Does your government participate in global planning process? Can you please explain?
- Give you elaborate on the relationship between the government and the UN system?

Question 3: Understanding influences

- To what extent do government processes collaborate with those of the UN system and how are the processes participatory?
- What is the government's understanding of participation?
- How do local priorities shape national planning? If it does, how is it done?
- How do global priorities influence national planning? Can you explain?

Question 4: Understanding of communication and participation

- The UN system adopted a Communication for Development Strategy in 2007 which is aimed at promoting community participation in implementing the MDGs. Can you describe how the government has integrated communication strategies to promote participation?
- Which communication for development methodologies, approaches and programmes have been used to ensure communication promotes participation?
- Do you think communication can play an important role in transforming society? Can you please explain?

Question 5: Progress assessment

- Since both the MDGs and UN communication for development have been in place, what is your assessment of the progress thus far?
- As the MDGs period comes to an end this year, what is your government's post MDGs plan? If there is any, can you describe how it took or takes the views of individuals and communities into account?

1.3 Questions for Development agencies/NGOs (Millennium Promise Project in Mwandama Village, Malawi and Water for Kids in Kamaila, Zambia)

Question 1: Understanding poverty/development

- How does your organisation describe poverty and development?
- What are the key factors that influence this description of these two concepts?

Question 2: The planning and participation

- Can you describe the poverty reduction planning process by your organisation?
- To what extent does your planning process collaborate with or compliment that of the UN system and the government and how the processes are participatory?
- How does your NGO participate in the UN system's planning process?
- How do you assess project participation?
- What is your organisation's understanding of participation?

Question 3: Understanding communication and participation

- The UN system adopted a Communication for Development Strategy in 2007 which is aimed at promoting community participation in implementing the MDGs. Can you describe how your organisation has integrated communication strategies to promote participation?
- Which communication for development methodologies, approaches and programmes have been used to ensure communication promotes participation?
- Do you think communication is an important in influencing participation? Can you please explain?

Question 5: Progress assessments

- Since you have integrated communication and participation in your programming, what is your assessment of the progress thus far?
- Can you attribute progress or lack of it, to participation/communication? Explain.

- As the MDGs period comes to an end this year, what is your NGO's post MDGs plan? If there is any, can you describe how it takes the views of individuals and communities into account and hot it links with the UN and national development priorities?
- In your view what are the opportunities and challenges faced by individuals and communities in accessing project planning processes, including your NGO's, and participating in the formulation and implementation of poverty reduction plans?

1.4 Questions for Radio stations (Zambia Nation Broadcasting Corporation -Radio and Malawi Broadcasting Corporation- Radio 1)

Question 1: Understanding poverty/development

- How does your radio station describe poverty and development?
- What are the key factors that influence this description of these two concepts?

Question 2: Radio programmes

- What development/ poverty reduction radio programmes do you run on radio station?
- Can you describe the objectives of those radio programmes?

Question 3: Media and development projects

- To what extent is your programming promoting participation or participatory?
- How does the programming collaborate with the UN/NGO/Government projects?
- What is your radio station's understanding of participatory development?

Question 4: Media and participation

- The UN system adopted a Communication for Development Strategy in 2007 which is aimed at promoting community participation in implementing the MDGs. Can you describe how your radio station has complimented these efforts to promote participation?
- Do you think radio is a powerful tool to reduce poverty in your country?
- What media methodologies, approaches and programmes have been used to ensure that radio programming promotes participation and poverty reduction?

Question 5: Progress assessment

- Since you included development radio programming, what is your assessment of the progress thus far?
- Can you attribute progress or lack of it, to your programming? Give examples.

1.5 Questions for the communities/focus groups in Mwandama and Kamaila Villages

Question 1: Understanding poverty/development

- What is your understanding of poverty or development?
- What are the factors that inform this description?
- How was wellbeing described traditionally/historically?
- How do people in this village survive?

Question 2: Development projects and local well-being

- What development/ poverty reduction projects exist in this village?
- Can you describe the objectives of the development projects?
- How do these differ or compliment your daily life needs?

Question 3: Understanding community participation

- Do you understand the MDGs, when they were adopted and their content?
- Can you describe how they were formulated?
- To what extent do you think the MDG development projects in your area are participatory?
- What is your understanding of participation in development projects?
- How would describe participation in the absence of development projects?
- Can you describe how you would survive in a situation where there are no development projects?
- What activities do you undertake to achieve this?

Question 4: Factors influencing lifestyle

- What factors influence your lifestyle most?

Question 5: Media and behaviour relationship

- Do you have access to media and which media do you access?
- What are the media-related development projects you have been exposed to and what has been their influence on behaviour and practices in this village?
- How do you describe the influence of traditional media on the behaviour and practices of the communities in the villages?
- What is the significance of these to supporting local/traditional well-being of the people in this village?

Question 6: Progress assessment

- Since different media approaches have been used in this village, what is your assessment of the situation so far?
- Can you attribute progress or lack of it, to the media? Give examples.