

MASTER OF SCIENCE PROGRAMME IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT
LUND UNIVERSITY

Building resilience in Malawi

The prominence of resilience in international development,
how it is performed, and its potential and consequences

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May, 2014



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to discuss the reasoning behind the prominence of resilience building in Malawi's development strategies, how resilience building is performed in Malawi, and what the potential and consequences of resilience in Malawi might be. In observations of a resilience building project and interviews with development practitioners, it was found that resilience had become prominent in Malawi primarily since it is advocated by donors. It was also found that resilience is built through, for instance, Village Savings and Loan programmes, and that such programmes sometimes tend to exclude the most vulnerable people who are unable to participate. These findings are analysed through a framework of theory on resilience, neoliberalism, and the concept of governmentality, and it is argued that resilience is a good example of what tools governments use in order to shape the conduct of its people. Finally, it is concluded that resilience often is perceived as the best response in this changing and disaster prone world we live in, but that it rather should be perceived as a complement to strategies mitigating the causes of such changes and disasters.

Keywords: resilience, vulnerability, governmentality, food security, poverty reduction, Malawi, Foucault, Dean, Reid, Joseph.

[Word count: 14 607]

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the staff at the World Food Programme in Malawi, Save the Children Malawi, the LUMID staff, and everyone who participated in the research. I would also like to thank my supervisor Catia Gregoratti, fellow students of LUMID, and my thesis group, for pushing me in the right direction while I ever so often got lost on a side-track. Last but not least, I would like to direct a thank you to my family and friends. Without you this thesis would not have been possible. Thank you.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ranked at place 170 out of 186 countries in the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2012), Malawi is one of Africa's least developed and poorest countries. In particular, food insecurity is a problem in Malawi, and over the last decade food emergency assistance interventions in Malawi have been executed almost every year (Edelman & Otter, 2013). From October 2013 to March 2014, nearly two million people out of Malawi's 17 million people population were targeted in a major food emergency assistance intervention (WFP, 2014a). One way of breaking the cycle of hunger is argued to be by strengthening the resilience of vulnerable people (MGDS, 2012:36). While there are several definitions of resilience, the one used in this thesis is defined by The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction: Resilience is "the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions" (UNISDR, 2007).

Over the last couple of years, the concept of resilience has received increased attention internationally and nationally (Welsh, 2012). In the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for Malawi, the Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) II 2012-2016, it is stated that the Malawi government wishes to improve "the quality of life for the poor to move out of poverty and vulnerability" (MGDS, 2012:36) through enhancing the resilience of the most vulnerable (MGDS, 2012:76). Vulnerability is defined in MGDS II as "people's inability to meet their basic needs due to exposure to hazard and lack of resilience" (MGDS, 2012:34). It is argued in the MGDS II that the most vulnerable include orphans and other vulnerable children, people with disabilities, elderly, destitute families, and chronically sick. The government argues that the lack of resilience of these groups keeps them from "engaging in higher economic return activities to enable them [to] move out of chronic poverty and ultimately above the poverty line" (ibid). However, as will be discussed further on in this thesis, the international and national focus on resilience as a tool for food security and poverty reduction is no silver bullet. Just like many other concepts within international development, resilience poses both potential and consequences.

1.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM

While conducting an internship at the World Food Programme (WFP) in Malawi in 2013/2014, I found that there was an increasing focus on resilience as one way of breaking the cycle of hunger in Malawi. The increasing focus on resilience can be found at WFP, but also amongst other international organisations, donors, governments, INGOs, and NGOs. The recent, and increasing, focus on resilience in international development and in Malawi is assumed to have some sort of impact on the life of the poor of Malawi, and as such, the concept of resilience deserves to be further explored. In particular, I argue that questions we need to ask us are; where the concept of resilience comes from and why resilience has become so central in development work in Malawi and other parts of the world. In addition, I argue that it is important to examine who are targeted for resilience building and how resilience building translates into development policies and programmes, and what it means in practice.

1.2 PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the concept of resilience, its prominent position in development strategies, and its potential and consequences for the people of Malawi. In order to do so, I will divide the research questions into three parts; *why*, *how*, and *what*.

- Why has resilience building become prominent in Malawi's development strategies?
- How is resilience building performed?
- What are the potential and consequences of resilience building in Malawi?

In an attempt to answer the research questions, I will firstly explore if the stronghold for resilience building is based on national initiatives or first and foremost advocated by international donors. Secondly, I will explore if international policies on resilience are translated into national strategies for development, and which activities are being executed in Malawi in order to build the resilience of the most vulnerable. Thirdly, I will explore who the most vulnerable are and whether their wellbeing, with a special focus on food security, can be strengthened through resilience building, and if resilience building may have any consequences. It is my ambition with this thesis to provide input for further discussions and future research on resilience.

1.3 DISPOSITION

Following this first and introductory chapter, is the theoretical framework in chapter 2, which contains theories in order to further explore and establish an understanding of the concept of resilience, its emergence in international development, and its impact. The concept of governmentality will be explored as a way of analysing how resilience building is translated into national strategies and executed in Malawi. In chapter 3, I discuss the methods which the findings of this thesis is based on. In chapter 4, I discuss the contextual background of Malawi and its national development strategies. In chapter 5, I discuss findings from interviews, observations, and briefly also a few evaluations on resilience building. In chapter 6, I analyse the findings from chapter 5 in relation to the theory discussed in chapter 2, before I proceed to further discuss those findings in chapter 7. Finally, in chapter 8, I sum up the findings and conclusions of this thesis.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the following chapter I will, firstly, turn to research question one and discuss why resilience building has become prominent in international development. Secondly, I will, in relation to research question two, explore the concept of governmentality as a framework to discuss how resilience is performed in terms of how policies on resilience building may be translated into national strategies and executed in Malawi. Finally, I will, in relation to research question three, discuss the potential and consequences of resilience building in Malawi.

2.1 WHY RESILIENCE BUILDING HAS BECOME PROMINENT

2.1.1 THE GENEALOGY OF RESILIENCE

The first piece of the puzzle to answer why resilience building has become prominent in Malawi is to examine the concept of resilience. Resilience is a concept which is applied within many different types of contexts, for instance health care, education, and international development. During the 1970s, resilience was associated with two epistemic communities investigating traumatised children and two discourses were developed; psycho-social resilience and socio-ecological resilience. The psycho-social resilience discourse relates to the ability to recover from trauma, and a capacity to sustain health. The socio-ecological resilience discourse relates to the ability of the system to absorb disturbance and reorganize during change (Welsh, 2012).

Within international development, resilience building is perhaps most evident in relation to governing emergencies (Pupavac, 2012). Strategies of building resilience in regards of international development and emergencies have mostly been about an older conception of resilience focused on engineering and building protection. More recently, resilience within international development has come to be about improving the adaptability of individuals and communities. Resilience places much focus on the individual's responsibility to adapt and one of the major criticisms of resilience is its close ties to neoliberalism (Welsh, 2012).

2.1.2 NEOLIBERALISM

Neoliberalism is in this thesis understood as “a regime of political-economic practices which promotes the deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal of the state from social provision,

proposing that human wellbeing¹ can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Reid, 2013:358). Larner (2000) further explores different perceptions of neoliberalism through the lenses of policy framework and ideology. As a policy, which is the most common conception, neoliberalism relates to five core values: “the individual, freedom of choice, market security, laissez faire, and minimal government” (Larner, 2000:7). Neoliberalism as a concept is characterized by a shift from the welfare state to relying on the market for providing goods and services. As an ideology, neoliberalism is, according to Larner (2000), best understood as a multi-vocal and complex web of ideas, rather than a straightforward unified philosophy. As such, neoliberalism has managed to attract people from all social classes. Therefore, Larner (2000) argues, that for instance new welfare state arrangements, such as a privatization of health care, has emerged out of political struggles, and not top down. The concept of governmentality, which will be discussed in the following section, will be explored as a way to understand changing of institutions and individuals in line with government policies on neoliberalism (Larner, 2000).

2.1.3 THE RATIONALE OF RESILIENCE IN DEVELOPMENT

According to Reid (2013), development, in the past, used to be seen as an issue of economic improvement. This, arguably Eurocentric, take on development is in line with the neoliberal take on development, which places focus on economy rather than people. It also represents a traditional division of the world, the rich and developed, and the poor and underdeveloped. The neoliberal standpoint has not been met without criticism, and over the last decades the focus on economic development has been contested by the doctrine of sustainable development. Reid (2013) argues that the sustainable development doctrine, in contrast to the focus on economic development, places more focus on human development and on sustaining those resources which we and future generations are dependent on in order to live a good life. According to Reid (2013), proponents of sustainable development argue that the wellbeing of the biosphere has to be prioritized over development of the economic life and standard of living of humans. The sustainable development doctrine deploys ecological reason in order to ensure security of the biosphere, while neoliberalism deploys economy as the very means of that security. In other words, without economic improvement the biosphere cannot be secured. The sustainable development doctrine has, perhaps especially in recent years, been

¹ Wellbeing is in this thesis understood as “the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy” (Oxford, 2014).

vulnerable to the neoliberal reasoning. According to Reid (2013), the concept of resilience is argued to have emerged as a response to the critique of neoliberalism and some would even argue that it is part of the sustainable development doctrine. Reid (2013) argues, however, that resilience fits well with the neoliberal philosophy on systems of governance and therefore rather can be perceived as a way of avoiding the critique of neoliberalism.

Resilience within international development has come to be about individuals and communities, rather than states. This approach to resilience is based on the assumption that communities have to self-organise in order to deal with uncertainties (Welsh, 2012). In addition, these uncertainties are nothing which can be stopped or changed, but you can only adapt to them. This also means that the uncertainties become de-politicised and that the role of the state is mere supportive, rather than controlling the resilience building activities, or enabling financial protection for the vulnerable individuals and communities (ibid). Reid (2013) argues that within sustainable development, the poor people in developing countries have become the subject of resilience based on the notion that they are, through the degradation of “ecosystem services”, the threat to the wellbeing of the biosphere. Building the resilience of the poor has therefore become a necessity in order to secure the wellbeing of the biosphere, but is also argued to require creating awareness of ecological sustainability. Ecological sustainability is in its turn is argued to require flexible and open institutions, as well as multi-level governance systems. In other words, building the resilience of the poor, requires building neoliberal frameworks of economy, governance, and subjectivity. Therefore, Reid (2013) argues that proponents of sustainable development have served to naturalize neoliberal systems through advocating the concept of resilience. According to Reid (2013), the United Nations Environment Programme has argued that “the absence of markets and price signals in ecological services is a major threat to resilience” (Reid, 2013:361), since changes in the conditions of the ecological services then have gone unnoticed. The market has been argued to be one of the most resilient institutions, able to function even where governments are weak, as well as to recover quickly (Reid, 2013).

Resilience may have started out as a concept built on the critique of neoliberalism, but it has turned into a concept which adapts a neoliberal model of development, based on markets and subjects within markets (Reid, 2013). As a contrast to Chandler’s (2012) claims that resilience is part of a post-liberal agenda, Joseph (2013) argues that the concept of resilience emphasises individual responsibility and heightened self-awareness rather than relying on the

state for your wellbeing. Therefore, Joseph (2013) argues, that resilience should rather be understood as an expression of neoliberalism. Chandler (2012), on the other hand, argues that since resilience places the main responsibility and ownership on local actors, in contrast to liberalism which is directly involved in state policies, resilience ought to be understood as post-liberalism. Joseph (2013) contests this statement by arguing that although local ownership is central, communities are rarely the ones choosing to get involved with resilience building. Instead, resilience building is more often introduced by international organisations and enforced in government legislation. Joseph (2013) argues that resilience should not be reduced to neoliberalism, but that resilience fits well with the concept in terms of placing responsibility on individuals rather than institutions. Joseph (2013) also argues that the recent enthusiasm for resilience is because it fits so well with the neoliberal discourse.

2.1.4 POVERTY REDUCTION AND INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE

Another key to answering why resilience building has become prominent in development might be to examine Joseph's (2010a) argument that strategies for poverty reduction have become a way for international organisations to control government policies. Earlier in history, such attempts, for instance through the Washington Consensus, were often dismissed and criticized as a top-down approach. Joseph (2010a) argues that since the shift towards local ownership in the late 1990s, international organisations have had the role of providing technical guidance. Within such a framework, as the Paris Declaration of 2005 (OECD, 2005), one essential piece is monitoring through a so called partnership. Joseph (2010a) argues that while this framework seems to be focused on improving the wellbeing of people, it is more about monitoring the behaviour of governments. Joseph (2010a) argues that poverty reduction and the terms local ownership and partnership are applied in order to shape the conduct of states. How this is done can be further analysed through the concept of governmentality, which will be discussed more in detail in the following sections.

2.2 HOW RESILIENCE BUILDING IS PERFORMED

2.2.1 GOVERNMENTALITY AND THE INTERNATIONAL

Governmentality is a concept first coined by Michel Foucault in a few lectures in the 1970s, in order to further explore and describe the methods and rationalities governments apply to create and shape conduct of the subjects, or the people (Dean, 2010). In other words,

governmentality can be understood as a way of producing citizens best suited to fulfil their policies (Mayhew, 2004). Governmentality can therefore be a useful tool in order to discuss how resilience building is performed in terms of governance (Dean, 2010). Government is commonly identified and synonymous to the state, with a sovereign body claiming monopoly on territory and the right to use violence. More precisely, “government is any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies... that seeks to shape conduct...” (Dean, 2010:18). Human conduct is perceived as something which can be shaped, controlled, and regulated. Governmentality unveils the way to consciously direct the subjects in a certain way which the government wishes the subjects to move in (Dean, 2010).

As discussed above, Joseph (2010a) argues that poverty reduction is used as a tool in order for international organisations to control government policies. However, given that Foucault’s work addressed advanced liberal countries, Joseph (2010b) also argues that the concept of governmentality only can be usefully applied to those countries having an advanced form of liberalism. Death (2011) argues that Africa often has been pointed out as one continent where it is difficult to apply the concept of governmentality, since it is politically far from the European advanced liberal countries. However, Death (2011) argues that the concept of governmentality can be useful also in non-liberal societies, and that governmentality reveals the interrelationship between the domestic and the international. Death (2011) argues that governmentality is most useful if one uses it as an approach to analyse “regimes of rule with particular attention to the conduct of conduct through certain visibilities, practices, knowledge, and subjectivities” (Death, 2011:4).

2.2.2 GOVERNMENTALITY AND RESILIENCE

There are several ways to understand how the government can create and shape the conduct of people. Dean (2010) highlights four dimensions of practices in order to analyse governmentality. These four dimensions will briefly be discussed in relation to the concept of resilience in this section, and we will return to the four dimensions in chapter 5 and 6 in order to cover Malawi in particular. The four dimensions presuppose each other and cannot be reduced to one another. The first of the dimensions relates to the visibility of government necessary to the operations and how its authority is visible and perceived. Dean (2010) mentions Bentham’s Panopticon as the most famous example of how a regime, in this case a

prison and its guards, are visible and how its authority is perceived (ibid). The Panopticon is a circular prison structure which enables one guard to observe all cells from one tower in the centre. Although the guard would be unable to observe all inmates at once, a central point of the structure is for the inmates to not know whether or not they are being observed at the moment. Bentham argued that since the inmates did not know when they are being watched, they have to act as if they are watched all the time (Bentham, 1787). Therefore, the authority is present at all times, even though not always visible. When it comes to resilience building, it is argued to be, and perceived as, a concept which is based on local ownership (Joseph, 2013). The understanding of resilience as a concept resting on local ownership might give resilience validity since it is in line with the Paris Declaration of 2005 (OECD, 2005). Joseph (2013) argues, on the other hand, that the direction of the resilience agenda is already set and promoted by donors, or primarily Western countries. However, if resilience is validated through the perception that it is based on local ownership, it will arguably be perceived by local people, as well as the government itself, as something which is sanctioned by the government. The government can therefore be argued to be visible in resilience building, since resilience is authorized through the local ownership of the government.

The second of the dimensions relates to the technical aspect of government, by what means and techniques “authority is constituted and rule accomplished” (Dean, 2010: 42). Dean (2010) argues that one essential implication of the second dimension is to contest the perception of government as primarily an expression of ideology and values. Dean (2010) argues that if a government is to govern, it must do so through the use of technical means. Doing so means that governments have to adhere to models of what is possible to do. For instance, keeping inflation rates low and stable are not primarily an expression of rational or capitalist values, but a necessity if governments are to achieve ends (ibid). Joseph (2013) argues that while the concept of resilience might seem like a systems theory, focusing on strengthening the system on a state level, resilience, on the contrary, emphasises the need for adaptability on the individual level. Resilience building in practice means that the state should take a step back from its social and economic responsibilities. However, taking a step back through promoting resilience also requires action. The government actively has to steer policies to promote individual responsibility and enable the private sector to take over responsibilities of the state (Joseph, 2013), which are techniques the government uses in order to exercise its authority for resilience building. As such, returning to the understanding of neoliberalism earlier, since the privatization adheres to techniques of governance which

are possible, the neoliberal form of governance should be understood as a policy here and not as an ideology. Joseph (2013) argues that the trend of privatization already can be seen within a range of areas which are traditionally controlled by the government, such as healthcare and infrastructure. Such a trend of increasing emphasis on resilience can be found in both traditional donor countries as well as in developing countries.

The third of the dimensions relates to what knowledge and rationality which is applied in practices of governing. Such knowledge and rationality may take place in the writing of a policy document, formulating what the government knows of themselves and the situation, and what the government wishes to achieve. Such formulation of the knowledge and rationality is aimed at shaping institutions in the way which the government wishes to move forward (Dean, 2010). By looking at a range of policy documents, Joseph (2013) argues that the argument of a changing world is rarely developed any further than to simply claim that there is evidence that the world is changing and we therefore need to learn how to better survive. However, the argument works simply because it is accepted as the truth (ibid). Once the knowledge and rationality of the need for resilience building is outlined and accepted, it is, one can argue, a small step to formulating such policies for resilience building.

The fourth, and final, dimension of practices relates to “the forms of individual and collective identity through which governing operates” (Dean, 2010:43). Moreover, the fourth dimension relates to the practices and programmes governments form in order to form such identities, identities which are important for the execution of government policies (ibid). One example is the identity of a subject to resilience building, as a subject who accepts the changing and disastrous world. The subject constantly has to learn how to adapt, rather than to resist or secure themselves from the changing world (Joseph, 2013; Reid, 2013).

2.3 THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE GOVERNANCE OF RESILIENCE

The potential of resilience building in terms of for instance reducing poverty and strengthening the food security in Malawi will be discussed more in detail in chapter 4 and 5. Below, the implications of resilience, through the lens of governmentality will be discussed, and later returned to in chapter 5 and 6. What an analysis of governmentality can do is to “make clear what is at stake and what the consequences of thinking and acting in such a way [are]” (Dean, 2010:49). Foucault (1986) argued that in an analytics of government the stakes

of how government practices influence individuals, the collective, and power relations become evident. Dean (2010) argues that it is through such an analytics that for instance relations of power are exposed. Hence, it is through an analytics of government the one can understand how things are done, and choose to do things differently. While analysing the governmentality of resilience, one can find that Joseph (2013) argues that the resilience agenda is part of a bigger ambition by donor countries tied to neoliberal ideas on trade and letting non-state actors tied to the market, such as NGOs and businesses, handle some of the traditional government responsibilities. Joseph (2013) argues that as a consequence of the introduction of resilience, human rights principles on state responsibility have to give way for neoliberal reformations. As such, one can therefore argue that governments and international organisations use resilience building as the method, and the need for adaptation as the rationality, in order to create and shape societies in accordance with neoliberal policies. According to Welsh (2012), this has led to a shift of focus, from a state-based to a society-based conception of risk and response. Welsh (2012) argue that such a shift is not only evident in developing countries, but also developed countries, where welfare state policies are aimed at strengthening the personal, community, and economic resilience of people. As a result, welfare has, through such policies, become the responsibility of individuals (ibid).

Welsh (2012) argue that resilience in international development functions like an ideology. That resilience promotes “a post-political life of constant adaptation, [and] the abandonment of long-term expectations” (Duffield, 2011:15). In other words, since resilience presupposes that the world is changing and that there are little people can do about it, vulnerable people have to accept those perceived truths. Instead of trying to stop or do something about the changing disastrous world, adaptation is argued to be the only way to a life in wellbeing, perhaps especially for the most vulnerable people. The concept of resilience is therefore argued to disable people’s political power, since it gives no space for any other path to wellbeing than adaptation (Reid, 2013).

3. METHODOLOGY

In order to shed some light on why resilience building has become so central in development work, how it is performed in Malawi, and what the potential and consequences might be, this thesis is based on project observations, interviews with development practitioners, secondary data, and an exploration of the literature on resilience. Below, the methods, selections, choices, and limitations will be discussed more in detail.

3.1 EPISTEMOLOGY AND ONTOLOGY

In this thesis I have partly looked at the governmentality of resilience and neoliberalism has been a central concept discussed throughout the thesis. A post-structural perception has been useful while doing so and Joseph (2010b) argues that governmentality studies tend to perceive neo-liberalism as the ruling system and therefore often are more preoccupied with the question of how neoliberal governance works, rather than why neoliberalism has emerged as the dominant ideology in development. Death (2011) on the other hand, argues that governmentality is useful as a concept studying the ruling regimes and its ways to shape the conduct, rather than a concept to only study neo-liberal regimes. In addition, the literature examined on resilience in the previous chapter also highlights why resilience has become prominent and its relationship to neoliberalism. As a result, I am able to explore both the why and how question, as well as the what (are the potential and consequences) question.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION

The data collection, which constitutes the basis for this thesis, consists of a desk review of literature and secondary data, as well as observations at resilience building project sites and interviews with development practitioners. The observations and interviews will be discussed more in detail below.

3.2.1 PROJECT OBSERVATIONS

In total, I have observed about 80 people in activity meetings at three different community resilience building project sites in the Zomba district. It was in previous academic work that I came across this project on resilience building which was executed by Save the Children Malawi since March 2013 and scheduled to continue until March 2014. The resilience building project was funded by the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and had been

implemented simultaneously to an emergency food assistance intervention executed by the WFP, where I conducted an internship during September 2013 – March 2014. In this thesis I am interested in how resilience building is performed and therefore approached Save the Children Malawi who thus came to act as gatekeeper during my project observations. As per usual while using gatekeepers, there is a risk that using Save the Children Malawi as a gatekeeper may have impacted the data collection in terms of for instance which sites I had access to and which people I were introduced to. This will be further discussed in the limitations section, under 3.6.1. At the project sites, I conducted moderate participation observations, meaning that I was present at the site but did not actively participate and only occasionally interacted on an individual level with people at the site (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010:262).

3.2.2 INTERVIEWS WITH DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS

In total, I have interviewed 11 people, 8 men and 3 women, from UNDP, Save the Children Malawi, ActionAid Malawi, WFP, and the Malawi government's Department of Disaster Management Affairs. The organisations targeted for the interviews were targeted since (a) they are a few of the largest international organisations/INGOs with activities in large parts of the world, since (b) the organisations are active in Malawi, and since (c) they are organisations I have managed to establish contact with either through WFP or by my own efforts. The specific interviewees, or development practitioners, were approached since they, to some extent, are involved in resilience building within their organisation. The interviewees hold different positions, from country level to district level officials and together have a broad experience of development and resilience building in Malawi, and to some extent also internationally. The focus on Malawi as an example in a wider discussion on resilience cannot necessarily be generalized to represent other countries (Yin, 2009:15). Instead, I seek to get a deeper understanding of the issues in question. Hence, this thesis includes interviews with development practitioners and the interviews are thus designed as qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2012: 97). The semi-structured in-depth interviews are argued to enable the interviewees to formulate their answers freely (Larsen, Ann Kristin, 2007:83-85) and to reveal individual experiences (Mack et al, 2005:30).

3.3 TRANSCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Some of the research was transcribed and analysed in the field. All material was, however, either analysed or re-analysed once I had left the field and specified the research questions for this thesis. Thus, all material have been analysed aimed at answering the research questions, as well as revealing any other issues or perceptions which may have been overlooked in the formulation of the research questions. The interviews and observations have been analysed by looking at common denominators and/or key words relevant to this thesis.

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND POSITIONALITY

Prior to conducting the observations and interviews, as well as after, I have considered and reflected on my positionality. Sultana (2007) argues that it is important to continuously reflect over your positionality and that one useful way of reflecting is by considering the identity others construct for you. This identity might also change over times, as might my personal relation to the respondents and understanding of the local context (Scheyvens & Leslie, 2000). I constantly reflected on my position as a (white male) stranger visiting the project sites and how I might be perceived by others. One worry that I had was that some people would perceive me as a person with the ability to for instance influence aid policies. I therefore made it clear as early as possible that I am a student and explained the purpose of my visit and research. One guiding star while conducting the field study has been to do no harm, and I did my best to sustain a professional relationship to my research as well as the interviewees and people observed. I also decided to keep all interviewees and people observed anonymous since I want to avoid any potential doubt whether the interviewees felt free to freely express their opinions and act as they normally do (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010).

3.5 RELIABILITY OF THE RESEARCH MATERIAL

In order to ensure reliability of the observations and interviews, the verbal interviews have been recorded, interviews via e-mail have been saved, and field notes have been stored (Bryman, 2008:376). The interviews and observations together constitute a broad perception of the work on resilience in Malawi, which, arguably, strengthens the base for the analysis (Scheyvens and Storey, 2003:16). In addition, I spent, in total, six months in Malawi. I believe my stay in the country gave me as a researcher quite a solid understanding of the local context, which was useful during the analysis of the research material.

3.6 LIMITATIONS

Throughout the observations and interviews I have – to the extent possible – strived to ensure a gender balance amongst the interviewees and people I have observed. I can conclude, however, that men are overrepresented amongst the interviewees at the international organisations since men often held the key positions relevant to the study, while women are overrepresented amongst people at the observation sites.

While I will discuss the work on resilience in Malawi, similar findings might not necessarily be found in other countries. Similarly, the potential and consequences of resilience building are based on specific findings as well as theory and will not necessarily represent other countries. The opinions expressed in this thesis do not necessarily reflect the views of the organisations approached, nor the Malawi government, nor Lund University. It is my ambition to provide input for further discussion and research on resilience, but I do not attempt to claim that my findings necessarily will translate to other circumstances and situations.

3.6.1 LIMITATIONS OF THE PROJECT OBSERVATIONS

The project by Save the Children Malawi on resilience building was not limited to the three sites visited, instead timing was one guiding factor and visits were planned to those sites which had meetings on the specific dates. It is therefore possible that visits to other project sites would have resulted in other observations. On the other hand, I chose to conduct observations prior to conducting the semi-structured in-depth interviews in order to get a better understanding of resilience building activities. In addition, observations are argued to be a critical source of information while conducting social research (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010:259) and I was during the observations able to further explore the concept of resilience in practice.

The occasional interactions were conducted with assistance from a translator. I am aware that a translator might influence the outcome of an interview, for instance through uses of words or due to different perspectives on issues. It is argued that the researcher should be well aware of a translator's intellectual biography (Davies, 1999:113), something which I would argue I was and I did not notice any irregularities during the interviews. The visits to the observation sites were carried out in consideration of biases while conducting field research.

There are a number of biases which potentially could lead to exclusions and faulty findings. These biases include, but are not limited to, roadside biases and person biases. Chambers (1981) argues that it is common that researchers go to easily accessible sites which might result in inadequate research, hence the roadside biases. He also argues that there are different types of person biases, including elite biases and active, present, and living biases. These types of person biases have one thing in common; they tend to exclude people who are less visible than others from the sample and research. Chambers (1981) argues that it is important to be aware of these types of biases in order to prevent them while conducting research. While conducting the observations, I went together with my gatekeepers to different sites, which all had different geographical conditions, such as distance to main roads. I also randomly chose who to interact with during the observations. I also asked whether everyone could participate in the activities or whether someone could be excluded, something I will return to in chapter 5.

3.6.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE INTERVIEWS

The interviews were all conducted in English, with people who have English as their work language, and without a translator. However, due to geographical challenges, some of the interviews have been conducted via email. The interviewees have still had the opportunity to expand on any answer or to follow up with any question. However, it is possible to argue that those beneficiaries did not have the same natural or spontaneous ability to follow up with possible questions. On the other hand, one could also argue that those interviewees potentially had more time to think through their answers. While conducting the semi-structured in-depth interviews, I have also bared Chambers' (1981) principles on biases in mind, and made sure I have interviewed a wide range of people on different positions and in different organisations.

4. NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND CONTEXT

In the following chapter I discuss the development strategies of Malawi, in particular the focus on resilience, and the contextual background of Malawi.

4.1 THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES OF MALAWI

Malawi has no history of bigger domestic or inter-state conflicts and has potential to be a relatively prosperous country. However, food insecurity², HIV/AIDS, suppression of human rights, and political and economic mismanagement, has turned Malawi into one of the regions poorest countries (Kajee, 2006). The MGDS II clearly specifies that the overarching goal is to “create wealth through sustainable economic growth and infrastructure development as a means of achieving poverty reduction” (MGDS, 2006:3; MGDS, 2012:2). The MGDS II, as well as the preceding document, was written in consultation with government ministries, local authorities, donors, and other stakeholders, such as NGOs, and the private sector. Six thematic areas are highlighted in the MGDS II: Sustainable Economic Growth; Social Development; Social Support and Disaster Risk Management; Infrastructure Development; Governance; and Gender and Capacity Development. It is argued in the MGDS II that these six thematic areas are essential to accomplishing the overarching goal of poverty reduction (MGDS, 2012). Of these six thematic areas, Social Support and Disaster Risk Management, will, due to the scope of this thesis, be given special attention following the contextual background.



Map of Malawi (2014)

4.1.1 CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND OF MALAWI

It is argued in the MGDS II that Malawi saw high economic growth and declining poverty levels over the past five years (MGDS, 2012), but 53 % of its 17.3 million people still live

² Food security is defined as existing “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life” (WHO, 2014).

below the poverty line, and over 40 % live on less than US\$1 per day (CIA, 2014). In the MGDS II, it is stated that “Sustainable economic growth is key to poverty reduction and improvement in the living standards of Malawians” (MGDS, 2012:18). The economy of Malawi is overall weak and Malawi is highly dependent on economic support from the World Bank, the IMF, and individual donor nations. However, Malawi is also a country with poor fiscal management and high levels of corruption. Malawi has, in theory, a functioning multi-party system of liberal democracy, but in practice party and state resources are closely intertwined and oversight institutions such as the Anti-Corruption Bureau have been rather ineffective, as result of denied funding (Kajee, 2006). Recently, in the so called “Cashgate” scandal, it has been revealed that at least 30 million US\$, and perhaps as much as 100 million US\$, have been stolen from the government over a 10 year period. At least 68 prominent figures are standing trial, for their involvement in the fraud. Aljazeera (2014) reported that government officials are accused for having used a central computer payment system to transfer money to made-up companies. As a result, donor countries, who provide about 40 % of Malawi’s budget, are now withholding millions of US\$ in financial aid.

Malawi is a landlocked country in sub-Saharan Africa which covers an area of 118 484 square kilometres, and shares borders with Zambia, Tanzania, and Mozambique. Approximately 80 % of the population live in rural areas, of which over 40 % cultivate less than half a hectare. Agriculture accounts for one third of GDP and both 90 % of export revenues and 90 % of the work force. Malawi faces challenges of inadequate energy generation and supply, climate change, unemployment, environmental degradation, and a limited export base. Primary export goods are tobacco (which accounts for more than half of the export), sugar, and tea (CIA, 2014). It is the ambition of the Malawi government to tackle those challenges “through the continued implementation of interventions aimed at ensuring sustainable economic growth” (MGDS, 2012:18).

4.1.2 SOCIAL SUPPORT AND DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

The government of Malawi recognizes that many people still live in poverty in Malawi and that they require social support. It is also argued in the MGDS II that building the resilience of the vulnerable will be a key to further economic growth and reduced poverty (MGDS, 2012:35). In addition to its general levels of poverty, Malawi has been affected by disasters which have led to a loss of lives. Despite a food production surplus nationally, disasters, such

as reoccurring droughts, have resulted in food insecurity in many districts in Malawi (MGDS, 2012:34). The government therefore argues that there is a need to continue provide social support and resilience building to the vulnerable and strengthen the disaster risk management of the country. The Malawi government argues that programmes such as the Farm Input Subsidy programme, the School Meals Programme, and the Village Savings, Lending, and Microcredit programme built resilience and resulted in decreased poverty rates over the last MGDS period (MGDS, 2012:34-35). However, a lack of seeds and fertiliser in agricultural production (Kajee, 2006), as well as widespread poverty, fragile macroeconomic stability, low levels of education, land pressure, and nutritional dependence on maize (Edelman & Otter, 2013), still poses a serious obstacle to food security in Malawi.

With an agricultural sector which is dominated by smallholder farmers who depend on rain-fed crops, making them vulnerable to prolonged dry spells (Kajee, 2006), the government argues that the types of programmes highlighted above are essential in order to build resilience as means for people to move out of poverty. However, the government highlights some challenges in social support and resilience building activities. These challenges include the lack of regulatory instruments which would make the beneficiary targeting easier, financial sustainability, limited financial resources which lead to limited coverage of direct assistance and cash transfers, and the continuity of programmes (MGDS, 2012:34-35). In addition, the government has been criticised for its lack of commitment in executing the existing policies in order to tackle the issue of food insecurity in Malawi. Kajee (2006) argues, as an example, that there is a lack of commitment from the government to fully allocate funds to programmes such as providing treadle-pumps or to provide free seed and fertiliser.

5. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS IN MALAWI

In this chapter, the empirical data (observations and interviews) will be summarized and presented following the same structure as in the theoretical framework, which follows the order of the research questions. In the following chapter the empirical data will be analysed and connected to the theory outlined in chapter 2.

5.1 WHY RESILIENCE BUILDING HAS BECOME PROMINENT IN MALAWI

5.1.1 THE GENEALOGY OF RESILIENCE

People participating in the resilience building project which I observed were some of the same beneficiaries who were targeted in the emergency food assistance intervention (due to a prolonged dry spell) of 2013/2014. Save the Children Malawi has been active in executing similar food emergency interventions before, and the U.S. have acted as a donor on several occasions. The aim of the project was to strengthen the resilience of some of the most vulnerable people so that they would not be in need of emergency food assistance again. Interviewee 2 argues that discussions on resilience in Malawi started about two years ago, at least in development partner circles, after another failed harvest. Interviewee 6 and 7 have noticed discursive and programmatic shifts of mainstreaming resilience internationally and in Malawi. Due to dry spell or floods in some parts of Malawi, a number of NGOs as well as the government have started to focus on resilience building in the affected communities. According to interviewee 2, this shift towards resilience seems to still be mainly a discourse in development partner circles.

5.1.2 NEOLIBERALISM

Interviewee 7 does not experience a shift in how for instance food security used to be the responsibility of the government, towards being an individual responsibility. Interviewee 7 argues that such a shift would not be possible at the moment since for instance prices for farm inputs (fertilizer), is too high and individuals may not afford it, which would have a direct effect on the amount of food realised from farming. Interviewee 7 argues that people are still dependent on other stakeholders. Interviewee 8 argues that resilience building should not only be understood as placing the focus and responsibility on individuals and their ability to adapt, but as something which involves a lot of efforts by different partners. Interviewee 6 argues that it is UN organisations and NGOs which will introduce resilience building

programmes, trainings etc. and hopefully this will make people more capable of building their own resilience.

5.1.3 THE RATIONALE OF RESILIENCE IN DEVELOPMENT

According to interviewee 1, there was a shift of focus from managing disasters to focusing on preparedness and relief in the 1990s in Malawi. Since 2005, the shift moved further towards resilience building and recovery in affected communities through humanitarian or development work. Interviewee 5 argues that climate change has put us in a situation where we need concerted efforts to reduce greenhouse gases emission and support adaptation strategies. According to interviewee 10, there has been a shift in the approach to development work where most organisations now try to come up with an approach which allows you to respond to any given shock. The hope is that the intervention will be of assistance immediately, but also long-term. According to interviewee 3, since the onset of the deterioration of food crisis in Malawi, several programs and initiatives have been designed and implemented to promote resilience among Malawians facing chronic poverty and recurrent food crises. The aim of resilience building projects in Malawi can therefore be argued to be based on the idea of sustainable development.

5.1.4 POVERTY REDUCTION AND INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE

Interviewee 10 argues that the paradigm shift towards resilience, which interviewee 10 calls it, is coming from donors, as well as practitioners who say that we need resilience. Interviewee 10 argues that donors are pushing for resilience building now because their citizens say that they want value for their money, especially taking into consideration the current global financial crisis. According to interviewee 1, the shift towards focus on resilience building in Malawi is a result of both external and internal influences, although it is within the governments mandate to implement the actions and therefore interviewee 1 argues it is primarily internal. Interviewee 5 also argues that the initiative for resilience is externally introduced, but shaped to suit the local conditions. Therefore, they argue, that the ownership is still local. Interviewee 8 argues that although resilience building activities are externally driven, there are also cases where individuals themselves take measures to build their own resilience.

5.2 HOW RESILIENCE BUILDING IS PERFORMED IN MALAWI

5.2.1 GOVERNMENTALITY AND THE INTERNATIONAL

One obstacle to resilience building in Malawi is that it traditionally has been easier to find funding for emergency operations. Interviewee 9 argues that although some donors have resilience building in their strategies, it is always more attractive to fund emergency operations. Interviewee 4 argues, on the other hand, that as a result of the donor's agendas on resilience, NGOs have started to take initiatives for resilience building as a way of making their work more attractive to donors. Therefore, the donor countries can be argued to have a way of influencing the development work in Malawi in other ways than direct collaboration with the government. The governance of resilience building therefore, at least in the case of Malawi, takes an international-district level (for instance Zomba district) shape, in addition to the international-national (Malawi) level outlined in the previous chapter.

5.2.2 GOVERNMENTALITY AND RESILIENCE

The following sections on governmentality and resilience in practice are divided in accordance with the four dimensions of practices of governmentality outlined in the theoretical framework.

5.2.2.1 VISIBILITY AND AUTHORITY

Interviewee 3 argues that improved coordination of resilience building initiatives is critical at the government and inter-agency levels in order to ensure sustainability. Interviewee 11 argues that resilience building is the way forward for governments and international organisations, because then the long term issues are addressed. However, in the interim, there is also a need for emergency operations. But it requires that one part handles the coordination, since resilience building is not limited to one sector. Interviewee 11 argues that the government has the machinery for that role, but does not take that responsibility fully. Although resilience is central in the Malawi national development strategies, there seem to be a lack of authority when it comes to authority of the programmes on a national level. Such authority could be expressed through a more active coordinating and leading role. As an example, the government has an active role when it comes to emergency food assistance interventions. However, in the case of Malawi, there are also traditional authorities (chiefs), who, to some extent in Save the Children Malawi's resilience building project in Zomba, are

actively participating in the activities. The chiefs can, arguably, be seen as an extension of the central government and thus the government is exercising its authority and visibility.

5.2.2.2 THE MEANS AND TECHNIQUES OF GOVERNANCE

Interviewee 3 argues that there is an urgent need to further involve private sector participation to make sure markets work. Interviewee 10, on the other hand, argues that there already is a growing trend that governments basically takes a step back for the people, through the market, to be responsible for their own food security. Interviewee 10 argues that the privatization might work in other countries, but not in Malawi. According to interviewee 10, the Malawi government is so inefficient that it is easy for them to leave the responsibility to the individuals. As such, one can see that there is a trend that the government is taking a step back and emphasising the importance of the market and individual responsibility. Why and whether that is the right way to go, however, remains debatable. Although interviewee 3 wishes to see more focus on the role of the market, interviewee 3 also argues that there is a continued need for social protection by the government in the short to medium term.

The individual is central in resilience building and interviewee 6 argues that it should be the responsibility of individuals to build resilience and adapt. Interviewee 6 argues that people need to understand that they have to make changes themselves. Interviewee 11 also argues that behavioural change is one of the most critical areas which one needs to work on if one is to achieve resilience. In order to address causes of food insecurity in Malawi, interviewee 6 argues, people need to be taught the importance of planning for the future and keep some stock (if they can). In addition, crop diversification is essential, as is irrigation. Interviewee 6 argues that food insecurity in Malawi is closely linked to poverty and a lack of income generating activities. Interviewee 11 argues that since so many people are farmers, or at least cultivate something, food security becomes a part of their life and it is therefore natural to teach the individual how to adapt.

5.2.2.3 THE KNOWLEDGE AND RATIONALITY APPLIED

According to interviewee 1, resilience building started mainly from a humanitarian viewpoint, which now also links more to development programmes, including social protection, livelihoods, agriculture, climate change and disaster risk reduction programmes, with a focus on the individual. Upon my visit in Zomba, in December 2013, I found that the resilience building project included activities such as agriculture and food security, Village

Savings and Loan (VSL) programme, and strengthening the nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women and children less than five years of age. The rationality that the individuals have to adapt was especially evident in the component on agriculture and food security of the resilience building project in Zomba. Through the activities on agriculture and food security, the beneficiaries received livestock, as well as sweet potato vines for planting. By applying a sort of volunteer, or mentor, system, Save the Children supported the local farmers in teaching each other these practices on for instance manure making. One other thing that Save the Children has been advocating is the increased use of kitchen gardens, where they can use left over water to water the crops. The introduction of livestock, often a chicken, is a way of strengthening the food access and economy of the households. The introduction of the sweet potato vines is a way of advocating a diversification of the nutritional dependency on maize, which in previous studies has been pointed out to be one of the underlying causes of food insecurity in Malawi (Edelman & Otter, 2013). As such, the focus of the agricultural and food security activities were very much focused on the individual, or household, level, although the training took place in a communal setting.

5.2.2.4 INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES

Similarly, the activities in the VSL groups, as well as care groups, were focused on strengthening people on the individual, or household, levels, while working together in the community. By participating in the resilience building activities, the beneficiaries, directly or indirectly, accepted the terms that they need to learn how to adapt in order to live a good life. In my observations in Zomba, I observed how the beneficiaries have their adaptability strengthened. In the savings and loans groups, which consisted of approximately 5-10 members in each group, one person received training (although they expressed a want for more training) and support from Save the Children over 1 year. The group normally met up once a week and the group members contributed approximately 50 Malawi Kwacha (approximately 0.13US\$) per household and week. In addition to the weekly contribution, the members of the VSL groups contributed a fee if they were late to a meeting. The members also paid a social contribution if a person from the group had a member of its household who got sick or passed away. The size of the weekly contribution, as well as for any additional contributions, was decided by the groups themselves. All contributions constitute a base of which the group members can loan money from. In addition to VSL groups, care groups were formed as a response to high death rates. The care groups met up once every second week to

learn more about best practices in terms of nutrition, hygiene, and sanitation. One of these care groups consists of members from ten households and one volunteer who receive a small financial contribution, as well as training and a bicycle from Save the Children Malawi. The care group observed a majority of female members and during their session the care group covered topics such as the importance of washing hands, not to drink water which may be contaminated, how long to exclusively breastfeed, utilizing existing food resources, and other issues such as how to construct a dish rack and washing facilities.

5.3 THE POTENTIAL AND CONSEQUENCES OF RESILIENCE BUILDING

5.3.1 THE POTENTIAL OF RESILIENCE BUILDING IN MALAWI

All beneficiaries who I talked to during the observations in Zomba district seemed proud to “own” the work of the group and expressed that they had benefited from the resilience building project. An evaluation of a similar resilience building project in Malawi, and in particular VSL groups, had positive effects on resilience in communities (Kabir, McNulty, & DeVries, 2012). An upside of the VSL programme is, arguably, that it is easier and more affordable to loan money from the group than from a bank. There is an interest fee on the loans but this fee goes back into the group’s cash base. How much each member can loan depends on how much that member has contributed, and therefore some members also choose to contribute with slightly more than 50 Malawi Kwacha each week. The ambition of the VSL groups was to build resilience, but there were no certain regulations on what the loans should be used for. In conversations with some members of these groups, it was found that the most common reason for loaning money was to pay for their children’s school fees. Others were hoping to be able to build a house. There were also a few examples of people taking loans for investments in diversifying activities, such as bike taxis, as a shift away from complete dependency on agriculture. Interviewee 8 does not foresee any potential problems with placing the responsibility to adapt on individuals. On the contrary, interviewee 8 argues that resilience building might even lead to better results if the individuals themselves take the lead in building their resilience. Interviewee 1 and 7 also argue that placing the responsibility of adapting on individuals is good, since they have a better understanding of the environment they are living in, rather than an external part. Interviewee 1 also argues that the locals are familiar with the locally available resources that might be required in resilience building. They local people also the first to feel the effects should a disaster hit them. Interviewee 1

argues that leaving the responsibility to the individuals therefore gives them ownership of the programmes and makes the resilience building sustainable.

In addition to the introduction of livestock and sweet potatoes through the activities related to agriculture, activities were carried out on manure making as one of way increasing yields and better conserving the rains. Interviewee 1 argues that resilience building projects have made people more food secure, and as one example small scale irrigation projects has resulted in an adequate harvest. Interviewee 3 argues that resilience building is the right approach to reduce exposure and vulnerability to shocks and address the underlying structural causes of vulnerability in Malawi. If done correctly, interviewee 6 argues, resilience building is the way forward for governments and international organisations.

5.3.2 THE CONSEQUENCES OF RESILIENCE BUILDING IN MALAWI

I conducted my observations of the resilience building project towards the end of the project and found that the beneficiaries generally feared that the project would soon lose the funding and support from Save the Children Malawi. Staff members of Save the Children Malawi argued that resilience building takes time, and were therefore hoping to be able to continue the project. An evaluation from a resilience building project in Guatemala in 2003-2010 show that resilience building projects often were executed during a short time and activities conducted were often household-level demonstrations of practices such as home gardens and composting, similar scenario and activities of those in Zomba district. In addition, it is found that resilience building projects often experienced shortfalls in budgets and commodities. It is concluded in the evaluation, however, that the activities benefitted individuals on a household level, but that a comprehensive large-scale approach would be necessary in order to build overall resilience (WFP, 2014d). The beneficiaries of the agricultural and food security activities in the resilience building project in Zomba were pleased with the support, but expressed that the sweet potato vines they had received only would result in food for a week or two. The lean season in Malawi traditionally lasts from October to March. Interviewee 1 argues that certain resources can be limited in resilience building projects, in which case the government and development partners should ensure to support the activities being undertaken. Interviewee 4 and 6 argue, however, that one obstacle to efficient resilience building in Malawi is that NGOs rarely work together, since it is a competition of getting funding. According to interviewee 6, it at the moment seems like many organisations are

doing resilience building since they know that they will receive funding from donors to implement these projects, although they do not necessarily have the experience to do it properly. Interviewee 6 argues that, in order to see a substantial impact of resilience building, there is a need for much better coordination (and less competition) between NGOs, donors, the government, and the UN.

While the ambition was to include all beneficiaries of the emergency food assistance intervention in the resilience building project in Zomba district, the nature of some of these activities resulted in an exclusion of some people. It may for instance be difficult for elderly to participate in agricultural activities, and in other cases social issues and conflicts resulted in members being eliminated from the VSL groups. Interviewee 10 and 11 argue that households are on different levels and have different abilities, and that resilience building activities so far mainly have been focusing on some households in the communities which are able to contribute. Not all households do have that ability, however, and are therefore often excluded from resilience building activities. According to interviewee 11, resilience building programmes have so far not been focused on the ultra-poor, such as child headed households. Finally, interviewee 4 argues that resilience building and adaptation is not enough in cases where you might be able to instead mitigate the underlying causes of for instance food insecurity. Interviewee 4 argues that adaptation should only be the way forward in cases where it is not possible to mitigate the underlying causes.

6. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

In this chapter I will analyse my findings in Malawi in relation to my research questions, the theoretical framework, and the empirical findings. The analysis is broken down into three sections, each section including a longer analysis and a brief answer for each research question.

6.1 WHY RESILIENCE BUILDING HAS BECOME PROMINENT IN MALAWI

As argued in the theoretical framework, resilience is a concept with many definitions and applied within many types of contexts (Welsh, 2012). Within international development, resilience is argued to function as an ideology (Duffield, 2011), a response to a changing and disastrous world outside the influence of governments (Reid, 2013). The resilience building project I observed in Zomba district was initiated after yet another failed harvest and a response to continuous droughts in the area. Interviewee 1, 2, 5, and 10, also argue in line with the argument that resilience building has become increasingly popular in Malawi as a response to the continuous disasters. It is argued in the theoretical framework that such an understanding of the world as a disastrous place outside the control of governments has led to a shift of focus, from a state-based to a society-based conception of risk and response. While resilience in international development first emerged as a response to the critique of neoliberalism (Reid, 2013), resilience is argued to be based on a neoliberal foundation, given the focus on marketization and individual responsibility. In addition, it is argued that the resilience agenda is part of a bigger ambition by donor countries tied to neoliberal ideas on trade and letting non-state actors tied to the market, such as NGOs and businesses, handle some of the traditional government responsibilities (Joseph, 2013). Interviewee 7 does not recognize such a shift of responsibilities and argues that agricultural subsidies are still essential. However, the observations and interviews confirm that resilience building emphasises individual and community responsibility. Although several of the interviewees argue that a focus on individual responsibility is nothing new, and that individual responsibility is good. The rationale the interviewees use is, that the local individuals themselves know the local contexts the best and that they are therefore best equipped to deal with such challenges.

Most of the interviewees argue that resilience is introduced by external partners, such as donors or international organisations. Several interviewees argue, on the other hand, that although resilience is introduced by external partners, the ownership of the implementation

remains local. However, some interviewees also argue that not all interviewees are equipped to build their own resilience, which is line with the argument in the theory that international organisations and donors set the agenda for resilience (Joseph, 2013) and have the role of providing technical guidance (Joseph, 2010a).

6.1.1 ANSWERING RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Why has resilience building become prominent in Malawi's development strategies?

No matter whether the donors are pushing for resilience, because it fits with the neoliberal discourse or not, there are many parallels between the neoliberal nature of resilience and findings in observations and interviews. However, donors role in advocating resilience building seem to have been essential for why resilience building has become prominent in Malawi's development strategies. In addition, findings in observations and interviews show that resilience building is perceived as the best response to a changing and disastrousness world, establishing resilience as a concept which is here to stay – at least for now.

6.2 HOW RESILIENCE BUILDING IS PERFORMED

One part of answering how resilience building is performed, is to first understand the previous section on why resilience building became prominent. The next step is, how resilience can be translated into policies and finally into practice. According to Foucault, it is through the concept of governmentality that understands what methods and rationalities governments apply to create and shape conduct of the people, including resilience building (Dean, 2010). Joseph (2010b) argues, on the other hand, that the concept of governmentality only can be usefully applied to those countries having an advanced form of liberalism. However, it is in the interviews argued that the governance of resilience building in Malawi takes an international-district level shape, in addition to the international-national level, since NGOs respond to the demand (for resilience building) of the market. As such, one can successfully apply the concept of governmentality in Malawi in order to understand how the conduct of NGOs, and ultimately the poor, is shaped (Death, 2011).

As highlighted in the theoretical framework, the concept of governmentality can be understood through four dimensions of practices (Dean, 2010). The first of the dimensions relates to the visibility of government necessary to the operations and how its authority is

visible and perceived. In Malawi one can conclude, based on the observations and interviews, that the government's role is limited when it comes to resilience building. Some argue that the government has the machinery for an active and coordinating role but does not take that responsibility fully, while others argue that the government is too inefficient. On the other hand, one can also argue that the government is successful in the work for resilience building, since it is leaving resilience building to the market. The second of the dimensions relates to the technical aspect of government, by what means and techniques "authority is constituted and rule accomplished" (Dean, 2010: 42). As argued in the theoretical framework, resilience building means in practice that the state actively should take a step back from its social and economic responsibilities, and steer those responsibilities over to the private sector (Joseph, 2013). In Malawi, it is argued in the interviews that there is a growing trend of having individuals taking responsibility for their own wellbeing, which is in accordance with what is technically possible and in line with the understanding of neoliberalism as a concept (Larner, 2000). The third of the dimensions relates to what knowledge and rationality which is applied in practices of governing. In the interviews and observations it was found that the rationality that the individuals have to adapt was widely accepted. The same rationality can be found in the MGDS II and is argued to be based on the knowledge that resilience building has positive effects in a disaster prone country like Malawi (MGDS, 2012). The fourth, and final, dimension of practices relates to "the forms of individual and collective identity through which governing operates" (Dean, 2010:43). In the observations it was found that by participating in the resilience building activities, the beneficiaries accepted the terms that they need to learn how to adapt in order to live a good life. That also means that the beneficiaries accepted the role as a subject of resilience building, or a subject targeted for change, although it was not explicitly expressed.

6.2.1 ANSWERING RESEARCH QUESTION 2

How is resilience building performed in Malawi?

By applying the concept of governmentality in order to understand how resilience building is performed, one can argue that donors, international organisations, and governments use resilience building as the method, and the need for adaptation as the rationality, in order to create and shape people and society. In other words, through the will of donors, international organisations, and the Malawi government, resilience building is translated into development strategies. One can also find that the market for resilience building is functioning since NGOs

are taking initiatives for resilience building as a way of getting funding from donors. Whether that is an expression of the government's lack of ability to coordinate, or a successful hand-over to the market remains untold. In practice, resilience building is often performed through, amongst other activities, VSL groups, and agricultural intensification.

6.3 THE POTENTIAL AND CONSEQUENCES OF RESILIENCE BUILDING

Beneficiaries, interviewees, and evaluations all witnessed that resilience building does strengthen the resilience of people. A vast majority of the interviewees were positive to resilience building and expressed that it is the way forward for Malawi, and a way to break the cycle of hunger. However, as has been discussed in chapter 2 and 5, resilience is not an unproblematic concept. The interviews, observations, and evaluations show that much of the criticism of resilience is about the execution of resilience building projects, and then first and foremost an issue of lack of sufficient funding, time, and a limited scope. In addition, interviewee 6 argued that not all NGOs have the necessary set of skills to execute projects on resilience building, but still execute projects on resilience building since it is a lucrative business for NGOs looking for funding. The search for funding is also argued to lead to competition between different NGOs, with less coordination and cooperation as a result. One common challenge, not just amongst NGOs, is the lack of stakeholder coordination on resilience building.

In the theoretical framework it is argued that resilience means a shift of focus, from a state-based to a society-based conception of risk and response (Welsh, 2012). As a result, welfare becomes the responsibility of individuals and is left to the market forces. In the observations and through the interviews, it was found that although the ambition of resilience building projects are to target the most vulnerable, this often fails since the most vulnerable are unable to participate. Without a functioning welfare system, the most vulnerable may therefore be left without support since they cannot participate. Resilience also prerequisites that the subjects of resilience building accepts that the world is a disastrousness and changing place, and that adaptation is the only way to a life in wellbeing. Therefore, Reid (2013) argues that resilience disable people's political powers. In addition, interviewee 4 argues that resilience building and adaptation is not enough when you instead might be able to mitigate the underlying causes of for instance food insecurity.

6.3.1 ANSWERING RESEARCH QUESTION 3

What are the potential and consequences of resilience building in Malawi?

Resilience building may in fact make people resilient and able to withstand shock, and ultimately contribute to food security and reduce poverty. It is found in the observations and interviews that the common perception of resilience is that it is the way forward for Malawi. However, it is also argued that resilience building may have a range of consequences. One is the disabling of political power to change the changing and disastrous world, another is the exclusion of people who cannot participate, a third is limited time, resources, and scope, a fourth is competition amongst NGOs for funding, and a fifth is a lack of coordination of resilience building programmes.

7. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In this chapter I will further explore and discuss the analysis outlined in the previous chapter. The discussion will take the analysis one step further and include recommendations at the end of the chapter.

7.1 RESILIENCE BUILDING IN MALAWI – CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE

Resilience building is in the analysis argued to have become prominent primarily through the influence of donors and international organisations. As a consequence, resilience building, while claimed to be a bottom up approach based on local ownership, is actually an agenda introduced by donors and international organisations. Moreover, it is argued in interviews that locals themselves know what needs to be done in order to build resilience, but there is little proof to show that resilience building projects are designed in a dialogue based on the specific needs of a certain community or individuals. However, even if communities and individuals would have something to say on what needs to be done in order to build resilience, resilience is still introduced by external stakeholders. In addition, as argued in the analysis, findings show that development practitioners and the subjects of resilience building (at least indirectly) perceive resilience as the best response to a changing and disastrous world. Resilience building has become so popular, and perhaps to some extent even perceived as the silver bullet in international development, that the consequences of resilience building are overshadowed.

As discussed in the analysis, resilience building projects often seem to pose a range of obstacles, which, arguably, are not that different from other projects within international development. Such challenges of logistical, financial, and organising nature should, however, not be impossible to mitigate. A greater challenge might be to design a resilience building project which also the most vulnerable people, who resilience building is argued to target, can participate in. I do not argue that the ones targeted in resilience building projects are not vulnerable, but there is, as argued in this thesis, a group which are unable to participate in some resilience building activities. Another dimension of the challenge is that, as many would argue, there is an increasing trend and pressure to produce results in international development. As a result, I argue, there is a risk that the ambition to include as many people as possible in a resilience building project, potentially will exclude the ones unable to participate. In addition, resilience building is not concerned with dealing with underlying

causes of vulnerability, for instance climate change. The focus is on adaptability of the individuals, which is argued to disable the political power of people. However, resilience building and mitigating for instance climate change might not necessarily be a contradiction. One could argue that it is possible to both mitigate underlying causes of vulnerability, at the same time as one builds resilience as a response to the immediate situation. Therefore, I am not suggesting that resilience is not the way forward. On the contrary, the development practitioners consulted in this thesis, as well as the beneficiaries, seem to believe resilience building is what Malawi needs.

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

If resilience is what Malawi needs, a few steps need to be taken in order to mitigate the challenges and consequences of resilience building. First of all, much of the criticism of the execution of resilience building is something which more coordinated efforts and commitment to resilience building would resolve. There is therefore a need for the government to take a nationally active coordinating role in resilience building in Malawi. In order to produce results, resilience building projects also need to be executed over a sufficient period of time, with enough resources, and with a range of activities designed to fit the local needs of people. In addition, there is a need to make sure that there also are resilience building activities for the most vulnerable people. However, there will still, most likely, be vulnerable people who cannot participate, people who will require social support and someone who is accountable for acquiring such support. When it comes to the issue that resilience may disable the political power of people, it is argued earlier on that the poor have to accept that the world is changing and instead of trying to stop that change, adapt to the changing world. I would therefore argue that Foucault would think that resilience is a good example of what tools governments use in order to shape the conduct of its people. In this case, the conduct of the people is shaped in order for the people to take responsibility for their own wellbeing through resilience building. However, the underlying causes of for instance food insecurity and climate change will not necessarily be mitigated through resilience building. Resilience building is therefore not a substitute for mitigating actions, but can be a good complement in order to, for instance, break the cycle of hunger.

8. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is concluded in this thesis that resilience building has become prominent in Malawi's development strategies since resilience is advocated by donors. In addition, resilience building is perceived as the best response to a changing and disastrous world, and a way to break the cycle of hunger. Moreover, resilience building in Malawi is performed and translated into policies and actions through a formulation of resilience building as the method, and the need for adaptation as the rationality behind resilience. In practice, resilience building is performed through activities such as VSL groups, and agricultural intensification. Finally, resilience does have potential in terms of making people less vulnerable, but resilience building today faces a range of financial, logistical, and organising challenges. In addition, it is also concluded that resilience building may lead to an exclusion of some of the most vulnerable people, since they are unable to participate in common resilience building activities. Resilience also disables the political power of people, since it is not a complement to mitigating causes of for instance climate change or food insecurity, but the primary strategy and focus.

Every once in a while we get reminded that there is no silver bullet in international development. The challenges facing Malawi and its population are multifaceted, which may require multifaceted approaches. Resilience building is multifaceted, since resilience can be built through many different activities. However, if the core argument is that resilience building is the way forward since the world is a changing and disastrous place, perhaps are we blinded by those changes and disasters. Resilience may be an important piece of the puzzle in order to break the cycle of hunger and reduce poverty, but the limitations and consequences should not be overlooked. I would therefore suggest continuous reflection and research on the concept of resilience, how it best can be performed, and what it means in terms of potential and consequences for the people targeted.

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APPENDIX 1 - ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VSL	Village Savings and Loan
WFP	World Food Programme

APPENDIX 2 - INTERVIEW PROCEDURE AND QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

All of the interviews were semi-structured in-depth interviews, following the same format. All interviews have been conducted in English, some in person, and some via email. Each interview, no matter if conducted in person or via email, included the following introduction:

Thank you very much for participating in my study. I am doing a field study on the theme of resilience which will serve as a foundation for my thesis. This is a semi-structured interview, so please consider these questions as guiding. You should feel free to expand your answers and bring up other aspects which you think are relevant. You should also be aware that you will be anonymous in my thesis, and that you should feel free to freely express your opinions. Please let me know if anything is unclear or if you have any questions. Feel free to answer any question in general terms and zoom in on Malawi when possible.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The introduction was followed by the interview and the following questions:

- *Have you noticed any discursive and programmatic shifts of mainstreaming resilience in general and in particular in Malawi?
Are those shifts local initiatives or externally introduced?*
- *Resilience places a lot of focus and responsibility on individuals and their ability to adapt. What do you think of that?*
- *Do you see any potential problems with placing the responsibility to adapt on individuals?*
- *Do you see a shift in how for instance food security used to be the responsibility of the government, towards being an individual responsibility?*
- *Would you argue that resilience building is the way forward for governments and international organisations?*

In addition to the questions above, some interviews included additional questions, depending on issues that might have come up during the interview or the specific job responsibilities of the interviewee.