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## “It is like diversity to unity”

**A case study exploring how party members of Myanmar’s two largest parties think about inclusion of its citizens in the democratic process**



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## Abstract

This study explores how members of Myanmar's largest political parties perceive inclusion of its citizen in the democratic process. Through a threefold aim the study has looked at how party members' understanding of inclusion is externalised within the parties; whether these perceptions implies hindrances to Myanmar's democratic development; and how the analytical findings can contribute to the theoretical discourse.

The study was carried out as a qualitative case study. Guided by theory on cultures of organisations, primary data was mainly collected in Yangon through semi-structured individual interviews with party members holding various positions within the parties. The prolonged time spent in the field provided the study with observations that validated information attained through the interviews.

By exploring inclusion in relation to the theoretical notions of representation, participation and deliberation a broader understanding of the respondents' perceptions was obtained. The analysis found that while inclusion in general is understood as something positive, it is also understood as a means to win elections. An understanding that in turn can lead to merely symbolic inclusion of different groups in society. Further on, the analysis found that a contextual deployment of the 'participation paradox' could enable identification of participation barriers relevant for diverse settings.

**Keywords:** Deliberation, Democracy, Democratic Development, Diversity, Inclusion, Myanmar, Participation, Participation Paradox, Representation

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## Abbreviations

ADB	Asia Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
EU	European Union
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICG	International Crisis Group
MNHRC	Myanmar National Human Rights Council
NCGUB	National Coalition Government of the Union of Myanmar
NLD	National League for Democracy
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Committee
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
US	United States
UDSA	United Solidarity and Development Association
USDP	United Solidarity and Development Party

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# 1. Before take-off: Where we are going and why

## 1.1 Introduction

When the contemporary leaders of Myanmar<sup>1</sup> first embarked on the path towards democracy by allowing general elections in November 2010 and a military-backed civilian government replaced the former military junta, the sincerity of this new direction was questioned by both internal actors and the international community (DPA E-News July 2012). Currently, the by-election of April 2012, the general elections of 2015 in the horizon, and several implemented reforms testify that a transformation is taking place. The concern of scholars, development practitioners and state actors seems then rather to be to identify, understand and remedy possible threats that could endanger or derail a peaceful development towards democracy. One such threat was identified by the International Crisis Group (ICG) in late 2012 when they stated that inclusion of ethnic minority groups, old political elite and the various political fractions would be crucial for reconciliation of the country (ICG 2012a:17ff). The ICG argued that an inclusive approach with broad representation that would reflect the country's diversity and “give as many groups as possible a stake in politics” was needed (Ibid). In the light of this concern I found it interesting to gain an understanding of how people close to the political power<sup>2</sup> structures in Myanmar perceive inclusion of the citizens in the democratic process.

On a more personal level, earlier studies in political science, partly undertaken in Southeast Asia, and several years of involvement in non-governmental organisations spurred my interest in this topic. While studying courses related to politics and government in Bangkok I was fascinated by Thailand's unsteady development towards democracy, the neighbouring country Myanmar was merely an enigma across the horizon. Some years later I started to question what the mantra of “democratic and inclusive organisation”, constantly repeated within the non-profit sector, actually incorporated. The ICG's concern of an inclusive approach in Myanmar's democratic development combined these interests and lured my curiosity. Here I could delve in the actual

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<sup>1</sup> *Burma* and *Burmese* will be used for the earlier history of Myanmar. *Myanmar* will be used to refer to the country as of 1990 when the country's name was changed.

<sup>2</sup> Although Myanmar still is situated at an nascent stage of democracy, obstructing a fair apprehension of the meaning and effects of domestic political power structures, the meaning of political power is here understood in the light of Foucault's idea of political power describing government as the “conduct of conduct”, i.e. the power to apply laws and influence the action of free subjects which have the possibility of resistance (Nash 2010:25-26).

meaning of inclusion in relation to democracy and let the exploration bring me back to the context of Southeast Asia and democratic development.

## **1.2 Aims and research question**

Thus, this study has a threefold aim. The empirical aim encompasses the case of Myanmar and looks at how a specific element in the democratic processes, that of inclusion of citizens, is externalised within the main political parties in the country. These findings will then give material to the second aim, striving to give an indication of whether anything in the respondents' perceptions of inclusion can be understood as hindrances for the country's path towards democracy. The third aim incorporates an aspiration to bring new insights to the theoretical debate. Since the scene of the study is a country that for several decades has been isolated from the surrounding world, due to military rule and teaching of political science long being banned at the leading university, the influence from contemporary discourses about democracy and inclusion can be assumed to have been limited. Thereby the thoughts and perceptions the subjects of the study have about inclusion may contribute with fresh notions and substance to the prevailing discourses. Combining the empirical and theoretical aims the research question that has guided this study is:

*How do members of Myanmar's (two) major political parties perceive inclusion of citizens in the democratic process?*

The democratic process is understood as the exercise where citizens are allowed to freely express their will in political issues, either through direct participation or elected representatives. Through semi-structured interviews with members of the two major political parties in Myanmar the concept of inclusion has been explored in relation to the ideas of representation, participation, and deliberation.

## **1.3 Limitations**

First of all it should be noted that it is beyond the scope of this study to assess where Myanmar sits in its democratic transformation, and thus, no such assessment have been attempted. It has neither been the intention of the study to explore the level of inclusion of any specific groups, such as women or ethnic minority group, but rather to grasp the respondents' broader perceptions

of inclusion. Further on, as data has been collected in Yangon<sup>3</sup>, the former capital and currently the commercial hub of the country, respondents' perceptions and thereby the findings might differ from perceptions and consecutive findings that would have been attained from citizens residing in other parts of the country. Last but not least, in aspect of the aims of this study, it should be noted that the conclusions is drawn on data collected from people involved in the two major political parties. That is, it will not include perceptions or attitudes from persons involved in the military, holding 25 percent of the seats in the parliament. The military is however not a democratic unit in itself, and the individuals involved thus not assumed to have similar possibilities to influence the procedures of their 'organisation'.

## **1.4 Disposition**

This study has started of by giving an introduction to the topic and presenting the research question and aims. The following chapters contain a description of the Myanmar context, an elaboration of the theoretical concepts employed in the study and a presentation and justification of methodological choices. Thereafter the study presents an analysis of the empirical material and ends with a conclusion and suggestions for future research.

## **2. Background - A description of the destination**

### **2.1 The Political Landscape**

Up until independence in 1948 Myanmar had been under British occupation for over six decades, and before that ruled by various authoritarian monarchs (Aung 2012:15). Democracy, civil rights and economical development had consequently been absent in the country. What was anticipated to become a new prosperous era in Myanmar's development turned, however, out to evolve in a different direction. The following decades were characterized by political turmoil and are commonly divided into periods of i) democratic regime (1948-1962), ii) military/socialist regime (1962-1988), iii) military regime (1988-1962), and, iv) democratic regime (2011 to date) (Ibid).

During these decades, the regimes in power were much more interested in enriching themselves than to develop a functioning welfare state, and the people's resistance became visible at several occasions (Valtersson 2010:13).

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<sup>3</sup> Also known as Rangoon



In 1988 student's protested against the government's recent demonetizing of the currency. The uprising was pushed back by the military, and while a new group of generals seized power, under the name State Law and Order Restoration Committee (SLORC), thousands of students and civilians fled to the jungle (Aung 2012:17-18; Valtersson 2010:11). Soon after the uprising SLORC announced there would be multiparty general elections, on May 27, 1990 (Martin 2010:2). Aung San Suu Kyi had by then started to involve herself in politics and operated as the leader of the opposition. She was put in house arrest in 1989 and remained there during the general elections of 1990. Her party, the newly formed National League of Democracy (NLD), won, however, a landslide victory in the 1990 elections. Nevertheless, SLORC never allowed the newly elected parliament to gather (Valtersson 2010:12). Several of the elected persons were arrested, some went underground and some fled to join ethnic rebel groups and form the National Coalition Government of the Union of Myanmar (NCGUB) (Ibid).

In 1995 Aung San Suu Kyi was released from her house arrest, only to be restored there in 2003. In September 2007, after sharp increases in fuel prices, mass protests hit the streets. The protest were first initiated by pro-democracy activist and later led by Buddhist monks (Valtersson 2010:12). They spread nation-wide and got known as the Saffron revolution (Saha 2011). Protesters got imprisoned, abused and killed, and it still unknown how many people that died in connection to the protests.

During these years the SLORC transformed into the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). In August 2003 they lunched the seven-step road map to democracy (Martin 2010:2) The seven-step road map includes drafting and adoption of a new constitution as well as holding free and fair elections to the legislative body, in accordance with the new constitution (Win 2004). In early 2008 the completion of drafting a new constitution was announced and a referendum in May the same year, along with dates for general elections in 2010, were scheduled (Saha 2011:4). The constitution was approved and adopted and the general elections held in November 2010. The NLD, still the main opposition party, decided not to participate and the military backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) won a great majority of the seats (Ibid).

After the general election in 2010 the new elected semi-civilian government was sworn in and the military rule was officially dissolved (Aung 2012:19). Nobody can with absolute certainty say why the military leaders decided on this sudden change. It is sometimes claimed to be a result of the military junta's seven-step road map, others argue it to be the result of to internal and external pressure. As described above, people had within the country persistently demonstrated demanding an end to the military rule. Meanwhile, economic sanctions from the US, the EU, ASEAN and others placed a heavy pressure on the military junta (Saha 2011:6-7).

### **2.1.1 The role of the political parties**

In accordance to the Political Parties Registration Law of 2010, all political parties with a minimum of 15 members must be registered (Martin 2010:7). The registration shall include the official name of the party, information about the party leadership, its constitution and regulations, party program and ideology, flag and seal (Ibid). By the end of November 2012, 54 political parties were registered in Myanmar, whereof 21 parties were considered as majority ethnic parties (consisting of Burman, see figure 2.1 below) and 33 of the parties considered to be ethnic minority parties (Aung 2013:30). In order to maintain a multi-party system, many of the smaller parties have asked the president and international actors for financial assistance and capacity building (Ibid). The dominant parties, the NLD and the USDP, are regarded as ethnic majority parties. The NLD was founded as a political party already in the aftermath of the 1988 uprising. The USDP's predecessor, the Union Solidarity Development Association (USDA), was founded in 1993 by the General Than Shwe, and still has strong connections to the military (ICG 2012b:13; USDP 2010:18).

According to Aung, rumours about disunity within the NLD and the USDP can diminish peoples' trust in political parties. He further raises the issue of the political parties as actors to promote democracy and political knowledge among people, how the parties can create examples of tolerance and respect by cooperation, but also can hinder the democratic process by internal power strives (Aung 2013:14).

### **2.1.2 A new democratic dawn**

A monumental change has been recognized in the Myanmar since the 2012 by-election, with people openly discussing politics and joining political forums. Scholars and heads of governments frequently visit Myanmar to participate in conferences and to hold talks with both the president U Thein Sein and the opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and sanctions have been lifted (EU 2013).

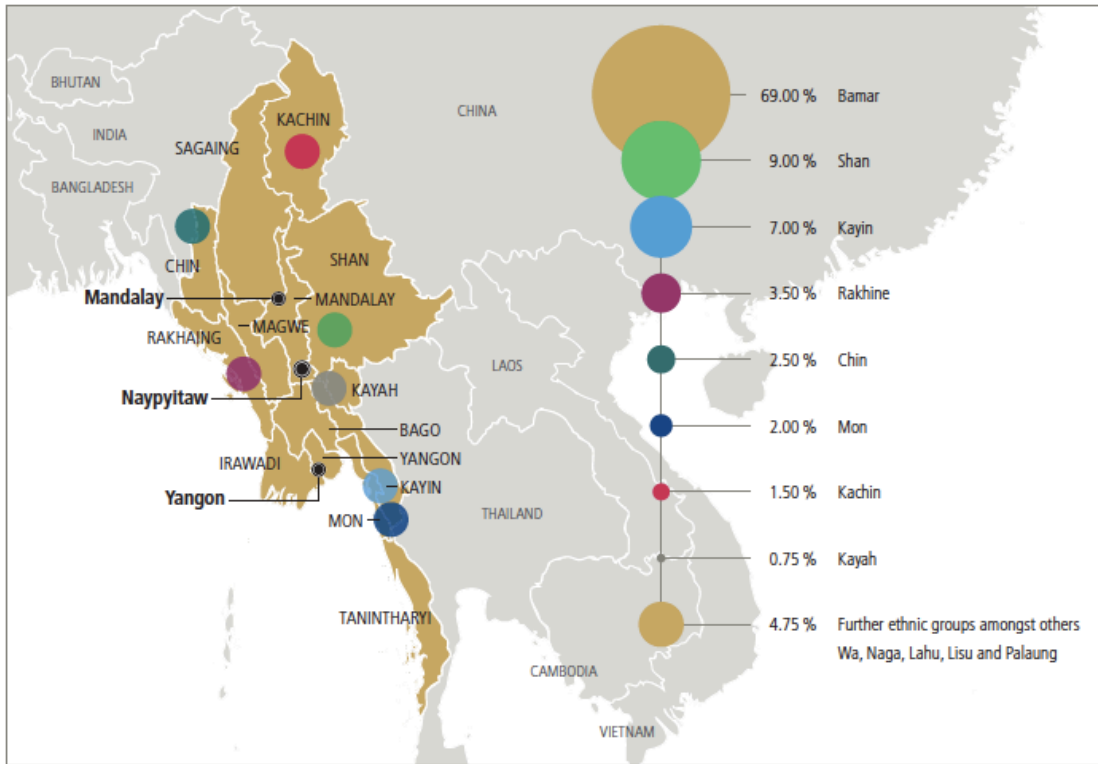
So far, the country has rebuilt several institutions and established new institutions, such as the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC). Along with the opening of these institutions, several laws and reforms have been enacted, for examples citizens' rights to peaceful assembly and procession, and the abolishment of media censorship (Quintana 2013:16). Hundreds of political prisoners have been released since 2011; yet, according to the Human Rights Watch (HRW 2014), few still remain imprisoned and about 200 people face charges. The reforms have also enabled the return of political activist that fled the country during to the military's repressions.

The country's nascent democratic state was acknowledge by president U Thein Sein who in December 2013 compared it to a sprout of a newly planted seed and who also remarked that "a healthy constitution must be amended from time to time to address the national, economic, and social needs of Myanmar", in order to stimulate the national peace process and reconciliation, and to strengthen democratic values (Quintana 2014:15).

### **2.1.3 Clouds on the horizon**

Notwithstanding the positive changes and development Myanmar has seen to date, the country still faces many challenges. Low levels of literacy and high levels of poverty, with 25.6 % of the population estimated to live under the national poverty line, in combination with lacking infrastructure and distributions networks, means that print media is accessible mainly to citizens living in urban areas (ADB 2014; Nigam 2013). The country's turbulent history and the top-down process towards democracy have led to people unaccustomed to living in an open democracy and to feel confidence for politicians (DPA E-News July 2012). A poor infrastructure contributes to a divide between centre and periphery, between the rulers and the subjects (Ibid).

**Figure 2.1: Ethnic Composition in Myanmar (Rough Estimate)**



Source: Bunte (2014), own composition based on data of the last census of 1983.

Based on the 1983 census, there is approximately 135 different ethnic minorities residing within Myanmar (Chaturvedi 2012). The Burmans, or Bamar, mainly lives in the midland plains, constitutes the majority of the population (see figure 2.1), and has traditionally held the most important positions within politics, economics, education and other spheres.

Ethnic conflicts have existed since before independence. To reach cease-fire with the armed ethnic groups and create reconciliation is currently one of the biggest challenges for the country (Quintana 2014:17; Steinberg 2012:225). The ethnic groups main demand is greater autonomy and acceptance for their religious and cultural identities (Chaturvedi 2012). To find a sustainable solution to the situation, Steinberg argues that Myanmar is in need of inclusive political structures (Steinberg 2012:225). Along with the importance of including the various ethnic groups, concern about women’s equal right to participate in political decision-making and access

to quality education and financial means has been substantially raised (Quitana 2014; Lagarde 2013).

Another central debate is that of the amendment of the constitution. The UN's Special Rapporteur on Human Rights has continuously raised awareness to the issue of article 59f, which disqualifies persons to stand for election to President or vice-president based on their kinship to foreigners, as well as the importance for Myanmar to amend articles that currently provide the military with the right to appoint 25 percent of the seats in the Union parliament (Ministry of Information 2008; Quintana 2013:18; Quintana 2014:15-16). With a vague support from the USDP, who suggest that instead of cancelling the article some changes could be made, the NLD strongly campaigns for the amendment of article 59f (Aung and Wai 2014).

These challenges should be seen in the light of the upcoming general elections to the union and the regional/state parliaments that will take place in 2015<sup>4</sup>. Myanmar has a first-past-the-post-system, which tends to favour larger parties, and the NLD is predicted to win a landslide victory (Tun 2013). However, such an outcome has raised concerns about the political stability of the country. Since the NLD has been excluded from official politics during the last two decades it is suspected to lack experience of practical politics and parliamentary work (Nilsen and Tønnesson 2013). In addition, article 59f prevents the party leader Aung San Suu Kyi to run for presidency. What might be more alarming is that a landslide victory by the NLD could result in Myanmar ending up with an elected one-party system, excluding the various ethnic-minority parties (Ibid). If the NLD becomes the dominant party in the union, and regional parliaments, ethnic minority groups might find themselves undermined in their own constituencies, which in turn could jeopardise the peace process and reconciliation of the country (Tun 2013; Nilsen and Tønnesson 2013). To counter-balance the imagined scenario, four out of the seven ethnic-minority parties discusses merges, and a change to a proportional representation system is on the agenda (Ibid; Tun 2013; Chit 2014).

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<sup>4</sup> While the last words are being edited in this study, Myanmar's government has announced that by-election will take place in November or December 2014 (see Htet and Min 2014). Implications of this election has, however, not been considered in the study.

### 3. Conceptual and theoretical framework

Considering that the aim of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of how the subjects perceive a phenomenon such as inclusion, it might sound contradictory to start with limiting their space for reflection and interpretation by setting up a theoretical framework. This has, however, been necessary in order to work with a systematic analysis, and to capture what the features described and applied to inclusion would mean in the light of previous research and existing discourses. This chapter therefore discusses the key concepts democracy and inclusion, and describes the linkage between inclusion and democratic development. Thereafter the specific concepts related to inclusion employed in the study are outlined and discussed.

#### 3.1 Defining democracy

The concept of democracy has been identified in 550 subtypes, and even the simplest form of definition, “rule by the people”, implies several complex issues to consider (Collier and Levitsky 1997). Held (1997) has provided the theoretical debate with a list of issues to define since the understanding of them will give different meanings and implications of the analysis of democracy. These issues include: whom should constitute the people?; how the people should participate (direct/representative; elite/popular)?; what sort of circumstances are assumed to be beneficial for participation?; how wide or narrow the scope of rule should be (how far should the politics reach – law and order, economy, relations with other nations, to the domestic and private sphere)?; should the rule of the people always be abide to?; can democracies ever be entitled to rule against their own people or against those outside their constituency? (Ibid).

A minimalist definition of democracy accentuates the freedom of all adult individuals to elect their leaders through open and competitive processes (Ewald 2011:48). This definition is argued to make the concept of democracy distinct and easy to operationalize, but also criticised for not including freedom of speech and assembly (Ibid). Dahl (2007) has broadened the definition of democracy by adding seven fundamental institutions that cover political rights, which then constitute the foundation of the liberal definition of democracy. These institutions include: i) elected officials; ii) free and fair elections; iii) inclusive suffrage; iv) right to run for office; v) freedom of expression; vi) alternative information; and vii) associational autonomy (Dahl 2007:343-344). Yet, the liberal definition of democracy has been found to be too narrow in the

sense that it primarily focuses on formal procedures and the electoral processes (Ewald 2011:50). Because of the narrow focus, it has also been deemed to not be useful in developing contexts, as it is found to imply that once democratic institutions are in place, further democratic development will follow (Ewald 2011:51).

The next broadening of the definition comes from the substantive theoretical approach, which “is concerned not only with the procedures of democracy but also with the quality of democracy in terms of participation and outcomes” (Beetham 2004). The substantive definition of democracy stresses the issue of identifying power structures within and between elites in order to prevent the few and powerful to make profit for themselves. It further raises the issue of redistribution of powers and the inclusion of poor and other marginalised groups in the democratic processes. According to the substantive, or maximalist, definition of democracy, the whole society should be run democratically and ordinary people provided opportunity to participate in order to influence decisions that impact their lives (Ake 2000 in Ewald 2011). It is with this definition of democracy in mind the following concepts in the framework are presented and discussed.

### **3.1.2 The role of inclusion in relation to democracy**

Inclusion in democracies is perhaps foremost illustrated and emphasised by Dahl (2007) in his description of the ‘ideal democracy’ and categorisation of regimes from competitive oligarchies to polyarchies. In his description of the ideal democracy, he lists five<sup>5</sup> criteria that should be fulfilled. Inclusion is found as criterion five and stipulates that all people within a specific democratic group should enjoy the same conditions on equal terms to be politically equal. While it can be difficult to distinguish whom that should belong to a certain democratic group<sup>6</sup>, once this distinction has been made, rules and legislation regulating the access to political power should guarantee that all members of the group are treated equally and have equal access (Dahl 1989:106-107). Dahl does not, however, foresee that any democracy will live up to the five criteria, nor democracy to be a final ends but rather a continuous process (Dahl 1989:109).

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<sup>5</sup> The five criteria include i) Effective participation, ii) Equality in voting, iii) Gaining enlightened understanding iv) Final control of the agenda, and, v) Inclusion.

<sup>6</sup> See for example contemporary discussions within political theory elaborating on the issues of the all-affected principle - all affected by a political decision should have the possibility to affect the politics, and the all-subjected principal - all that are obliged to follow the laws within a jurisdiction should have the possibilities to influence these laws; as well as Dahl’s own discussion on adulthood as non watertight criteria for inclusion in the demos (Dahl 1989:130-131; Näsström 2011).

Instead of reaching this ideal level of democracy, countries with developed institutions that touch upon fulfilling the criteria, are regarded as politically advanced and classified as polyarchies in Dahls's terms.

In a development context, Schelder's (2010) work on electoral authoritarianism raises some interesting points. He has noted that manipulation and substantive control over representative institutions is the primary means of post-Cold War electoral authoritarian regimes to maintain authoritarian management, while they on the surface resemble liberal democracies. His examples include "directly appointing of deputies or by choosing who runs for elective office" within the legislature and keeping elections noncompetitive, by for examples suppressing the rights of the opposition, transforming the constituency, or disenfranchisement of citizens (Schelder 2010:72-73). Greater and increased inclusiveness, understood as the extent citizens under a given regime's jurisdiction have the right to participate on equal terms, can then show gradual progress in a country's democratization process and how the polity moves closer to the stage of polyarchy<sup>7</sup> (Carraway 2004:454; Dahl 1999:221-222; Janoski 2005:427). Inclusion of the citizens in the democratic processes is thus understood both as a means to accomplish democracy and a measurement of the development of the democracy and its institutions.

### **3.2 Inclusion in relation to the democratic process**

The following sections discuss the concepts: representation, participation and deliberation, in which inclusion of citizens manifests in different ways. Deliberation can be seen as a form of participation, and participation and deliberation are therefore sometimes coalesced within the participatory theory. While this notion might be well justified, the concepts are here described separately as some of their features and connotations are more strongly associated with, and applicable to, one over the other.

#### **3.2.1 Representation**

Representation within the state is commonly understood as the modus operandi consisting of free and fair elections with widespread participation, where citizens enjoy political liberties and through which the few win the trust to represent the whole (Manin et al. 1999:29). The authority

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<sup>7</sup> Or any other preferred definition of advanced democracy.



of the representatives to make decisions and/or act on the behalf of the represented derives from this agreement (Patnaik 2013:36). The underlying idea is that peoples' opinions will be reflected in election results and the designated representatives will thereafter transmit the opinions into the decision-making processes (Hadenius 2001:62). How to achieve the most efficient, or finest, form of representation, and the benefits of different alterations of representation is much discussed and this section enquires a little deeper into the issues.

Representation is often based on different parameters such as territorial representation – all constituencies of a country choose their representatives; socio-demographic – equally mixed representation commonly based on ethnicity, gender, age and to some extent education; or, opinion-based – each individual's opinion should be equally reflected (Hadenius 2011:78-79).

Representation is further often linked to empowerment<sup>8</sup> since widened representation, increased inclusion, is perceived to provide people with a space to voice their concerns and to participate in decision-making of matters that affect them (Spike 1994 in Patnaik 2013:35). This notion divides political representation into two central strands: substantive representation and descriptive representation (Patnaik 2013:36-38). Substantive representation focus on, and emphasises the issues, programmes and ideas at hand, not who the representative is or where s/he comes from. According to advocates of substantive representation, the representative is expected to be responsive to the represented and act in their interest. Emphasis on the representative is apprehended to overshadow issues of relevance and the actual actions of the representative (Ibid). In this sense, the activities carried out by the representative are more important than the person's characteristics. That is, the socio-demographic aspect is less important than the opinion-based aspect, while the territorial aspect is of minor interest. The question is then raised whether citizens with diverse backgrounds and identities can be represented as equals based only on collectively shared interests, but without consideration or recognition of their specific identities (Gencoglu-Obasi 2011:438-439). Contrary to substantive representation, descriptive representation focuses on the *who* rather than on the *what*. According to descriptive

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<sup>8</sup> Defining empowerment can in itself suffuse an entire theoretical framework. Since it is not a key concept in this study, no such discussion or definition will be attempted. Empowerment is instead shortly described as the enhancement of individual agency leading to increased control over personal decisions and “ability to change aspects in one's life at the individual and communal levels” (Ibrahim and Alkire 2007).

representation, the representative should share background and life experiences with the represented. This is regarded as a means to empower marginalised, disadvantaged, and previously excluded groups. Additionally, Patnaik argues “that visible political leadership by members of minority groups would enhance trust in government, group pride and participation” (Patnaik 2013:38).

A strong advocate for the descriptive approach is Anne Phillips, who argues for the need of Politics of Presence (Phillips 1994). Politics of Presence calls for a more equal representation of men and women, ethnic groups within the society, and other groups that might find themselves marginalised in the society. The need of this extended representation builds on the three premises that i) disadvantaged groups have distinct and separate interests; ii) these interests cannot be amply represented by people that are not from their group/community; and, iii) the election of members from these groups ensures their representation (Patnaik 2013:39).

Similar arguments are found among pluralist and difference democrats. They tell us that people are different from one another in fundamental ways and that different experiences produce different interests (Dryzek 1997:476). Young stresses that the differences in interests, opinions and perspectives justifies progressive inclusive representation. Examples of progressive inclusion can be affirmative measures such as quotas for women in party lists or rules stating a certain proportion of minority group members in political institutions or party conventions (Young 2000). These affirmative mechanisms will then ensure enhanced representation of marginalised groups (Ibid; Dryzek 1997:476, Walter 2008:536-537). Progressive inclusion in this form is by difference democrats understood to deepen the qualities of democracy. Relating this claim to Dahl’s criteria for the ideal democracy, progressive inclusion can be understood as a means for increased political equality in the sense that it urges for all citizens to be equally represented.

If not criticism then at least scepticism towards progressive inclusion is presented by the deliberation advocate Dryzek. Drawing on some historical examples, he argues that the progressive approach to inclusion will deflate democracy (Dryzek 1997:478-479). He proposes that pressure for more democracy tends to come from groups in opposition, and thereby, by including more and more groups within the state, this pressure vanishes. Further on, he stresses

that once included in the state, groups are only truly included if their interests corresponds to the imperative of the state. Otherwise they will find themselves merely with the symbolic reward of being included, but without means to actually influence decisions (Dryzek 1997:482). In this sense, Dryzek means that passive exclusion from the state is preferable so that the group can influence the state from “the outside”.

### **3.2.2 Participation**

Participation, understood as the active engagement by citizens in the democratic processes that influence their lives, can involve participating in both decision-making and/or the opposition (Faulks 1999:143-145). The traditional, also referred to as the conventional, form of political participation takes place within the institutionalized sphere of politics, for examples through voting and standing for elections (Hooghe and Stolle 2011:119-120). Non-conventional, referred to as emerging civic engagement by Hooghe and Stolle, forms of participation takes place outside the institutionalized sphere and is mainly practiced through ad hoc activities such as signing petitions or engaging in short-lived campaigns (Hooghe and Stolle 2011:139). The degree to which people participate is regarded as a quality check of the democratic process.

Several positive aspects have been linked to the involvement of citizens in the democratic process. Pateman, for examples, describes participation as a means to achieve democratization of democracy (Pateman 2012:15). Participation by citizen is pushed for, as representatives’ interpretations and aggregation of peoples’ opinions are not apprehended as sufficient (Pateman 2012:14). Instead, it is seen as vital that citizens are actively involved in the democratic processes. Through participation, Pateman argues, citizens are given an active part in decision-making processes rather than solely a consulting role. This should then result in citizens becoming educated and developing the habit to participate, which leads to more participatory and democratic societies (Pateman 2012:10). In this aspect participation in the democratic process is, similar to descriptive representation, linked to empowerment of the citizens. Pateman has further identified that citizens are more likely to participate when they can see the connection between their own participation and the outcomes (Pateman 2012:12). Additionally, it is argued that increased and widened participation can counterbalance elitist tendencies as more pressure can arise from the grassroots; that the interaction caused through participation creates openness and

tolerance towards others; and, linked to Pateman's first notion, that participation creates engagement among citizens and a sense of responsibility for various society issues (Hadenius 2001:63).

However, the level of participation expected from the citizens can lead to the phenomenon known as the 'participation paradox'. Hooghe and Stolle noticed in their study on participation patterns in industrialized countries that expectations of intense participation might inherently have an excluding effect as all people do not have the cognitive skills or material resources required for active participation (Hooghe and Stolle 2011:120). Especially the poor and lowly educated people might be excluded as they are the groups most likely to lack sufficient knowledge, time to allocate for political participation and financial resources in terms of transportation to meetings or loss of income due to time dedicated to political involvement (Pateman 2012:12; Hooghe and Stolle 2011:138). Hooghe and Stolle's research noted that effects of the participation paradox are foremost prevalent in non-conventional forms of participation. Yet, when it came to the variable of education level their study showed that it is significant for both conventional and non-conventional forms of participation (Hooghe and Stolle 2011:138). This observation raises the concern that different education levels among those who wish to participate can have a negative effect on political equality. It may lead to professionalization of political participation by excluding the poor and lowly educated and simultaneously privilege the highly educated and wealthiest groups in society by providing them increased political access and possibilities to influence (Hooghe and Stolle 2011:122).

### **3.2.3 Deliberation**

According to advocates of deliberation, democracy should occur through discussion based on well-justified and contemplated viewpoints. Decisions should be based on ample reasoning, not solely on visions, passions and wish-thinking, and they should lead to prosperous long-term solutions for the entire societies instead of short-term benefits for certain groups (Hadenius 2001:64). In this sense the criteria of well-justified arguments based on facts bring a qualitative aspect into the decision-making process (Ibid). As settled and informed conversation rather than propaganda and prejudices should guide the political debate this approach is understood to lead to more like-mindedness and consensus. A notion strongly associated with Habermas and his

ideas of moral discourse. Habermas argues that any question is discussable in the public sphere and should be presented to the views of others in an argumentative process (Gencoglu-Obasi 2011:449). The open deliberation decides the acceptability of the reasoning and from it generalizable interests can emerge while the process in itself develops both the individual and the collective identity interdependently (Gencoglu-Obasi 2011:435ff). In this sense Habermas's moral discourse is regarded to maximise inclusion as it allows subjects of diverse backgrounds to collectively deliberate and agree on issues that will affect them (Finlayson 2005:107). In contrast to Rawls position, that citizen should enter discussions under "the veil of ignorance", Habermas argues that one should enter the discourse fully aware of the other's perspectives and prejudices and build ones' arguments on any existing comprehensive doctrine (Gencoglu-Obasi 2011:435ff). Although Habermas was of the notion that the goal of the argumentative deliberations was not to influence others but rather "to reach an agreement on mutual understanding" (Baynes 1992:80) deliberation has been criticised of privileging the arguments of certain forms and thereby from certain groups (Walter 2008:534).

The criticism arise partly from the observation that well-educated people to a larger extent tend to developed talents to argue for their cause while those without these talents risk to have their opinions disregarded, neglected and/or obliterated from the agenda (Hadenius 2001:65). So while Habermas means that the public reasoning and argumentation function in a determinative and healthy fashion, voices are raised claiming that expert knowledge notwithstanding creates problems to this premises for deliberation since that knowledge essentially will carry greater status, and thus all are not included in the deliberation or conversation on equal grounds (Walter 2008:531). The essence of this criticism faces the trade-off between reason and equality in the deliberation (Ibid). Dryzek and Young are both committed to the significance of equality between those deliberating and believe that one form of argument should not be given privileged over other forms. According to Dryzek non-coerciveness is key for deliberative arguments. He states that expertise only entails difference in argument, that experts may not speak as experts, and that their arguments are only admitted if they are found to be non-coercive (Walter 2008:534-535). Young is of a similar view regarding the use of expertise knowledge – that it should not be utilized as a trump. Further on she stresses the equality criterion by linking it to inclusion and the legitimacy of the state. She consider the legitimacy of democracy to spring

from the notion of all-affected principle and when it comes to the inclusion of certain groups in the decision-making process it may not engender exclusion of another group. Thus, inclusion of various groups in the deliberation is not sufficient but should also be accompanied by equality between those who deliberate (Walter 2008:535).

To conclude, inclusion in the democratic process has been related to the procedures of representation, to the role of citizen participation, and to how deliberation can both include and exclude. The study will now go over to a presentation of how data was collected before employing the conceptual and theoretical framework in the analysis.

## **4. Methodology - Choosing means of travel**

In the preceding chapter the conceptual and theoretical framework of this study has been presented. The following chapter describes and argues for the chosen research design and strategies; it presents and gives a justification to the choice of sampling strategy; gives a description of how data collection and analysis was performed; and finally deliberates on ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

### **4.1 Research design and strategies**

I arrived to Myanmar and Yangon on August 18, 2013. I was then under the impression that I would devote the coming months to an evaluation for my host organisation, which would offer the ideal opportunity to identify key informants, build trust, and create favourable relations for my coming data collection. I was soon informed that the evaluation had already been carried out and it was back to the drawing board to elaborate a new strategy for data collection.

#### **4.1.1 Case study design**

Going back to the overarching purpose of this study which deals with understanding how a certain phenomenon (that of inclusion of citizens in the democratic processes) is perceived by a specific group of people (those close to political power) in the specific setting of Myanmar (due to the interest in this specific setting) a case study design with a qualitative approach was applied as it was understood to be the most suitable design (Bryman 2012:69). A case study approach reflects the aim of this study very well as it is considered to enable the research to become an in-

depth exploration of the real-life phenomenon of interest based on the ideas of a specific group (Yin 2009:16-19; Creswell 2013:97).

Concurrently as qualitative empirical research offers vast freedom to the researcher in form of selections and decisions, it also postulates concerns about the validation of findings. It requires an in-depth awareness of methodological approaches, consequences of subjectivity and generalisation, and the influence of dominant ideologies. Here a general assumption that democracy and inclusion is something inherently good could be questioned. The concepts should, however, be understood in relation to the Myanmar context where the transformation to democracy has recently begun and where exclusion of certain groups has been noted as a potential hindrance to a smooth transformation. It is with this background, and that various political parties will be competing over the political power in upcoming general elections in 2015, that the study has focused on obtaining the perceptions and ideas from two different but resembling groups in society (Bryman 2012:68-69). In order to identify patterns or variations of attitudes, their perceptions have been critically examined and jointly constitute the unit of analysis.

#### **4.1.2 Employing an abductive and phenomenological approach**

The aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the respondents' perceptions, attitudes and actions related to the specific phenomenon of inclusion has bestowed the study with an interpretive and phenomenological approach in terms of epistemology (Bryman 2012:28-30; Marsh and Stoker 2002:26-27). According to Schutz, who was one of the first researchers to apply a phenomenological approach, the "social reality has a specific meaning and relevance structure for the people living, acting and thinking within it" (Schutz 1962:59 in Bryman 2012:30). He considered people to have pre-selected and pre-interpreted common-sense constructs of the world in which they are living. These constructs, Schutz argued, guided and determined their action and behaviour (Ibid). This study is of a similar understanding; that the attitudes of the respondents comes from their preconceptions and will influence their actions and behaviour. Further on, the understanding that the respondents' attitudes will form their behaviour also implies that they can influence the political climate in Myanmar. This view of how the individuals can form the world in which they are living gives the study a constructionist stance in

terms of ontological positionality (Bryman 2012:380).

Further on, the conceptual and theoretical framework has been omnipresent in the sense that it has guided the construct of themes for the interview guide, interview questions, and the initial themes for the data analysis (Bryman 2012:24). An abductive approach to the use of theory has thereby been applied, as theory has been used to interpret the respondents' descriptions and perception of their surrounding world and the implications of the findings to that world (Bryman 2012:401).

Considering the epistemological and ontological stand-points, findings will mainly be relevant for the specific context, and not appropriate for grander universal generalization (Bryman 2012:71; Ryen 2004:138-139). Inputs the analytical findings may contribute to the theoretical discourse will instead be the main "generalisable" outcome from this study (Bryman 2012:71).

## **4.2 Data Collection - entering the field and meeting the respondents**

### **4.2.1 Sampling**

Selection of research units and subjects has primarily been guided by the research aims and secondarily by theory on culture and organisations.

About two months after my arrival contacts were established with the NLD headquarters in Yangon. By then it stood clear that I would have to abandon my initial intentions of meeting respondents across the country. This was partly due to travel restrictions – which would inhibit purposive selection of states and/or regions – and partly due to convenience reasons; transportation to rural areas can be quite expensive and infrastructure in Myanmar's rural areas rather poor. Focus was thereby on accessing similar contacts within other parties either residing in Yangon or at their respective headquarters. In the middle of November 2013 contacts were established with one of the USDP's party offices in Yangon, which also happened to hold the mission of communication office.

The NLD and the USDP are the parties presumed as the main competitors in Myanmar's coming general elections in 2015, and consequently the parties most likely to have access to de facto



political power. Additionally, they claim to have national spread with offices in all townships across Myanmar. Access to political power was already of interest for the study and thus a natural sampling criterion for the research units. Their similarity in having national spread became a second sampling criterion as it allowed a necessary limitation of which parties to include in the study<sup>9</sup>.

Next step was to decide on whom within the parties to address. With the political changes taking place in Myanmar the study has relied on the prerequisite assumption that the parties are associations characterised by democratic structures regulated by rules and regulation that allow members to actively participate in the decision-making procedures and whom thereby have the power to influence the politics of the party (Held 1997:256). It therefore came down to the members of these parties that were of interest for the study. The selection still had to be narrowed and census data was at an initial stage considered to inform the selection to gain a stratified sample reflecting the diverse demographics of Myanmar (Bryman 2008:458). However, at the time for data collection Myanmar's latest census was conducted in 1983 and the current size and population composition is based on approximate birth rates (UNFPA 2011:2). A sample based on demographics was therefore deemed to incorporate too much uncertainty. Instead the circumstance that the intended subjects were positioned within political parties, a type of organisation, guided the sampling. Theory on organisational culture states that aside from the influence of childhood on our pattern of thinking, feeling and potentially acting, we also learn from our social environment (Hofstede 2005:2-3). Further on, according to organisational theory, to gain a representative understanding of the issue of investigation, people at various positions within a organisation - such as receptionist, manager, accountant, program or campaign manager - should be interviewed (Linde 2013). Rephrased, in contrast of having a homogenous sampling group of people in terms of similar work tasks and positions, the third sampling criterion was that the subjects should hold various positions within the parties (For an detailed description of respondents, see Appendix 1).

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<sup>9</sup> Inclusion of further parties was considered, but since no other party have similar spread the decision to keep it to these two parties was arrived upon after consultation with my supervisor and thesis group,

#### 4.2.2 In-depth interviews and observations

Primary data has mainly been collected through individual semi-structured interviews. The individual interviews enabled opportunities to spend a solid amount of time with each respondent, for the respondents to truly express themselves, and for the study to gain a profound understanding of their perceptions in relation to inclusion (Mack et al. 2005:29ff).

The interview guide was designed thematically to cover the areas of the theoretical framework. The formulation of questions were in turn guided by theory of planned behaviour (Armitage and Christian 2003) to make the conversations flow from a level of attitudes and beliefs to real-life situations exemplifying the respondents behaviour. According to theory of planned behaviour there might be considerable variance between a persons attitudes and intentions and the final behaviour (Armitage and Christian 2003:192). Therefore, interview questions that could delve a bit deeper where desirable. The described interview-structure was utilized to: i) circumvent the risk of ending up with empty rhetoric and socially accepted answers, which could be the case when interviewing people involved in politics, and, ii) attain that deeper understanding of the respondents perception of the investigated phenomenon. This strategy also helped to bypass common flaws of qualitative interviews, such as interviews being more focused on thought and experiences than action (Ryen 2004:96ff). Room for flexibility was maintained as all interviews derived from initial questions about the respondents and their personal experience of involvement in the parties; from there I sought answers covering the themes (Bryman 2012:470-471). The interview guide (see appendix 2) worked as a control mechanism, providing themes and example questions, in order to guarantee that all thematic areas were covered.

While the case study design and individual semi-structured interviews constituted the initial research strategy, observations and reflections on encounters, events and impressions were constantly recorded in journal-like notebooks<sup>10</sup>. Back at the writing-board it came obvious that these notes in combination with the prolonged time spent in the field had provided the study with features from ethnographic research methods (Creswell 2013:92). Observations were recorded in non-interview settings and validated the perceptions and intentions of the respondents and are

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<sup>10</sup> Courtesy to our teachers in research method who encouraged this practice!

therefore included as primary data. However, although I interacted with the groups I observed and they were aware of my intentions, I was not a member of the groups my role should be defined as that of a minimally participating observer (Bryman 2012:443).

The main source of data was still collected through the semi-structured interviews. Respondents were identified through snowball sampling as the initial contacts helped me establish new contacts relevant for the study (Bryman 2012:184). Nine interviews were conducted with NLD members and seven with USDP members (See appendix 1). All interviews were conducted face-to-face and to the extent respondents gave their permission they were digitally recorded. Interpreters have assisted in five of the interviews with NLD members and in four of the interviews with USDP members. Three different interpreters were consulted in order to minimize interpreters bringing in their preconceptions from earlier interviews in the translations of new answers. Interpreters were always provided with the interview guide ahead of time and discussed questions with me before the interviews. After interviews I strived to discuss the answers with the interpreter as a quality check of my understanding. As the interpreters retold the answers in third person, “she think that”, quotes have been changed to “[I] think that”, to provide a flow in the text and to mark that the thought comes from the respondents.

Interviews with NLD respondents took place between December 6-12, 2013, and interviews with USDP from late November 2013 to mid-January 2014. Ideally the interviews would have been conducted in private locations to protect the confidentiality of the respondents (Mack et al. 2005:34). This was, however, not the reality. Upon the request of the interviewees the interviews were conducted at the offices of the parties, normally with at least one active or passive bystander. This resulted in one of the USDP interviews transforming into an open conversation involving several of bystanders. The interview was conducted through interpreter and I was not able to distinguish which individual that gave what answer. As the interviewees discussed on specific topics and participated because of their individual knowledge and positions within the party the information attained from this interview has been kept and treated as material from a focus group interview (Bryman 2012:501). After the January-interviews I found that information started to overlap and judged that enough data had been collected.

### 4.3 Data analysis

Secondary data, such as reports, studies, and other documents, have supported the study both by providing the conceptual and theoretical framework and by putting the findings in a context.

Considering that the researcher possesses both the role of data collector and analyser it should be noted that the thought chain, processing the gathered information, subtly began more or less simultaneously as the first interviews were conducted. This circumstance gives the inherent risk that answers in following interviews are analysed through the lens of assumptions drawn already in the initial interviews, adding on existing individual subjectivity. This form of involvement, I would claim, is a natural almost unavoidable<sup>11</sup> part of the research process. It demands however of the researcher to be aware of the knowledge and experience accumulation that is taking place to enable a reflective approach upon new and earlier assumptions. Or as Diefenbach frames it, to understand one's "conscious and unconscious biases" in order to understand their influence on the formulation of following questions and interpretation of answers (Diefenbach 2008:875).

The collected data has later been analysed by drawing on the ideas of Standardized Discourse Recording (Mustafa et al. 2008). The model recommends a systematized unfolding of interview material through three operational phases. The first phase – elaboration of a script to guide the interviews – and parts of the second phase –registration of information - have been described above (Mustafa et al. 2008:78). The second phase also include transcription of the recorded information and preparation of the material according to relevant topics to facilitate the analysis (Mustafa et al. 2008:80). Once the interviews had been transcribed the material was re-arranged into thematic topics mirroring the interview guide. Since the interviews were semi-structured and topics and questions not always asked in a cohesive order this re-structuring of answers facilitated the analysis, gave a clearer overview of the answers, and enabled an easily accessible comparison of the answers. Thorough reading and re-reading of these 'spreadsheets of information' also enabled identification of sub-topics within the predetermined themes (Bryman 2012:579).

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<sup>11</sup> See for example Diefenbach who states "Science in general is a human endeavour and cannot have ideas, assumptions, theories, and formulas without the human factor." (Diefenbach 2008:876).

#### **4.4 Ethical considerations**

When conducting field research a natural concern becomes that of how the research will influence those who agree to participate and how any potential harmful influence can be prevented (Bryman 2012:135). To start of I made sure to establish contact with the units of analysis as well ahead of time as possible and sent them information in both English and in Burmese (for the English version see appendix 3). This information was repeated, together with clarification of their voluntary participation and right to terminate the interview at any point, before they signed papers stating their informed consent. Although the general response was enthusiasm, curiosity and eagerness to participate, it cannot be out ruled that some of the respondents were talked into participate by their peers.

Concerning positionality, this study has strived to erase the distinction of “me” and “you”, and instead make the research occasion to a mutual learning experience (Ryen 2004:99; Sultana 2007:376). To achieve this, visits to the party offices took place beforehand to eradicate barriers of nervousness and feelings of unfamiliarity. Further on, interviews ended with a recapitulation of answers, opportunity for the respondents to add information, and encouragement to the respondents to ask questions themselves. This opened up for queries ranging from whether Sweden had problems with youth unemployment to whether I was politically active. Although there is no doubt that I am the one who asked most questions, this approach enabled the interviews to become somewhat of a mutual learning opportunity.

#### **4.5 Methodological limitations**

Limitations and factors to consider when conducting a qualitative case study have already been mentioned. To these notions two concerns can be added. Firstly the effect of snowball sampling, as it allows the initial contact to steer who that will participate and thereby get their voices heard. Secondly, the role of trans-cultural communication and misunderstandings, which for example can lead to the term “you” being interpreted as both the individual, and the collective/group (Scheyvens and Storey 2003:184). This is especially relevant as the study explored the respondents’ perceptions but encountered them in capacity of members of the respective parties. Although it was emphasised that it was the respondents personal opinions was of interests, this do not eliminate the risk that some of the respondents answered with their party’s values in mind.

## 5. Analysis

In the following chapter the perceptions and attitudes of the respondents are analysed in order to gain a deeper understanding of how they construe their world and whether their perceptions may imply any hindrance to Myanmar's democratic development. Although the initial purpose was to explore inclusion in relation to the concepts of representation, participation and deliberation, the interviews also brought material covering the respondents' perception of inclusion itself. The analysis thereby starts with a section on this, and thereafter the succeeding sub-sections discuss the respondents' perceptions of inclusion in relation to the remaining concepts.

### 5.1 Inclusion - strategies for recruitment and individual perceptions

This section of the analysis aim to address the issue of the respondents perception of inclusion of the citizens on a more general level: why should/is, an inclusive approach (be) of relevance to a political party?; do they have strategies for recruitment of new members?; if so, what good can they see in employing such strategies?

#### 5.1.1 Strategies for recruitment of new members

During the introductory discussions – touching upon potential strategies for recruitment and inclusive approaches towards new members – almost all respondents started out by describing the standard procedures for admission of new party members. USDP members described the procedures in similar wording with one respondent retelling the following scenario:

“So for example, you are the Myanmar, you are also over the 18, so that's why you can join to the USDP. /.../ I give a form, a party form. Cause, of first thing you have to fill in your biography, in the UDSP form, then we have submit to the division level, the regional level, then we give back to the member of USDP, the registration number. And then you will be the member of the USDP.” (USDP6)

NLD members gave resembling descriptions of their procedures, and their narratives show that when it comes to formal procedures of how to accept new members, both parties have well-established routines, which would imply that persons who wish to become members would be treated equally.

When further asked if the parties had strategies for recruitment of new members, distinctions could be noted among both NLD and USDP members. Several of the NLD respondents

emphasised the role of the party leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, “who was the daughter of our great hero”(NLD5), how “people trust her, she explain party policies and activities”(NLD4) and that she is “...believed by the public and won the Nobel Peace Prize”(NLD6). Others brought up the importance of Aung San Suu Kyi in combination with how well-known they regarded the NLD to be and that the party has national spread: “they [the NLD] still have regional parties everywhere: state, district, township, villages. There are NLD offices, to reach people with different backgrounds, nation-wide”(NLD5). This was argued to lead to “mostly people come, mostly young people, boy and girl/.../they find us, rich and poor, different occupation”(NLD3). These sorts of attitudes were quite common among the NLD respondents. Some respondents were however of a different meaning:

Of course important to find new members, because of generation problem. Now the new generation is getting older, need new leader, and also for the 2015 election. Want many young people to become member of the party. Because the youth is very active compared to the older, and are able to work more. (NLD1)

This standpoint was also reflected in the intention of the NLD to organise a youth conference during the spring of 2014. A conference that became prioritized during a ‘Project Planning Training’ in December 2013 (Observation 1). These different views of a need to recruit on the one hand, and the assumption that people will find the party themselves, on the other, may underpin the disunity within the party identified by Aung (2012).

The USDP respondents showed resembling attitudes towards the issue of recruitment. While some stated that: “They [the USDP] just accept everyone who want to be a member of the party”(USDP5) some difficulties were also recognised since: “Want to reach and involve everyone, not possible due to lack of interest among the individuals”(USDP3) and that new regulations had complicated their recruitment of new members:

Reaching out to people and to get new members is hard today. Before there were no limitations, cause it [the USDP] was not a party, but an association. 2010, the new Party Act/.../with rules and regulations says that government and official staff cannot join the party/.../For collection of members, these regulations are no good./.../Parties can no longer go to universities to collect new members, only through the communities. (USDP4)

Yet, also within the USDP there were some members who had more distinct ideas of who to recruit and how to go about with the recruitment:

Yes, we have a lot of strategy to organise a new member/.../This is a very downtown area...that’s why this organization style is different from the other township/.../So we especially emphasize

only for the youth/.../So for the time, our target group is the youth member. So at the time, we train for the youth, our USDP youth members, so they organise for their friends to participate our activities. (USDP6)

This focus on youth recruitment brought about a youth celebration at the USDP Yangon regional office with ceremonies symbolising the delegation of responsibilities from the senior members to the junior (Observation 2).

Respondents' attitudes towards, and ability to give detailed description of strategies for recruitment, seemed to correspond to the individual's closeness or distance to the recruitment per se. Those who worked actively in townships or with arrangement of for examples the youth activities could give both reasons to why an active approach towards recruitment and targeting specific groups were important, and describe how these processes went about. Respondents with responsibilities that positioned them more distanced from the "on ground work" rather stressed either a non-existing need to worry about recruitment, or challenges for contemporary recruitment, and without exemplifying specific groups their party attempted to recruit.

The most noteworthy observation here might be the implications of a vague divide within the NLD. The divide did not occur primarily between those close or far from the "on ground work" but rather between senior members – who saw less of a need to work actively with recruitment due to the party's leader's repute and the party's ubiquitousness – and members who had more recently joined the party and found active recruitment as something essential. This indicates that the difference in attitudes did not derive from knowledge and understanding of present recruitment processes, which in turn could be relatively easy to adjust, but rather more deeply grounded perceptions of the party and its status in Myanmar.

### **5.1.2 Attitudes towards inclusive strategies**

As the discussions lead into why it could be important for a political party to have an inclusive approach examples were given describing how both the new members and the parties could benefit from additional inclusion of citizens:

A new member can present what they to do, what they want to serve the people/.../we collect the new idea from the members, and then we have to submit, step by step, and then, we will do for the people. (USDP 6)



Currently the NLD accept all of the new members, even those without experience. Those with real political will, own ideas, all are warmly welcome/.../It is very important to enlighten the right policy and the right political issues. People should be exposed by this party, the NLD, that have the right way to go to democracy. (NLD7)

Answers tended however to embed traces of duality. For example, one respondent who was asked whether he found it important for political parties to be open for everybody stated: “Yes!, party principal, if someone wants to join, should agree to party policy and can become member”(NLD9). When further asked to explain what the positive consequences of including many people could be the same respondent answered: “To have a consolidated nation by different people. If people want democracy, [the NLD] will grow as party”(Ibid). This instant response to inclusion as something important followed by an elaboration of i) how the new member should agree to party policies, and, ii) how an inclusive approach could benefit the needs of the party, was present also in answers given by USDP members: “Our main objective is to be inclusive, and that all will support our party at the election, so all people need to participate in our activities”(USDP7). This viewpoint indicates an understanding of an inclusive approach mainly as a means to win election, not to deepen the democracy as described by Dahl. That new members should “be exposed” to the party ideas further implies limited room for new ideas to grow, which in turn could result in what Dryzek describes as symbolic inclusion rather than actual possibility to influence decisions.

To summarise this first sub-section, while the respondents showed positive attitudes towards adopting an inclusive approach, a majority also gave examples of how their party would benefit from gaining new members; that new members could fulfil various needs of the parties. In this sense the respondents’ attitudes resembled that of a party-centred<sup>12</sup> approach, focusing on the interest of the party, rather than a citizen-centred<sup>13</sup> approach. The ideas of Dahl, that inclusion would be a mean to achieve political equality among the citizens, were relatively absent at this initial stage of the discussions. However, the respondents eagerness to have an inclusive approach would imply it to be unlikely, at this moment in time, that the sort of means identified

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<sup>12</sup> The party-centred theory is often utilized to explore the professionalization of party campaigns and include the factor of vote seeking as a primary goal. For more information about party-centred theory see Gibson and Römmele (2001).

<sup>13</sup> The concept of people-centred approach is mainly utilized within the development context, by NGOs and governments, who apply in strategies and policies. It refers to a sustainable approach through local ownership, participation and capacity building. See more in Korten (1987).

by Schelder, such as keeping elections noncompetitive, would be applied by any of the parties.

## 5.2 Representation

In the following three sub-sections the respondents' attitudes towards inclusion through representation is analysed. The first issue to be scrutinized is whether a representative should be elected based on his/her background and belonging to a specific group in the society or on his/her standpoint(s) in political issue(s). Thereafter the analysis looks at respondents' attitudes towards affirmative measures and diversity among party members and representatives.

### 5.2.1 Desired characteristics for elected representatives

On the issue of what characteristics an elected representatives should possess the respondents varied in their answers. While some emphasised the importance of strong linkages to the constituents, others found it critical that the person had genuine political interest and a true political will, and some gave examples of features such as honesty and to be knowledgeable.

The first notion, that the representatives should have strong linkages to those s/he represented was present among both NLD and USDP respondents with one USDP respondent describing it in the sense that:

The representation of different people is important. The representatives should be more in contact with e.g. youth, but be [USDP] member/.../ The representative should be familiar with youth affairs/.../They do not represent the whole nation, they represent the leader for youth, not rich or poor. (USDP2)

Another respondent asked to explain why he considered representation of different people and groups in the society to be of importance added on this consecution and stated that "Very important to find members from different parts of the country/.../Important that they can become candidates so they can talk about their state" (NLD2). Both these examples show that the respondents found it important for the representatives to share backgrounds and experiences with the represented. As described by Patnaik, shared traits were assumed by the respondents to entail representatives to have specific knowledge about the subjects, and the relatedness to enable access to information about the certain group or territory they represented. Although effects for marginalised or excluded groups were not mentioned at this stage, parts of the respondents are understood to build their preference of representatives on the notion of descriptive representation

rather than substantive. In this sense these respondents' attitudes resembles the argumentation of Phillips' call for progressive and equal inclusion and representation by various.

Further on, a vast part of the NLD respondents found it central for an elected representative to have a *true political will*. True political will was described as: "Political will for party and country and the national interest, not personal interest" (NLD8). Along with the political will other characteristics related to the representatives loyalty to the party were described, such as being devoted to the party, believe in party policies, and its leader. These exemplifications of personal features illustrate how the respondents perceive the representatives' bond to party ideas and programmes, the *what*, and substantive representation, as more essential than the *who*, and the representative's linkages to his/her constituents. So while part of the NLD respondents found substantive representation to be of importance, both NLD and USDP respondents likewise regarded descriptive representation as essential.

A third category of personal features brought up by the respondents was that of the representative's knowledge capacity; the importance of being knowledgeable and able to share ones knowledge to others. Expressed in an extreme, one of the USDP respondents stated that:

Members of Parliament can come from outside the party if knowledge is missed out on. Different parties want the same people! Finding the right person with the right knowledge is essential for all parties. They get interviewed to validate ideological sharing. (USDP4)

While respondents from both the NLD and the USDP described this as the former system of electing representatives the practice got confirmed by a deputy minister asked about his connections to the USDP, answering in a confused manner: "The USDP? Yes...they tell me that I am connected to that party"(Observation 3). Knowledge as a criterion for representatives is not mentioned in the discussion about substantive and descriptive representation or in Phillips argumentation of politics of presence. It is nevertheless brought up as a factor influencing participation and deliberation and these statements will be returned to in that section of the analysis.

The respondents' mixed attitudes of what characteristics a representative ought possess is maybe best illustrated by this NLD member:

...Member of Parliament, as long as they share the values of the party/.../ [MPs should] truly represent their people in their area. They must find trust among people, have knowledge about

legislation, they need such knowledge and experience. The main reason is people's choice, since they represent their region. (NLD4)

Although these diverse attitudes do not give direct support to Phillips ideas of politics of present, or strive for more equal representation, the diverse preferences indicates in themselves an open political climate. If such a climate is sustained and penetrates the party corridors it would lay a foundation for an inclusive approach and foster more diverse representation.

### **5.2.2 Diversity and affirmative measures**

As the interviews turned into discussing whether it could be important for political parties to strive for diversity among their members and representatives, nearly all respondents answered that they found it desirable. The importance for ethnic and religious minorities to be represented was especially emphasised. Yet, few of the respondents demonstrated rather passive attitudes towards adopting such an approach, and some exemplified how affirmative measures could have negative consequences. There were also some of the respondents who, although they had expressed positive attitudes towards diversity, indicated a reluctance to let inclusion of various groups lead to actual possibilities to influence the politics.

A vast part of the respondents remarked on the importance of striving for diversity among members based on Myanmar's diverse demography. Respondents from both NLD and USDP stressed that their parties already had members from different minority groups and, similar to Patnaik's reasoning, explained that the prevailing diversity within the parties could enable new members to feel confidence and trust for the party (Patnaik 2013:38). They expressed a will to reach citizens from various backgrounds and motivated this aspiration with the belief that various groups had different needs and interests. Moreover, as expressed in the quote below, diversity and the inclusion of different minority groups was stressed as a mean to secure the rights of minority groups in the society:

It is like, it is the best way to represent each and every ethnic groups. Because one cannot represent all of these, not in very detail. Because ethnic groups are...they have their each cultural tradition and something so to be more detailed and to be more effective they use as representatives of different ethnic groups/.../To let the minority ethnic groups feel they can also get the rights and they are also the privileged people. So it is like giving a chance to every person. (USDP1)

Based on these statements it is understood that the respondent's regard representation based on specific identities and shared life experiences, the *who*, as more important than representation based on solely collectively shared interests, the *what*. Their reasoning about different backgrounds leading to different interests resembles both that of Patnaik (2013) and of Phillips (1994), and could imply a will of extended representation.

As the interviews turned over to the issue of adopting affirmative measures several respondents referred to a quota system in Myanmar<sup>14</sup> allocating seats in the local parliament based on proportional representation of registered minority groups. The system was regarded as a “great opportunity for the ethnic groups, they would get a chance to express themselves/.../to promote their languages, cultures and/.../negotiate with the government to share their natural resources”(NLD6) and for the party to create friendly relations with the minority groups.

Respondents also justified the quota system with reasoning similar to why the parties should strive for diversity among members; that the various minority groups were assumed to be different in fundamental ways and that these differences necessitated extended representation. These arguments strongly correspond to those of Phillips (1994) about politics of presence and Young's (2000) justification of progressive inclusion. The justification and reasoning behind the need of the quota system indicates an acknowledgment of that increased inclusion of minority groups is desirable since it will enable the marginalised groups to represent their opinions and issues, and for the country to become more democratic. Since both NLD and USDP members expressed these attitudes, they indicate that enhanced inclusion of ethnic minority groups might be a plausible scenario, which in turn could diminish the divide between centre and periphery noted by Nambiar (2013).

Aside from the benefits the respondents identified that the ethnic minority groups could enjoy, several respondents accentuated benefits a diversity approach could bring to the parties:

We are not a peer group – same age, education, economic situation - our political party welcome all different people/.../As a political party, we need more members, they can organize other

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<sup>14</sup> I have searched for details about this system in both the national constituency, other legal documents and on the web without finding a source that can describe it in detail. However, since the system was described and referred to by a majority of the respondents I have chosen to include their opinions concerning the system in the analysis.

people who are not member of party/.../We decide to participate in election, need voters, after having many party member, they can create many voters for us. (NLD3)

In the USDP constitution, we have already executed that the all of the national races, all of the different level of people, that rich people, poor people, middle class people, all of the people, have to, should be eager to join our party/.../If different level can join our USDP, so we can penetrate separate, all of the separate, as the USDP/.../Because you know, political party, every political party, all want to win the election. So if we need penetrate to all of the strata, so we can win the election I think. (USDP6)

This reasoning reiterate the attitudes the respondents showed in relation to why an inclusive strategy could be desirable. So along with an expressed will to cherish the ethnic minority groups' diverse interested, the respondents once again expresses opinions indicating a party-centred approach.

### **5.2.3 Ambiguous opinions about diversity**

As aforementioned, there were some respondents who showed attitudes of less concern for diversity. They did so without expressing anything negative about the idea of diversity per se. But apart from justifying diversity as something attractive by referring to the party policies, this group of respondents did not attach additional connotations to the idea of diversity, such as considering diverse marginalised groups to have different experiences, interest and/or opinions. If the respondents do not see these elementary premises of a need for extended representation, as described by both Patnaik (2013) and Phillips (1994), the likelihood that they would advocate for affirmative measures, to increase the diversity within the party, and to certify inclusion and representation of various ethnic minority groups, could be assumed to not be very high. On the contrary, these passive attitudes might risk reinforcing the current divide between the majority and the minority groups in Myanmar identified by Chaturvedi (2013) among others.

On the topic of affirmative measures there were a number of respondents who identified negative consequences that could come from adopting a quota system. The current situation in Myanmar with the military holding 25 percent of the seats in the parliament was brought up as an example. It was considered unjust and respondents stressed that Members of Parliament should be decided upon through free and fair elections. Another difficulty of utilizing a quota system pointed out was the complexity of achieving a system that would provide fair inclusion of all the various

minority groups residing in Myanmar. On this issue one of the respondents found it advisable to judge a candidate on variables such as capabilities, skills, knowledge and experiences, rather than where the person came from or what group the person might be intended to represent. These respondents showed an understanding of both the purpose behind adopting affirmative measures and the complexity that might come with the implementation of such measures. One of them also formulated a solution that indicated less focus on descriptive representation, the *who*, and more focus on the substantive representation, *what* the person represent, and especially the personal capabilities.

Some respondents further argued that affirmative measures could have negative consequences for their party. One USDP respondent, who first had confirmed the importance of including people from all walks in life, later stated that this could lead to the majority group getting the impression that the party was prioritizing the minority groups. Further on, when asked in what way the minority groups could enjoy affirmative measures such as quotas, whether it would enable them the opportunity to influence politics, the same respondent answered “Not influence, not influence, there is a...Join and actively participate in the activities. And they will be organised to, [recruit] other people to participate in USDP activities”(USDP6). Another USDP respondent noticed negative effects that could occur. He expressed concern about representatives of ethnic minority groups who had started to raise attention to issues of the group, participate in demonstration, and talking negatively about the party. The respondent suggested that representatives of minority groups should have a positive mind-set, try to compromise with the party, and represent the ideas of their minority groups in a positive manner. These respondents expressed opinions that strongly contrasted their initial answers, and insinuated that they wished to limit the sphere of influence for representatives of minority groups. As noted by Dryzek, an approach to include groups without allowing them actual possibilities to influence would lead to merely symbolic inclusion. Representatives would thus be left without real possibilities to promote issues of interest to the minority group. Similar to the consequences that could come from respondents with passive attitudes, this scenario could also underpin existing divides between Myanmar’s ethnic groups and result in frustration rather than a feeling of being included.

On the whole the respondents were found to have quite diverse attitudes towards representation, diversity and affirmative measures. Several respondents recognized that inclusion of ethnic minority groups could have positive effects for the groups, but the positive effects this could have for the party tended also to be frequently mentioned. Thus, the opportunity to gain more members and win elections was strongly emphasised. There were also those respondents who stayed rather passive to the issues of diversity and affirmative measures, and those who initially stated positive attitudes, but later expressed desires to limit the minority groups' representative's possibility to speak freely, act against the party line and to influence the politics. These attitudes are understood to risk real inclusion of minority groups. They could rather have a counterproductive effect on the minority groups' potential possibilities to influence politics, and risk to bolster the current divide and tensions between Myanmar's ethnic groups.

### **5.3 Participation and deliberation**

As noted in the presentation of the conceptual and theoretical framework, participation and deliberation are sometimes found under the same umbrella and so is the case in these sections of the analysis. This sub-sections starts out with analysing the respondents perceptions of citizen participation, then how deliberation should go about, only to end in a section that brings the findings related to both these concepts to an expansion of the participation paradox.

#### **5.3.1. Citizen participation**

When asked to describe how citizen participation should go about and if they could see any purpose of involving citizens more actively in decision-making respondents from both parties described citizen participation as something essential in relation to the current situation of Myanmar. They had similar views on how and why citizens should participate: to give input to the party, to participate in activities, and to gain knowledge through trainings offered by the party, with the USDP emphasising the participation in activities a bit more strongly.

In general, the discussion related to formal decision-making at township level where non-members were described to “have the right to listen, not give suggestion, only after last meeting”(NLD7) as “we [the township committee] discuss the party issues and we listen to their advice/.../all can come and discuss, we accept the ideas and opinions”(NLD2) and that “everybody [are welcome], maybe they are from the other party also, but they are citizens



(USDP5). As described in the section about attitudes towards inclusive strategies, the benefit of including citizens as a means to understand their ideas was still prevailing in these discussions. Moreover, the benefits were extended to be a means to elicit the needs of the citizens: “for example, water sanitation need came from the village leader/.../USDP member visit the sight to understand the need”(USDP4). Several of the USDP respondents explained how elected representatives congregates the opinions, expressed as needs, from the citizens and forward these needs to the appropriate decision-making body. In this sense, citizens’ participation seemed to be limited to the input level, to give advice, in contrast to participation leading to active involvement in decision-making, as advocated by Pateman (Pateman 2012). The level of citizen participation was explained to “depend on the nature of the issue. If central committee need to make decision, it is up to them”(NLD7). These descriptions of citizen participation imply that citizens are welcome to participate and share their ideas, but without any real possibilities to influence decision-making, unless they join the parties and climb the hierarchies up to some executive body.

Beyond participating in decision-making the party members did see other ways that citizens could participate: “after you become a member, if you have time and if you really want to cooperate and you can go through, a, if there is any new event, like donation of blood or anything”(USDP1). Participation by performing social deeds like these were described by both NLD members, who mentioned the planning of funerals, and USDP members, who gave further examples of working with sanitation etc. Again, participation is not described in the terms of gaining real possibilities to influence decision-making as described by Pateman (2012). Yet, some of the positive outcomes from participation in politics might occur, such as developing the habits to participate and increased openness and tolerance through interaction with others (Pateman 2012:10; Hadenius 2001:63).

The third way the respondents described that citizens could participate was through trainings offered by the parties. Both NLD and USDP respondents recognized a general need among citizens to learn about democracy, as described by these respondents: “Democracy is very young in this country, so we are still learning how [to] make democratic reform” (NLD4); “Myanmar stayed a military regime more than 25 years. Still need to learn” (USDP4). Similar to Pateman’s

(2013) reasoning about the benefits of active participation some of the respondents argued that “it would be best if all people could participate in political processes, we would be better democracy”(NLD6). One difference between the respective parties was, however, that NLD members often referred to the fear they perceived citizens had for politics as a constraint to participation:

People still have fear in them. To become a democratic country we need the participation of the people/.../If they participate in the discussion, they will come to know the importance of politics and they will have interest in politics, and they will also know that politics is in their everyday life. (NLD5)

USDP members did not reflect upon this issue. In stead they rather focused on the need to educate about democracy, as they believed that increased awareness would lead to enhanced unification and consolidation of the country:

So, one of the benefit is that people can gain higher political awareness and knowledge. [What does that lead to?] If the people will be higher political awareness that might be higher love for their country, the separate races, they try hard to be good citizen. (USDP7)

Respondents from both parties described how they offer trainings to new members, ranging from language training to training in human rights and democracy. This sort of trainings and the succeeding discussions they could lead to was described to facilitate further positive effects: “The family or the ordinary citizen get the habit of discussion, because they participate in meeting and planning, and will continue to discuss and form their opinion and [I] will then know their real opinions” (NLD8). Additionally, one NLD respondent expressed how she, when joining the party, had not only acquired new knowledge, but also gained new friends and access to networks she would not have become familiar with through her normal social sphere. Once again, this form of participation can be understood to entail positive effects such as citizens being educated, develop the habit to participate, and to counteract intolerance (Pateman 2013; Hadenius 2001:63).

Overall, the way the respondents described citizen participation implies their recognition of many of the benefits Pateman and Hadenius argues comes through the active participation by citizens. However, all the forms of participation described above lack the element of citizens’ actual influence on decision-making. Considering that Myanmar is in a nascent stage of

democracy this might be natural. As described by some of the respondents, Myanmar is still learning what democracy is. Then to assume political parties to start handing over power of decision-making to its citizens, before they have even had time to taste it themselves, might be to expect too much. This could in turn be seen as a narrowing, in contrast to widening, of participation and thereby to nourish elitist tendencies. But bearing in mind the strong desire to educate people about democracy and the trainings offered by both parties, it seems that the parties are leaning more towards a broader inclusive approach than elitism.

### **5.3.2 A wind of change? Open attitudes and room for deliberation**

Related to participation is then the concept of deliberation, the idea that democracy should occur through an informed conversation between citizens.

Several respondents witnessed about changes they had seen concerning the possibility to meet in an open conversation: “Today one can express ideas. Before you could not. The party try to reform”(USDP4). They also expressed appreciation of taking part of others opinions and a willingness to open up for discussions. As noted above, learning about democracy was understood to foster discussion, and in turn people’s ability to form their own opinions. Rephrased, it describes Habermas’ idea about deliberation leading to development of the individual’s identity (Gencoglu-Obasi 2011:435ff). Some respondents acknowledged the fact that people have, and will have, different opinions and that this require room for argumentation and negotiation: “Even in this office people have different ideas and opinions. Can have small conflict. Must find unity in diversity. Have to find out the best solution from their ideas. Must negotiate with each other”(NLD8). Reiterated by a USDP member who said that: “If new members have new ideas, need to make them uniform ideas. Not everything the same, but the backbone needs to be there. But they should still be able to have different ideas”(USDP4), these respondents’ descriptions of how to act when opinions differ resembles the ideas of Habermas who wanted any issue to be discussable and for people to reach mutual understanding and agreement.

Yet, some respondents described taking part of others’ opinions mainly as a means to gather information: “...discuss, what can I say. /.../What we get, we need to do and what we don’t. So

the impact of the past activities. We can get the impact of the past of activities”(USDP6). While this certainly opens up for bringing a quality aspect into the decision-making, it does not imply a two-way communication leading to informed conversation and mutual understanding as described by Habermas. Neither does it seem to broaden the inclusion of people into the political conversation, but rather implies a one-way communication that solely informs the receiver.

Further on, as noted in the discussions above about representation and participation, knowledge and higher education are characteristics strongly appreciated by a majority of the respondents. Described by one NLD member: “Education doesn’t matter, but if they have graduated, we need this people. We need in general uneducated people as members”(NLD2). USDP members described the importance of education in similar wording, and specially stressed the importance of Members of Parliament to acquire a bachelor degree and to have deeper, or even expert, knowledge. This appreciation of higher education and expert knowledge implies that arguments from knowledgeable persons will be privileged. In contrast to Dryzek’s opinion that experts should not speak as experts, NLD respondents described how they invited experts to discuss certain issues. This appreciation of knowledge might very well lead to a professionalization of politics and decision-making, excluding those with lower levels of education.

These findings shows that while the respondents express how they welcome the more open political climate and opportunities to deliberate with each other, their strong appreciation of knowledge may lead to the exclusion of people with lower education. These are tendencies noted by both Hooghe and Stolle (2011) and Hadenius (2001), who described that people with less education might as well be less eloquent and therefore risks having their opinions disregarded. For Myanmar’s development such trends may foster divides not only between different ethnic groups, but also between those with higher and lower education.

#### **5.3.4 Expanding the participation paradox**

Several of the respondents described that the level of citizen participation depended on the individual person’s own desire and capability to participate: “Some of the members want to become members but they don’t have time to participate/.../for the member level it depends on their willingness”(USDP2). This approach to expected participation in combination with a

tradition to offer new members training in relevant topics would imply low risks of creating a participation paradox, as citizens are welcomed to participate on their own terms.

The approach does not, however, eliminate the scenario described by Hooghe, Stolle and Pateman; that those with more time, financial resources and higher education tend to participate more frequently (Hooghe and Stolle 2011:138; Pateman 2012:12). Virtually all respondents had some sort of university diploma, implying that political participation was more common among people with higher education. Yet, the respondents did not comment upon this. The analysis has further noticed that knowledge is strongly appreciated by the respondents, and that this appreciation might lead to privileging of arguments from people regarded as experts or more knowledgeable. Building on Hooghe and Stolle's observations, it could be assumed that although the parties welcome people to participate on their own terms, the person's level of education might be the factor determining to what level s/he will experience real inclusion and possibility to influence political decision-making.

In contrast to the idea of participation paradox, USDP members found themselves in a different situation:

It is like, the difficulties is that if they [the USDP] have something to make it good for the people who are in the lower level, it is okay. But in the higher level, if there is something difficult, to even meet up with them. (USDP3)

USDP members had thus identified that while they were able reach people of the lower and middle socio-economic groups in society, they had troubles reaching, involving, and gather opinions from people like national businessmen or others from the higher socio-economic groups.

While NLD members had not identified a specific group, they had still identified a barrier to active participation: "NLD was oppressed for a long time, if you communicate with NLD you would be in trouble. So people still have fear in themselves, so it will be difficult to invite people" (NLD5).

The analysis has thus noted both tendencies already described to result in the participation paradox, that of higher education, and identified some new factors that may have excluding

effects. The absence of persons from the higher strata in society would imply that their voices are not being heard, at least not at township level. Similarly, the fear of political involvement described by NLD members may have an excluding effect, and result in persons or groups not participating. Drawing on the theoretical discussion, suggesting that participation “creates openness and tolerance towards others”, this effect of participation is most likely lost when one specific group is absent, and others refrain from participation due to fear.

## **5.4 Summary of findings**

### **5.4.1 Inclusion as a means to win elections**

Although the respondents varied in their appreciation of to what degree the parties needed to actively work with inclusion, on what grounds representatives should be elected, and the benefits of diversity and affirmative measures, the general attitude was that extended inclusion of citizens was something positive. This was as well noted in the discussions on participation. A diversity approach and adoption of affirmative measures were understood to have positive implications for minority groups as it could lead to their voices and interests being raised. Participation of citizens was further argued to result in increased political awareness of the citizens, which in turn would have positive effects on the democratic development in the country. However, to have an inclusive approach, strive for diversity, and more people participating in party activities were continuously referred to as means creating more members; members who in turn could generate additional voters and increase the parties’ potential to win elections. This reasoning implies that the respondents’ perceptions of inclusion were party-centred rather than people-centred.

### **5.4.2 Potential hindrance to a democratic consolidation**

Inclusion in relation to diverse representation and affirmative measure were as aforementioned regarded as something positive by the major part of the respondents. However, some respondent’s showed reluctance to let extended inclusion and representation of ethnic minority groups lead to actual influence over decision-making. This finding in combination with an observed affection for knowledge and expertise may result in exclusion of both ethnic minority groups and persons with lower education. In a country where literacy is low and access to higher education have been, and still is, very limited, this sort of appreciation and prioritizing risks to enhance already existing discrimination towards those less privileged as well as existing power

structures. Exclusion of these groups could in turn lead to frustration and potential divides, and thus become hindrances on Myanmar's path towards democracy.

Further on, the connotations of the participation paradox was expanded further than to the factors identified by Hooghe, Stolle (2011) and Pateman (2012). According to the respondents fear of politics could be a barrier to participate, along with difficulties in reaching people from the higher socio-economic groups. As these barriers to extended participation were detected by the different parties, it shows the importance of having an open dialogue not only within the parties, but also between them..

## **6. Conclusions - Conveying the discoveries**

Through a qualitative case study, involving members of the two major political parties in Myanmar, this study aimed to understand how inclusion is externalised within the parties; if their conceptions and actions in relation to inclusion could imply any hindrances to Myanmar's democratic development; and if these findings could bring anything new to the theoretical discourse. The idea of inclusion was investigated in relation to the concepts of representation, participation and deliberation. Data was collected through semi-structured individual interviews and observations made during the prolonged time spent in the field.

In general, the findings showed that broaden inclusion of citizens is regarded as something positive and desirable. The desirable component, however, tended to be related to the parties probability to win elections by the acquirement of new members, and risked thereby to result in merely symbolic inclusion. The study further detected that a strong appreciation of knowledge, fear among people to involve in politics, and the absence of the higher strata in politics are components that might lead to i) discrimination, and, ii) lacking tolerance of others, and thus become hindrances for a smooth transition to democracy.

Although the concrete findings might only be applicable to Myanmar, and even just the units that participated, their inherent implications could be relevant also in other settings. For examples, a party's desire to win election and thereby strive to include as many persons and groups of the society as possible, may lead to solely a symbolic inclusion of these groups also in other

contexts. To seek understanding of parties' intentions, not only concerning inclusion, on a deeper level could maintain prediction of impacts they may produce.

Based on the findings in this study, future research could benefit from examining the connotations of the participation paradox in various settings. By being culture sensitive and attentive to the context this could enable identification and visualisation of country specific factors that might have excluding effects on participation. Concerning future research in Myanmar, it could be of interest to focus on one of the theoretical concepts examined by this study in order to learn even more about its country-specific connotations. Lastly, considering the respondents' common referencing to procedures at township level, future research could as well engage in investigating local governance in Myanmar in order to gain a greater understanding of the democratic structures and their potential.



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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Primary Sources - Interview Data and Observation

Respondent Pseudonym	Interview Date	Age Range	Gender	Ethnicity	Education level	Position within the party	Years in the party	Use of interpreter
NLD1	10 Dec 2013	20-30	Female	Burman	Tertiary	Receptions	7	Yes
NLD2	9 Dec 2013	60-70	Male	Karen	Tertiary	Labour Affairs Committee	25	No
NLD3	9 Dec 2013	70-80	Male	n/a	n/a	Receptionist/Humanitarian assistant	25	No
NLD4	9 Dec 2013	60-70	Male	Burman	Tertiary	Education Committee	25	No
NLD5	12 Dec 2013	60-70	Male	Burman	Tertiary	Central Farmers Committee	25	Yes
NLD6	12 Dec 2013	50-60	Male	Rakhine	Tertiary	Central Farmers Committee	24	Yes
NLD7	10 Dec 2013	60-70	Female	Rakhine	Secondary	Township committee / Event Manager	17	Yes
NLD8	10 Dec 2013	20-30	Female	Burman	Tertiary	Receptionist	2	Yes
NLD9	6 Dec 2013	50-60	Male	n/a	n/a	Township Committee	n/a	No
USDP1	3 Dec 2013	30-40	Male	n/a	n/a	District Committee	20	Yes
USDP2	3 Dec 2013	30-40	Female	Bumar	Tertiary	District Committee	13	Yes
USDP3*	3 Dec 2013	30-40	Male/ Female	-	-	-	-	Yes
USDP4	29 Nov 2013	40-50	Male	n/a	Tertiary	Regional Committee	14	No
USDP5	3 Dec 2013	50-60	Male	n/a	Tertiary	Central Committee	19	Yes
USDP6	18 Jan 2014	30-40	Female	Burman	Tertiary	District Committee	14/3**	No
USDP7	18 Jan 2014	50-60	Male	Burman	n/a	Township Committee	16	No

\* During this interview bystanders joined the discussion, the interview is therefore regarded as a focus group interview.

\*\*The respondent referred to both USDA and USDP membership as the USDA transformed into USDP in 2010.

### Observations

Observation 1, 17<sup>th</sup> December 2013, Yangon, Myanmar. Project Planning Training for the NLD's research unit.

Observation 2, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2014, Yangon, Myanmar. Youth Celebration arranged by the USDP.

Observation 3, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2013, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, National Workshop on Strategic Agenda for Rural Development.

## Appendix 2: Interview guide

### *General information*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Years within the party: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation (if not working full-time with politics, then previous occupation): \_\_\_\_\_

Education level and academic background: \_\_\_\_\_

Position /role in the party: \_\_\_\_\_

### **The interviewee and the party**

- 1) Could you tell me how you first came in contact with the party?
  - a. Describe how/if you were introduced to other members of the party and the organisation as a whole?
  - b. Do you remember how you felt when you first were introduced to the party?
- 2) If someone comes in here today and start to talk to you and the person want to become a member, what would you do to welcome the person to the party?
  - a. Will there be any activities, to introduce or give information?

### **Inclusion and representation**

- 1) About finding new members today, does the party work actively with finding new members?
  - a. Do you have some sort of strategy?
  - b. Should anyone be able to join the party?
  - c. Does the party aim for diversity among the members?
  - d. Do you find it important with diversity within your party?
    - i. Why/Why not? Benefits? Negative aspects (tensions/loss of opposition)?
- 2) In general, do you find it important that different groups from the society are represented within countries political parties?
  - a. Who should be represented?
    - i. Is it important that political parties and candidates reflect the composition of the population?
    - ii. Quotas for ethnic minorities and other (vulnerable) groups?
      1. I have heard about the 1% rule – what do you think about that system?
  - b. Do you think it affect the different groups if they have representatives or not within parties/governments/parliament?
    - i. Represented at what level, just party members or also MPs?
- 3) For elected party representatives, do you find it important that they fulfil some certain criteria?
  - a. Is it important with knowledge, visions and ambition?

- b. Should anyone be able to be elected as a member of parliament

**Inclusion, participation and deliberation**

- 4) Could you describe how your party work with meeting citizens, e.g. township meetings? (Frequency, how to “invite”, how many can participate, etc.)
  - a. If you were arranging one of these meeting, what would an ideal situation be for a (township) meeting (that people come and listen, discuss have debate)?
- 5) Is it important that citizens of the township participate in/come to township meetings or is it enough that politicians discuss with township leaders?
  - a. Can you describe any benefits or positive effects of people coming to the
    - i. Any negative effects?
  - b. Should anyone be able to participate in the meetings?
    - i. (E.g. foreigners)?

**Extra**

**The concept of inclusion**

- 1) How would you explain the concept inclusion to a five year old?
  - a. Who should be included?
  - b. When is inclusion achieved?
- 2) Do you regard inclusion to be something important for a political party?
  - a. Why?
  - b. Why not?
- 3) Can you see any benefits with having an inclusive approach within a party?
  - a. Which ones?
  - b. If no, why not?
- 4) What role does inclusion play in democracy?
  - a. Is it of importance?
    - i. Could inclusion have any negative effects?

## Appendix 3: Informed consent - English version

Lund University  
Department of Human Geography

Karin Karlsson  
MSc in International  
Development and Management

### Perception of Inclusion within Political Parties in Myanmar

A study carried out by the student Karin Karlsson, Master Study Candidate of International Development and Management, Lund University, Sweden.

#### Informed Consent from Respondents

I am a student of the Master Program in International Development and Management ([www.lumid.lu.se](http://www.lumid.lu.se)) at Lund University in Sweden. I have my academic background within Political Science from the Program of European Studies at Linnaeus University, Växjö, Sweden. As part of my master program I am conducting a study about how people involved in the political parties in Myanmar perceive inclusion, whether inclusion is regarded as something important in the political process, as something positive or negative, if people have the same basic perception of the meaning of inclusion and whether there exist differing attitudes towards the idea of inclusion. The study is focused on attitudes towards inclusion among people engaged in political parties, that is members, employees and volunteers, how they perceive inclusion and how they act in relation to their idea of inclusion.

I would like to interview people from various positions within the parties, e.g. receptions, finance manager, persons responsible for different programs and campaigns, persons responsible for different policy issues, persons within the steering organ, elected representatives, volunteers etc. The interviews will be conducted in English as long as the respondents do not wish otherwise.

All together I wish to conduct 8-10 interviews with people from your party. I will ask questions regarding how you got in contact with the party, your current position within the party and your thoughts about inclusion. The interviews will take approximately one hour, and you are free to withdraw consent and participation at any time throughout the interview. I wish to record the interview and will transcribe the recording. The transcripts will not have your name or any identifying details on them, and they will be kept on my computer for the duration of the study. I promise to make every effort to maintain the confidentiality of the interview material, unless you give permission for me to retain the recordings and transcripts, they will be destroyed by the end of the study. Any material used in the final written composition of this study will have identifying characteristics or statements omitted or paraphrased to hide your identity unless you indicate otherwise. The final thesis will, in accordance with Swedish principal on public access to official records, become public property and available to anyone who wishes to access it.

If you agree to be interviewed please indicate with your initials your agreement or disagreement to each of the following requests and sign the form at the bottom.

1. You agree to participate in this interview    Yes \_\_\_\_\_    No \_\_\_\_\_



2. You agree to the recording of the interview Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
3. You wish your name not to be recorded Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
4. May the recording and transcript be retained after the completion of the study? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
5. You wish to do the interview with an interpreter translating between English and Burmese. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the participant: \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print)

Position with in the party: \_\_\_\_\_  
(e.g. volunteer, manager etc.)

Signature of the participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information to participant: \_\_\_\_\_  
(phone or email)

If you at any time have any questions regarding your participation in this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at: [nirak.karlsson@gmail.com](mailto:nirak.karlsson@gmail.com),  
I can also be reached at + 95 (0) 9250 137 541.