The Quest for Accountable Governance

The achievements of nonviolent youth social movements in Myanmar after the 2010 elections

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1)Activista, 2011. *Activista logo.* [electronic print] Available at: https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=206395689426640&set=a.158363817563161.42293.158351057564437&type=1&theater [Accessed on 26 July 2012]

2) Generation Wave, 2011. Generation Wave Logo. [electronic print] Available at: https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10150863876005105&set=a.10150292171095105.540657.209504710104&type=1&theater [Accessed 26 July 2012]

3) 88 Generation, 1988. Seal of The 88 Generation Students. [electronic print] Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/88_Generation_Students_Group [Accessed on 26 July 2012]

4) ABFSU, 1988. *Flag of ABFSU.* [electronic print] Available at: https://htoosannchin.wordpress.com/tag/abfsu/ [Accessed on 26 July 2012]

5) Oxfam Novib, 2011. *Grow logo.* [electronic print] Available at: http://www.oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/?p=5591 [Accessed on 26 July 2012]

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Abbreviations

ABFSU   All Burma Federation Student Union

BC   British Council

IDP   Internally Displaced Person

INGO   Internationally Non-Governmental Organisation

KIA   Kachin Independence Army

KIO   Kachin Independence Organisation

LDC   Least Developed Country

LNGO   Local Non-Governmental Organisation

NLD   National League for Democracy

RC   Revolutionary Council

SLORC   State Law and Order Restoration Council

SM   Social Movement

SMO   Social Movement Organisation

SPDC   State Peace and Development Council

USDP   Union Solidarity and Development Party

Introduction

To the casual observer Myanmar seems like a mighty fortress, where the military junta (ruling from a high impenetrable tower) has muted any blip of resistance on its radar by brutal force. The most well-known internationally reported instances of protests being crushed in Myanmar are the 8888 Uprising, the 1996 student revolt and the 2007 Saffron Revolution. But even though they were not reported in the international sphere, imperatives to challenge the regime and so reach the goal of a democratic Burma have been constant. These occurred on different scales of contention (think of graffiti, waving of flags, wearing of symbols, pamphleteering) and by different elements of society. Without taking into account these constant dents being made in the impenetrable tower and the existing international linkages (through underground tunnels out of the mighty fortress) the political changes happening in such a high-capacity, low-democracy regime like Myanmar indeed appear as sudden as they are portrayed in the Western media where the role of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy (NLD) has been put under a magnifying glass.

One of the goals of my thesis is to enhance the public and academic knowledge on the underexposed element of nonviolent activism by youth social movements for accountable governance in Myanmar, as part of the overall pro-democracy movement. Through this lens I will explain how and why the current political shifts could have occurred and how they influence the strategies, goals and achievements of the social movements for accountable governance.

Many youngsters have indicated that they became active after the brutal killings of monks during the Saffron Revolution and the governmental failures during and after cyclone Nargis in 2008. These two episodes caused serious cracks in the foundation of the impenetrable tower of the military junta. Furthermore these episodes have made a new generation rise as many of the 88 Generation were still in prison, or in their fifties causing them to have other social responsibilities and ties. Due to the time and size restrictions of my thesis I will, however, focus on the work of social movements after the 2010 elections.

Theoretical Framework

To be able to aptly understand the ways social movements for accountable governance can operate in Myanmar I have decided to utilize a mechanical explanation analysis (Tilly 2001). According to Tilly and Tarrow social movements come into being when a *social movement base* is able to launch a *social movement campaign* (2007: 114). This transition is triggered by the presence of mechanisms and processes. I therefore focussed my research on what mechanisms are at play when trying to promote active citizenship for accountable governance in high-capacity, low-democracy regimes, like Myanmar. This made me formulate the following research question:

What have the nonviolent youth social movements for accountable governance tried to achieve from the 2010 elections onwards within a political context dominated by Myanmar's high-capacity, low-democracy regime; and what are the mechanisms that can account for their political achievements (or lack thereof) towards their goal?

I have linked the mechanical explanation analysis to the overall concept of political opportunities and split it into three parts, which constitute the three chapters of this thesis: (pre-existing) contextual conditions, frames, and organisations. Contextual conditions help form frames as they cannot be created out of thin air. Strong frames, in return, will benefit from the human and financial resources available to organisations when they are being adopted and broadcasted, which are depended on both the contextual conditions as well as the framing techniques of social movement leaders. Together they can form a potent weapon able to penetrate the impenetrable. These three parts are therefore intricately linked. Through the usage of these three concepts, which I will break down with the help of specific theoretical ideas, I will categorize the mechanisms at play. Due to the size of my thesis I have chosen to analyse two mechanisms per chapter. This does not mean that I won't mention other mechanisms, or link them to the processes at play. This simply means that these will be my main focus.

Through this analytical framework I will try to provide relevance for both the public and academic debate concerning the political changes taking place in Myanmar. As I aim to depict a clear picture of the role of grassroots level actors and the ways they are still hindered by the civil-government

today this will provide insights relevant for journalists, policymakers and politicians. I believe they are currently basing their new actions and policies on an incorrect master narrative, which could mean that instead of aiding a transition towards democracy, they are aiding the Military instead.

For the academic sphere this thesis is relevant as it helps understand how political shifts can happen in high-capacity, low-democracy regimes, similar to Myanmar. Perhaps not at lightning speed, but apparently there is a political space, which creates opportunities through which changes can happen. It is therefore relevant for social movement theory to analyse, which mechanisms are at play in these instances and so broaden the theoretical knowledge on how changes can take place in these type of regimes.

Theories help us make sense of reality, and in this case the empirical reality of Myanmar social movements on the grassroots level has been underexposed. This research will therefore also increase the knowledge on the empirical reality in which social movements operate. Most renowned international scholars specialised in Myanmar have not done research in the State itself, interviewing only those that have crossed its borders, or haven't done so for a very long time (Taylor 2009) (Steinberg 2010) (Beatty 2011). This results into knowledge gaps, which my thesis will help fill.

Methodology

The nature of my research is contextual and I have used several appropriate data collection techniques to collect the material necessary to answer my research question.

First I have used five case-studies in the form of social movement organisations (SMOs) part of the social movement for accountable governance, which are Activista, Grow, Generation Wave, All Burma Federation Student Unions (ABFSU) and 88 Generation. These helped construct the boundaries of my research and gave me the opportunity to examine the overall differences between organisations and their modus operandi.

Second, I interviewed several members and organisers of these five SMOs and two Myanmarese political analysts. Of course these interviews cannot be understood outside of their context. I am also aware of the problems of oral accounts. Some organisers had clearly developed a routine in giving interviews. Furthermore, some events took place a long time ago, increasing the risk of incomplete and coloured accounts. Last, some topics were quite sensitive, like foreign investment. Still, I believe I have managed to acquire the data necessary by utilising my skills acquired as a counsellor and a researcher.

Of course, I did this in relation to the analysis of documents. Which is my third data collection technique. For example, the activities of the social movements on the net, like their publications on their websites and on social media were part of this analysis. Next to the more obvious forms of text I know that clothing plays a significant role in Burma. Specific colours and symbols relate back to important events in the past. Both visual and textual data helped construct a better understanding of the social and political context.

Last, I designed a survey, which I distributed under twenty-five youth activists part of the social movements for accountable governance. While this is a quantitative method, I felt it necessary to use it as an anonymous data collection technique. There is still a big fear of giving ones political opinion in Myanmar due to the presence of intelligence agents throughout society. I tried to lower the threshold of giving sensitive data through this survey. It turned out though that Myanmar people are unaccustomed to filling in surveys, which forced me to rewrite and redistribute the survey several times, as they misinterpreted the answering formats. I therefore believe it functions as an addition to my other data collection techniques, but it can definitely not stand on its own.

Chapter One: Conditions

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1   6) Douglas, Carl, 2009. *The Diffused Fortress II: Diagram.* [electronic print] Available at:
http://diffusive.wordpress.com/2009/10/13/the-diffused-fortress-ii-diagram/ [Accessed 26 July 2012]

In this first chapter I will provide the context in which the nonviolent youth social movement for accountable governance operates. I will start from the sixties onwards, but will also touch the colonial period as this forms the basis of political conditions the social movement needs to work with today. The introduction of this chapter is considerable longer than the following two, because it is the make up of the mighty fortress that influences both framing opportunities as well as organisational capabilities. It is therefore prudent to provide you with a thorough understanding of the political climate to which I will refer to, repeatedly, in the chapters to come. In my narrative, and in the upcoming two paragraphs, I will focus on two mechanisms, which are active in this high-capacity, low-democracy regime: *repression* and *co-optation* (Tilly and Tarrow 2007). Both have been used for decades by the Military Junta and have played, and still play, an important (albeit different) role for the success rate of the social movement for accountable governance. So, now let's see in which way they were active in the time before the 2010 elections.

As you might have well expected the mighty fortress and its impenetrable watchtower did not come falling out of the sky. It dates back decades, all the way to the colonial period when its artificial walls were raised by the British in 1885. The British left in 1948, after General Aung San (father of Aung San Suu Kyi) negotiated independence in 1947 (Aung-Thwin 2003). However, the outer walls remained despite the fact that some minorities, like the Karen and Shan, were promised their own independent 'citadels'. General Aung San was trusted by most minorities and had negotiated a form of federalism. He was not a democrat but a socialist, and suggested to share the country's resources with them (Steinberg 2010: 42). Before the actual independence had come into being he was, however, assassinated.

In 1962 General Ne Win initiated a military coup and after installed the watchtower to keep the fortress together. Many scholars of that time[2] and people I interviewed[3] reported that the Revolutionary Council's (RC) reform plans, or building plans for the tower, were met with general approval by the Burmese citizens. The international academic sphere framed it as a "necessary link in the process of modernization" (Chang 1969: 830), while an interviewee stated that '[t]he Burmese approved as it would ensure control over the rebelling minorities'[4]. This view quickly changed when

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2   See the work of John Badgley (1962: 24) and Frank Trager (1963: 320-21)
3   Author's interview on 8 April 2012 with Oo Aung (pseudonym), political analyst for the British Council.
     Author's interview on 23 March 2012 with Maung Maung (pseudonym), political analyst for ActionAid Myanmar.
4   Author's interview on 8 April 2012 with Oo Aung, a political analyst for the British Council.

the Revolutionary Council's radical agenda was revealed: Buddhism as a state religion, the introduction of the 'Burmese Way to Socialism' and rapid power shifts which entrenched all levels with military commanders through a newly introduced control system of Security and Administration Committees (Holliday 2011: 49). It became clear that the watchtower was equipped with various mechanisms to make it impenetrable and therewith form the state element that would help control its citizens. It is in this period that the mechanisms repression and co-optation were being re-introduced: "On July 7, 1962 the RC revealed clear repressive intent by killing dozens of protesting and then rioting Rangoon University students, and detonating the student's union building on campus" (Holliday 2011: 49). Co-optation, was utilized to keep ethnic and political rebellions outside of the major cities under control: "[...] some groups were allowed to keep their arms as a kind of militia (that program was abandoned in 1973) as long as they did not fight against the government. It enabled them to engage in their traditional occupations, which in some cases involved opium production" (Steinberg 2010: 43).

In this time period relations with the outside world were furthermore severed, both on the economic and social front. In the third chapter I will analyse how this decision still influences the opportunities of social movements today.

In the eighties it became obvious that the 'Burmese way to socialism' and the non-involvement in international economics was a strategic mistake. When Ne Win denounced the old order in August 1987 and instructed the development of economic and political reform public confidence was severely undercut (Taylor 2009: 380). Add demonetisation disabling students to pay their intuition, the announcement of the Least Developed Country status by the UN in December and the failure to improve the economic malaise and one has a potent form of ammunition that can shake any watchtower to its core (Steinberg 2010: 77). It is therefore no wonder that increased public protests took place throughout 1988 and it soon became clear that the Military's only mechanism of response was violent repression. These public protests evolved from "essentially specific student or local grievances to broader and more fundamental political and constitutional demands took place simultaneously with the growth of new or reactivated political forms and institutions in Myanmar" (Taylor 2008: 385).

The whole society was in uproar, plunder and looting took place as individuals settled their personal scores. Normal life drastically changed as even public institutions, markets and shops closed their

doors and civil servants and former supporters of the regime joined the protesters. Amidst the chaos international players entered the field backing up the newly formed political movements.

In the end, the sheer size and inability of the newly risen political activist leaders thwarted them to make a unified claim, uniting not only the political movements together but also uniting them to the public. Their overconfident demands and their lack of organizational resources made them easily swiped away from the playing board and into the mouldy cellars of the fortress.
Still, Ne Win stepped down and the sceptre was taken over by a new military government under the name of State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) framing themselves as the bringers of order and justice, saviours of the nation, and promising eventual multi-party elections (Taylor 2009: 389).

What followed was a period darkened by martial law and human rights violations. The sheer size of military troops had tripled to 428.000 by 2005 and the level of repression flowed with a constant pulse (Fink 2001: 3). There are two more events that I would like to highlight as I believe they have made a significant impact on the behaviour of social movements today and are clear examples of the usage of co-optation and repression. These are the 1990 elections and the Saffron Revolution.

When SLORC took control in 1988 they promised elections and to adhere to its results. Through this they hoped to convince both national and international forces about the sincerity of their pledge to start a transition towards democracy, and so regain aid and investment into the country (Yalowitz and Lawday 28 May 1990). Many analysts[5] and SMO leaders[6] I interviewed believe that this is also the reasoning behind the current reform.
When the elections took place in 1990 the National League for Democracy won by a landslide, the results were however annulled. In this case they did not let co-optation take place. Instead of by-elections these were full out country elections and the results would therefore lessen the role of the Military, weakening its power. Although similar to now, the Constitution would still provide a large base of leverage for the Military. In the end, in stead of the promised mechanism of co-optation they resorted to the usage of the mechanism repression. Student movements, which had been active in

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5   See (Steinberg 5 December 2011); (HRW 4 November 2011); (Price December 2011)
6   Author's interview on 8 April 2012 with Oo Aung, political analyst for the British Council.
    Author's interview on 14 April 2012 with Tar Zin Oo, head of Activista Myanmar.
    Author's interview on 18 May 2012 with Soe (pseudonym), member of the executive board of Generation Wave.
    Author's interview on 18 May 2012, with Xiao (pseudonym), member of the executive board of Generation Wave.

the 8888 Uprising, were unable to reform as universities were intermittently closed down between 1991 and 1994 (Taylor 2009: 423). This was accompanied by an increase of monitory tools, like the Military Intelligence service which also had spies in the form of University personnel.

The trend of student and youth movements waned in the decade to come. A clear example of the weakening of their collective action frame can be seen at Saffron Revolution in 2007, which was triggered by the doubling of fuel prices and the persistence of human rights violations. It were not youngsters that initiated or maintained this revolt, but Buddhist monks, hence the name 'Saffron' Revolution. People were hopeful that the monks could achieve where students had failed: true democratic reform, as the Generals claimed to be devout buddhists (Rogers 2008: 115). The monks urged the authorities to change the economic situation and lower the fuel prices to their normal amount. They also demanded the release of political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, and most importantly that they'd enter into "a dialogue with democratic forces for national reconciliation immediately" as to resolve the crisis, and to elevate the suffering of the people (Gil 2008: 10). Their demands were met with violent repression. Dozens of monks were killed, while countless others disappeared after Military raids, or by fleeing the borders to Thailand (Burma VJ).

In accordance with the 2008 Constitution general elections were held in November 2010. The National League for Democracy, who boycotted the elections, condemned the elections as unfair. A narrative supported by Western States. The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), a party supported by the Military Junta, won. In March 2011 the new, and acclaimed, civil-government took office. Many were sceptic about the democratic reform plans of the new President Thein Sein, but a new political space seemed to have opened, which I will explore in this thesis.

The last five decades have set the tone for the behaviour of social youth movements today. Denied co-optation and especially repression have increased the costs of participation for both the organisers as well as its audience. It has influenced which frames can be built and how effective they are. It has impacted the current strategies, goals and achievements. It is with this knowledge that I can continue on to how these mechanisms are at play today and how they influence other mechanisms, which operate in this high-capacity, low-democracy regime.

1.1 Repression

Often the past gives inspiration to future generations. The reflexive power of mobilisation therefore usually "sheds light on why structurally disadvantaged groups (those who score low on all 'rebellion factors') mobilize for collective action: because of the mere knowledge that others have successfully done it before them" (Demmers 2012: 92). In this case however, it sheds light on the cautionary steps taken by social movement organisations in promoting accountable governance, as they know that 'others' have been largely unsuccessful in obtaining this goal. The repressive actions of the government "increase[d] the cost – actual or potential – of an actor's claim making" (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 215).

Social movement organisations do not only look back, but also look around and ahead as they try to gauge the power disparities between themselves and the government and so decide which path to take forward, which is why I will focus on the November 2010 elections onwards (King 2007: 115).

Since the installation of the civil government in March 2011 there is no denying that levels of repression have dwindled on some fronts. One only has to walk through the streets of Yangon to be able to observe it. In March 2012, weeks before the by-elections, taxi drivers spoke openly about their hopes for the future. Stickers, flags, posters, t-shirts, mugs, buttons, baseball-caps of the NLD, Aung San Suu Kyi and General Aung San could be seen everywhere[7], while these were forbidden before January 2012 (Gray 19 June 2012). Stickers of the Myanmar flag were torn off cars and replaced by the familiar red and gold peacock. I attended a revolution themed film festival[8], went to various art exhibitions, which raised awareness on the human rights violations happening in the North East, joined a NLD rally, and openly raised my beer in cheers with activists in a street bar to the downfall of the regime. Labour unions are allowed to form once more, as well as strikes and peaceful demonstrations. New press freedom laws are being developed and according to government officials they will give Myanmar citizens the highest level of press freedom rivalling that of Western states (Pitman 29 February 2012).

The picture I have just sketched looks like the ending off a fantasy novel where all in the land rejoice as the mighty army is defeated and the people live happily ever after enjoying their newly gained freedom. This is close to the image portrayed by international media and foreign

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7   Author's own observations in Yangon in February and March 2012.
8   Both the Revolution Film Festival and my participation at a NLD rally were part of my first internship and took place between the 20th and 25th of February 2012 in Yangon.

advisors. President Obama stated that the country has made a "significant progress along the path to democracy" (Spetalnick 11 July 2012). In actuality, those involved in social movements are waiting for the other shoe to drop. State repression never left. The watchtower might have gotten a newly coloured facade, some flower beds and a group of political actors representing itself as a civil government, but behind the scenes the military is still heavily involved. This can be linked to what Sharp calls the mechanism of *accommodation,* which Shock in his book defines as: "the government grants concessions to the challengers even though it is not converted to the challengers' part of view, is not forced to concede by the challengers' actions, and has the capacity to continue the struggle" (2011: 41). This way the government keeps the upper hand, is able to portray a level of fairness, and can boost its international image (Sharp 2012: 55). Furthermore repressive conditions do not solely constitute of violent attacks against protesters, which are clearly visible, but also include "policies that limit democracy organizers access to new recruits, information, financial resources, and support from the population" (Beatty 2011: 5). In Myanmar these conditions include a still active censorship board and the non-allowance of peaceful demonstrations before December 2011. However shifts are taking place in the repressive conditions in Myanmar. One of the most positively acclaimed changes is that peaceful demonstration are now allowed by law if approval is sought five days before hand and consequently approved. This law was approved days before the arrival of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in what was to become the 'go-ahead' signal for renewed foreign relations with not only the United States, but with the European Union as well (BBC 3 December 2011). In the next paragraph I will analyse how this seemingly lessening of repressive levels turned into a tool of repression reminiscent of the 8888 Uprising by taking the example of the current conflict between Buddhist extremist and a group of stateless Muslims.

1.1.1 A Fragile State in Transition

The path towards democratisation is often a violent one as is obvious by studying Western Europe's history, as well as recent events in Myanmar. When a few decades ago it was ordered that the walls, surrounding the fortress, would remain, the land within it was divided in various divisions and states some with higher levels of autonomy than others. Within one of these areas, Rakhine state, live the Rohingya's (stateless Muslims), who are not recognized by the government and have been in conflict with other inhabitants for decades. In the beginning of June 2012 it was reported by

national news agents that a Buddhist woman was raped and murdered by three Rohingya's, who are to date not caught (DVB 4 June 2012; Irrawaddy 5 June 2012). The news spread like wildfire and retaliation actions began: ten Muslim pilgrims travelling in a bus were beaten to dead, hundreds of Buddhist homes were set on fire, within days one retaliation had followed the other. Nonviolent forms of contentious action were also utilized, but they both turned into violent episodes. The first example is when a large group of sympathizers of the deceased Buddhist woman protested peacefully in front of the police office that had failed to apprehend any suspects, the police opened fire on them. Another example was when Muslims held a peaceful demonstration in down-town Yangon they were attacked by Buddhists[9]. In stead of an intervention by the police it were leaders of ABFSU and Generation Wave that managed to arrange a truce. These examples show that the newly received liberty of peaceful protesting brings with it the danger of repression as the current government is unaccustomed to managing these issues in a nonviolent way. It must inform the public on the ground rules of peaceful demonstrations and what the consequences are of crossing these boundaries. If done appropriately it will increase state power and authority in a way which seems accountable and legitimate to all. Instead in June 2012 large parts of the Rakhine state were put into a state of emergency akin to that of 1988 and 2007 as the civil government tried to resolve the religiously framed dispute by force.

I, therefore, suggest that Myanmar is a state in transition towards democratization which brings with it a new political space for contentious performances (King 2007: 117), but also "creates threatening uncertainties for some groups" (Gurr 2007: 146). I will now break this assumption down and analyse how it effects the level of repression and thereby the ability of the non-violent social youth movement for accountable governance to succeed.

There are various definitions of what constitutes state fragility:
- "The basic functions of a state are no longer performed" (Zartman 1995: 5).
- "The inability to maintain monopoly of the internal means of violence" (Ignatieff 2002: 117).
- "A low-income country with that has a CPIA score of 3.0 or less" (Baliamoune-Lutz and McGullivrey 2011: 33)

When looking at the State of Myanmar it is clear that it would fit all three definitions. Although

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9 Author's own observations in down-town Yangon on the 5th of June 2012.

Zartman's might be problematic when engaging in a discussion of what constitutes as 'basic functions'. In Myanmar, the colonial background and thereby the artificially constructed boundaries by the British, the lack of societal cohesion, and the stage of juridicial, economic and political developments form the backdrop of their state fragility. This forms a problem when becoming a state in transition towards democracy, as this backdrop forms the key to the political trajectory of the state. Especially, since I believe that the State has embarked on this transition prematurely. According to Mansfield and Snyder this is dangerous when the present political institutions are too fragile to make democracy work (2007: 161). A state in transition, therefore, brings with it instability, making it hard to gauge governmental response on ones contentious performances, and so the level of repression one may face. For social movements this means that the 'durable' opportunity factor of the character of the state seem to have become a 'transient' factor, as the character of the state is framed to have shifted (Gurr 2007: 144). According to Tarrow these "changes in the political opportunity structure create incentives for collective action" (1994: 4). However, when interviewing leaders of social movement organisations[10] they all stated that they did not believe the political change was real and had therefore not adopted a new strategy. When questioning them further it became clear that things HAD changed as they had adopted a new set of contentious performances and thus verified Tarrow's analysis. They can now operate out in the open, utilize government property (like public parks), hand out flyers, wear symbols, gather in groups, wave flags, and perform contentious performances that challenge the state, albeit with caution and mainly indirectly. Instead of performing in secret, like spraying graffiti in the night or spreading flyers and then run away. As King states it is the perception, or misperception, of power disparities that counts and makes belligerents chose a certain path (2007: 117). In this case the methods have changed, but due to the chaos caused by the transition process the social movement organisations I interviewed have difficulty gauging the current repression levels and thus use the political space fully. In stead their newly gained freedom has them hopping from one issue to the next, while new organisations appear with rapid speed. This effects their mobilisation opportunities, as I will discuss in the next chapter.

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10   Author's interview on 20 February 2012 with Than Oo (pseudonym), ex-political prisoner and former secretary of ABFSU.
    Author's interview on 14 April 2012 with Tar Zin Oo, head of Activista Myanmar.
    Author's interview on 18 May 2012 with Soe, member of the executive board of Generation Wave.
    Author's interview on 18 May 2012 with Xiao, member of the executive board of Generation Wave.
    Author's interview on 20 May 2012 with Stephin (pseudonym), member of the exiled central board of ABFSU.

Indirectly the level of repression is linked to their goal of accountable governance. Their contentious performances can be seen as a way to test the waters and so measure the progress made. When looking at their work from this perspective this is by itself one of the main achievements of social youth movement for accountable governance. They have come a long way and will, before long, have increased their level of leverage and resilience to repression. If they manage to change their strategic approach, understand the obstacles in their way and build up their alliances they will be able to stand more strongly against the repressive mechanism deployed by the state (Aall 2007: 487).

1.2 Co-optation

As explained in the introduction of chapter one co-optation was a mechanism used to settle disputes in the past. The allowance of the NLD to participate both in the 2010 elections (which they boycotted) and in the 2012 by-elections (which they entered) is the most visible form of co-optation today and can be linked to the achievements of non-violent social movements in both a positively and negatively way:

First there is the positive role of ABFSU. This student organisation has always had a close connection to the NLD and the current NLD peacock flag is a tribute to this collaboration and the role students played in the 8888 Uprising[11]. Since its official formation in this particular format in 1988 the ABFSU (then known as the All Burma Students Democratic Front) often had to dissolve due to high levels of repression, but still continuously showed its support through public statements and performances. In 1991, a time of severe repression, they held a demonstration for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, the reestablishment of student unions, and the formation of a civil-government[12]. They believe that the NLD is the best force to initiate democratic reform as '[political] organisations, like student organisations, train [civil society] to try to get democratic habits. We train students [...] to become future politicians'[13]. Through this collaboration active citizenship is promoted, which is an important basis for the democracy process and prudent for a repeated victory for the NLD in 2015. It is also a sign that social movements in Myanmar are

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11 Author's interview on the 20 February 2012 with Than Oo, ex-political prisoner and former secretary of ABFSU.
12 ABFSU, unknown. *Burmese Student Movement: Very Brief History of Student Movement.* [online] Available at: http://abfsu.net/?page_id=3
        [Accessed on 12 March 2012].
13 Author's interview on the 20 February 2012 with Than Oo, ex-political prisoner and former secretary of ABFSU.
    [Clarification words added by author] [removed part as interviewee struggled to find accurate wording in English]

incorporating non-coercive powers not only into their regional, but also into their national strategies and so force a change into their own society (Aall 2007: 490). Another positive effect is that the credibility of ABFSU has increased, thereby lowering their chance of drowning in the 'paradox of plenty'. However the idolatry of Aung San Suu Kyi currently still marginalises their position as both the national and international community focus on her, instead of the whole democratic opposition (Lauras 10 July 2012).

The participation of the NLD in the by-elections brought with it a feeling of exclusion for those members of the 88 and 07 Generation just released from prison. These groups, which are basically clusters of people actively engaged in protests at a certain period in time, are highly respected in Myanmar society. The Generation groups are however scattered, some just released from prison, others in exile, and yet others have started a family and have withdrawn from the political sphere. As they are hold in such high regard an interviewee explained to me that members of the 88 Generation expected to have automatic access to the NLD[14]. Their goal of co-optation however failed as, like any other, they had to go through a formal application process. They re-formulated their goal and now aim to form their own party. My interviewee, an advisor of the British Council, which aims at strengthening the 88 Generation as part of the movement for accountable governance, told me the following on this:

'I advised them not to do so. We currently don't have enough capacity, human resources, to run the country. If we have two or three democratic parties they will all be incomplete soccer teams. Only when a soccer team is complete, with all positions filled with a good player, can you compete with others. Right now we don't even have one complete team!'[15].

While this advise is plausible, it should not be forgotten that the general elections are three years from now. When only the NLD would enter as a non-ethnic democratic party, wouldn't that defy the purpose of democratic elections? It cannot be expected that all parties have members that know the ins and outs of politics, but is that even the case in democratic Western States right now?

The 88 Generation sees accountable governance through the lens of inclusion and wants to be a positive force of change. As the main players are now the NLD and the Union Solidarity and

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14 Author's interview on 8 April 2012 with Oo Aung, political analyst for the British Council.
15 Ibid.

Development Party[16] this co-optation is quite exclusive, forcing them to take a backseat. As civilians become more actively involved, through for example the ABFSU or BC trainings, more players will enter the political arena wanting a slice of the power.

Co-optation can be viewed as a form of soft power: "the ability to influence others by attraction rather than coercion or payments" (Nye 2007: 389). Perhaps by implementing the 88 Generation within the NLD they would have both strengthened their political party, the social movement for accountable governance and avoid problems in 2015.

When viewed from a national and international community perspective this form of soft power is attributed as a positive sign of change for the civil-government, increasing its legitimacy as it incorporated Aung San Suu Kyi and her party, a former excluded political actor, into its centre of power (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 215). Co-optation challenges systemic relations and therefore fills a gab that public dissent alone cannot tackle. The creation of this alternative structure, especially after fair 2015 elections, will be able to resist corruption and dismantle destructive existing institutions (Shock 2011: 45). In Myanmar this challenge of systemic relations was shown through the NLD's electoral victory in Naypyidaw, the political capitol. Active since 2005, this brand new fortified seat of government with its broad lanes and flashy hotels, is the paragon of power of the Military Junta. The NLDs victory in this particular city can be perceived as a sign of weakening of the central authority.

Since July 2012, Naypyidaw is officially the home of the NLD Ministers of Parliament, which clearly shows the duality of co-optation. On the one hand their presence challenges the civil government to continue its transition of democratization, on the other hand the MPs face the challenge of being viewed as part of a corrupt system. There is therefore also a danger of linking oneself too much to this co-optation. The NLD won forty-three out of forty-five seats on the first of April 2012, but these are only forty-three seats out of 664 and has little power to influence the decision-making process as I will further elaborate in the next chapter (Petty 20 March 2012).

Furthermore democratization in way of greater political participation through co-optation does not seem to currently mean that ethnic separatism is being appropriately handled (Ayoob 2007:

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16 Military run party, currently in office.

105-106). Co-optation has had no success in diffusing ethnic tensions (yet). Social movements should therefore heed the well concealed trap of procedural and electoral democracy and in stead focus on the creation of "constitutional and judicial constraints that would prevent majorities from riding roughshod over minority opinions and interests" (Ayoob 2007: 101). Once again this goes back to building political institutions that are capable of providing a peaceful transition towards democracy.

In short, the mechanism co-optation has provided the social movement for accountable governance with more visibility and legitimacy, and a profound first step in reaching its goal as it helped achieve co-optation. The current co-optation brings with it an exclusive aspect that has set back the goals of the Generation groups. They therefore have to reconsider their goals to be able to achieve them. The duality of this mechanism must be noted as it paints a picture of a transitionary state well on its way towards democracy, while its building upon quick sand. The 2015 elections will be the true test of its weak foundations.

Chapter Two: Framing

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17 7) Ben, 2008. *Steampunk Goggles: Titanium and Variable-Aperture Goggles.* [electronic print] Available at: http://www.likecool.com/Steampunk_Goggles--Accessories--Style.html [Accessed on 26 July 2012]

In this chapter I will analyse the *collective action frames* deployed by the non-violent social movement organisations which I researched (ABFSU, Generation Wave, Activista, Grow and 88 Generation) and how these frames link to their goal of accountable governance, or failure thereof. A frame "refers to an interpretative schema that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within ones present or past environment" (Benford and Snow 1992: 136). More easily explained, a frame can be seen as a pair of magical, or high-tech, goggles, which give elements in- and outside a certain space a special meaning, which is negotiated by the parties involved: the wearer, who has his or her own specific background; the designer, who controls the glasses through which the wearer looks; and the surroundings, which form the basis of the input the wearer gets and the designer can manipulate. A frame cannot be created out of thin air due to a wearer's awareness of its surroundings. The first chapter therefore presented an array of historic and cultural elements of which a frame can be moulded. Of course there are many more aspects, some of which are difficult to observe by an outsider. I will therefore not focus on all the specific encoded elements, but on those aspects that generally assist the formation of salient frames.

So now I have explained, in brief, what constitutes a frame the next question is: what happens if you want to negotiate the same kind of understanding for a big group of people? This means you will have to construct the goggles in such a way that the same input creates the same output for different kind of people. This is quite the challenge in a large multi-ethnic society with big cleavages between rich and poor, as I will discuss below. Let's, for now, say that the designers manage to finalise the process and want to take it one step further by not only deploying the same interpretative schema, but also have this schema mobilise people to act. This is what is called a collective action frame. Sidney Tarrow identifies collective action frames as those frames that "[...] redefine social conditions as unjust and intolerable with the intention of mobilizing potential participants, which is achieved by making appeals to perceptions of justice and emotionality in the minds of individuals" (1998: 111). The social movement organisations I researched all try to mobilise people to demand accountable governance in an inclusive manner. This means that they try to mobilise people with different backgrounds to perceive the current situation as unjust and strive for accountability. To be able to analyse the collective action frame in a sharp and comprehensive manner I will focus on two mechanisms: *boundary formation* and *attribution of similarity* (Tilly and Tarrow 2007).

Boundary formation explains how boundaries are shaped between different parties. This is of course difficult when wanting to reach such an intangible goal as accountable governance in a

diverse society. Still, this intangibility brings with it an all inclusive aspect, which can unite several organisations under one large umbrella and so reach a wider audience. The mechanism attribution of similarity shows how similar frames can encourage groups to work together as they recognize that they fall within the same group, like a social movement for accountable governance.

2.1 Boundary Formation

The mechanism *boundary formation* comes into being through the "creation of an us-them distinction between two political actors" (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 215). This mechanism and its definition reveal a high mountain social movement organisations have to climb when wanting to encourage active citizenship due to their all inclusive strategy. I have structured this paragraph by breaking up Tilly and Tarrow's definition into two questions: 'Who is us?' and 'Who is them?'. Through this structure I will discuss the difficulties the social movement organisations for accountable governance face when trying to mobilise their audience for collective action.

2.1.1 Who is us?

Even though the non-violent youth social movement organisations I interviewed all focus on a specific part of accountable governance they all have one thing in common: inclusiveness for their audience. They do not focus on a particular ethnic, gender or religious target group. Their only specific boundary is their focus on youth (aged 18 to 35), both in their audience as well as in their organisation itself. The question now arises whether age can establish a level of salience of group identity necessary to deploy a collective action frame and so mobilise youths from all over the country (Gurr 2007)? In this paragraph I will analyse three forms of highly interconnected needs that can create a collective action problem related to the formation of 'us':

1. Differing communal identities (acceptance);
2. Differing physical needs (security);
3. Different lack of participation in political, market and decision-making institutions (access).

(Demmers 2012: 80)

The first element, differing communal identities, becomes all the more clear when looking at the inhabitants of the 'mighty fortress' of Myanmar. A communal group identity encompasses a

"common descent, shared historical experiences, and valued cultural traits, including shared belief" (Gurr 2007: 131). With more than fifty-four million inhabitants (CIA 2012), over four big religious groups (Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Animist) and at least eight main ethnic groups, which can be divided in approximately 135 sub-groups or races (Smith 1994: 43) it is hard to discern one common identity. The Bamar (Burman), the largest ethnic group, which holds around sixty-eight per cent of the population (CIA 2012) is viewed as a prerogative group as Bamar hold the highest positions in both the government as well as the army (Mydans 12 January 2012). Ethnicity plays therefore an important role in today's society, which dates back to the late 1900s when the monarchs were identified as ethnically and culturally Bamar and "led communities and individuals to accept the state's definition of their cultural orientation" (Taylor 2009: 25). Framing in ethno-cultural terms would therefore be difficult when one wants to mobilise youth from the entire country as it would not be culturally resonant (Benford and Snow 2000: 621).

The ABFSU does not frame through a communal identity perspective as a whole, but through the element of shared historic experiences of students. They have made their own timeline on their website, which constructs student life from 1876 to 2007 and ABFSUs involvement in it[18]. It encodes every negative action done by the government and immediate counteraction of the student community led by the ABFSU. The question is whether this single element of communal identity is enough to create a sustained social movement? Looking at Myanmar history we can learn that student activists, especially those from the 88 movement, have transformed alongside the political structure as they have been active for over two decades. The credibility of these frame articulators is therefore strong, which is an important aspect for frame resonance (Benford and Snow 2000: 619). Their weakness however is that many student leaders have been in captivity for years and are now being trained by institutions, like the British Council, to re-take their proactive role in society. ABFSU itself is now an exiled organisation, making it difficult to maintain the constant involvement it had before.

What a large part of the youth in Myanmar do share is the second element of group salience: a constant lack of access to political, market and decision-making institutions for the common citizen.

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18 ABFSU, unknown. *A Concise History.* [online] Available at: http://abfsu.net/?page_id=2
[Accessed on 12 March 2012].
This includes the previous formats of ABFSU, like the Rangoon Universities Union (1920), All Burma Students Union (1935), All Burma Student Democratic Front (1988).

There are many examples I could use to underscore this non-participatory aspect. I will, however, focus on access to the current political and decision-making institutions as the international community has framed it as true groundbreaking process, while on the grassroots level little to no change is being felt yet[19]. The experiential commensurability of this frame therefore resonates with its targets (Benford and Snow 2000: 619).

So what about the 2012 by-elections? Did this not create a new politically participatory sphere? Yes, it did to a certain degree, but as long as the 2008 Constitution is still in place the role of the civilians in the government is small. The Constitution creates a structure enabling Military dominance and impunity. Many Ministry positions and twenty-five percent of both Houses of Parliament are reserved for security force personnel, which culminates in 166 seats (ICTJ 2012: 3). The by-elections filled forty-five seats out of a total of 664 seats, of which the NLD won forty-three (Petty 20 March 2012). The remaining 455 are mainly ex-military personnel and civil service officials (Ghai 2008: 21). As seventy-five per cent of Parliament needs to agree on any amendment, this makes a structured path towards democracy all but impossible (ICTJ 2012: 3). Using the 2008 Constitution as a clear sign of unaccountable governance and demanding rigorous changes would be a tangible goal and promote attribution of similarity, not only between youth social movements, but across many groups in society.

From the five social movement organisations I researched only one mentioned this goal: ABFSU. In a statement of their annual meeting in March 2012 they declared the following:

"Now is the time for the Burmese to strive for changing the 2008 Constitution. In these attempts, all the democratic and ethnic groups both inside and outside Burma are using several tactics according to their status quo. We, ABFSU-FAC, declare that we will work harmoniously with the Burmese democratic movement in line with the Five Principles of ABFSU. We support and work for the current mobilizing of student unions in Burma, democracy, peace, national solidarity and the development of our country including the most challenging task of reviewing and changing the 2008 Constitution."

(Statement 1/2012: 23 March 2012)

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19 Concluded from author's survey distributed under 25 politically and socially active youth on the social and political situation before and after the 2010 elections between April and June 2012.

However in May the ABFSU stated that their current activities included the welcoming home of released prisoners, the (re-)formation of student unions, the formation of several committees, trying to release more political prisoners, a signature campaign to release Rev. Shwe Nya WA, a campaign for free education, and a money-raising activity for IDPs in Kachin State (Statement 2 May 2012). Not only are these activities attached to a variety of goals, they are interest based for most of their mobilisation targets and not an non-negotiable need. Although each goal alone would find salience through centrality, experiential commensurability and narrative fidelity with a specific target group, by mixing them all up there is no frame consistency needed for the credibility of their framing for all students in Myanmar (Benford and Snow 2000).

The last possible collective action problem as part of salience of identity or 'Who is us?' is the differing physical needs within the country. There are many security issues that differ between the urban and rural community, but there also those that form a threat to all due to the lack of properly functioning institutions. A good example of this is natural disasters. Almost every year Myanmar is hit by a severe tsunami killing hundreds or even tens of thousands of people along the coast line, specifically the Irrawadday division. There is no governmental warning system in place. This responsibility has been taken up by LNGOs and INGOs. When an international warning reached the ActionAid office during Thingyan (Waterfestival) me and three other colleagues needed to contact our field offices throughout to area to warn people[20]. The system was quite primitive with people having to drive on motorcycles from village to village. There are no shelters or escape routes, so when a tsunami strikes the only chance to survive is to go to higher ground. Now in this case mainly rural areas are effected, but the country is also plagued by cyclones, the most damaging one was Cyclone Nargis in 2008, which also destroyed big parts of Yangon[21]. The social movement organisations I interviewed had not yet tackled this issues as part of their framework for

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20 Author's own observation on 11 April 2012.

21 On May 2nd 2008 cyclone Nargis struck in the south of Myanmar, in the Irrawaddy Delta area. Over 138.000 were reported to have died, while at least 2.4 million were directly affected. While this is one of the worst cyclones that has struck Myanmar, many of the deaths were 'second wave' fatalities as they died of malnutrition and diseases in the weeks that followed. In the first couple of weeks 100.000s of people had no shelter or drinking water. Rise prices rose with seventy per cent and for example ten liter water bottles rose from 30 cent to 4 dollars within four hours after the event. The Military Junta obstructed the work of international aid by not allowing them access first to the entire country and later to the most affected areas (EARARM 2009; WHO 19 May 2008; OCHA 2010).

accountable governance, instead focussing on ethnic conflict, food justice or land grabbing.

So are the physical needs attached to these issues also similar from site to site? No, I don't believe this to be the case. Let's take the goal of Generation Wave, the ending of the Kachin conflict, as an example. As an ordinary youth of Yangon the war in the north-east of Myanmar does not affect your daily routine in any way. Your physical needs do not include safety from land mines, gunfire, acute poverty, rape, forced displacement, etc. Still, the leaders of Generation Wave claimed that they focus on youth in general: 'Our audience is young people, not only specific groups, but all youth in our country'[22]. As there have only been cease-fires in Chin, Mon, Karen, Kayah and Shan State since 2012, this would mean that many youth there understand the physical needs of the Kachin people (Mydans 2012). Whether or not this means they would be easier to mobilise is besides the point as I have observed (through interviews, surveys and backtracking their activities) that the organisations mainly operate in urban areas where no conflict is taking place, or has taken place in recent years. The question now arises whether individuals can only be mobilised in satisfaction of their own personal needs or need for identity, or whether it is the talent of leaders to mobilise support (Jabri 1996: 23)?

In answer to this question I will continue with the example of Generation Wave and their goal of peace in the Kachin State, as I believe this to be a goal which a) focuses on a specific ethnic group and so increasing communal difference, b) does not effect the access to political, market or decision-making institutions to most outside of the Kachin State, and c) has little direct influence on the physical needs of most youth outside of the State. This goal could therefore create a collective action problem.

So how does Generation Wave try to overcome this? Their solution is two-fold:

1. Low participatory threshold;
2. Framing techniques of leaders.

Their current campaign to end war Kachin State has the slogan "Shoot roses, not bullets". This campaign takes place in various cities throughout Myanmar, but I was only able to observe their activities in Yangon. It started out as an awareness raising campaign. People were made aware that a bullet costs X Kyats. As the war in the north has been going on since 1962 (with a cease-fire of

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22 Author's interview on 18 May 2012 with Soe, member of the executive board of Generation Wave.

seventeen years) this amounts in approximately X Lekh Kyats. Money that could have been spend on infrastructure[23]. In effect, they framed (and so simplified) a situation far removed from the beds of most youth to something that directly effects them: infrastructure. This skill is an important form of power (King 2007: 121). Infrastructure is of course something material and therefore an interest and not a need, especially for those living in urban areas where a moderately functioning infrastructure is already in place. The construction of a new meaning by encoding the Kachin War as something affecting every youth's needs, and their right to accountable governance is therefore too weak to create a profound resonance of the frame (Tarrow 1994; 1998) (Benford and Snow 2000).

Still, through the pragmatic choice of non-violent contentious performances - in this case the spreading of stickers, leaflets and information through public gatherings – the cost for participation is low. Furthermore these activities built confidence amongst the audience and provide the building blocks for public acts of dissent necessary to show that active citizenship is power (Sharp 2012: 92). In this way they reinforce the self-awareness of their target's political voice, which is an important step towards accountable governance and democratization. Also, the participation of the entire population is not necessary to draw the attention of the regime, or to built a set of goggles for the international community.

2.1.2 Who is them?

We now know that it is possible to formulate a form of 'us'. The social identity that 'us' common youth have despite of our communal differences includes similar lack of access to political, market and decision-making institutions and psychical needs. Still, the organisations I have researched seemed to have failed to make a strategic analysis of where to begin, or at least which tangible goals can unite their target group most efficiently and thereby lower the threshold for collective action as described in the previous paragraph (Sharp 2012: 65).

So who do social movement organisations I researched portray as the force that needs to be 'rebelled' against? What is the collective understanding of 'them' (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 79)? To keep my argument cohesive I will continue with the example of Generation Wave. In the previous paragraph I discussed the first part of their campaign, namely the awareness raising of the public

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23 Author's interview on 18 May 2012 with Xiao, member of the executive board of Generation Wave.

about the Kachin conflict and how it effects their lives indirectly, along with appealing to the moral sensibilities of their audience. In this conflict there are several political and military parties involved. There is the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the State Military, and the State itself. Of course there are also smaller players, but Generation Wave pleads for talks between the State and KIO, drawing a line between the ethnic group and the State and framing the State as the one at fault. The State should control the actions of its Military and enter peace talks again; taking on its role as a civil government on its way to democracy[24]. This perspective is backed by both the national and international media as they reported that it was the State Military that broke the seventeen years of cease-fire on the ninth of June 2011, due to the Myintsone Dam controversy[25] (BBC 14 June 2012; NY Times 15 June 2012; Der Spiegel 29 March 2012; DVB 30 April 2012). It must be noted that the Myanmar State media seldom reports on the fighting.

So what is the role of the international media in the boundary formation framed by Generation Wave when specifically looking at the 'them' identity? In the framing process, the designers of the magical goggles are on a two-way street with many other designers, including so-called outside forces. They share information and ideas, upscaling each others creativity or crushing (test) models. When ones frame perseveres this can be defined as a form of power: "the power to manage the way in which the conflict is perceived by outsiders: journalists, policymakers, humanitarian workers, foreign publics" (King 2007: 121). In this case the KIO and the KIA mainly hold this power. Though some newspapers describe them as rebels many focus on the human rights violations done by both the Military and China (BBC 14 June 2012; NY Times 15 June 2012). Stopping these violations is an important task for a State stating to be in transition towards democracy. The counter-framing of the government through their mouthpiece The New Light of Myanmar in which it accused the KIA of killing civilians, including a child, has failed to enter the international narrative (DVB 3 May 2012).

But can we assume that national and international journalists and researchers influence the Myanmar population and thereby enforce the 'them' identity framed by Generation Wave? Due to high levels of (self)censorship, few State publications, and only a small group of internet users their

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24 Author's interview on 18 May 2012 with Soe, member of the executive board of Generation Wave.
25 The Myintsone Dam was a China-backed project, which would create hundreds of IDPs and subtract resources out of the area.

role is relatively small. Furthermore when requested to rate ones level of trust in journalistic publications in a survey I held under twenty-five activists they rated them (at an average) of two out of seven[26]. Of course this sample group is too small to make any generalizing conclusions, but it does reveal how a group of randomly selected youngsters perceive the national and international media, which might give an indication of how it is perceived state-wide.

In this case, the media and international reports are a small movement attribute. It is the political context, as described in the first chapter, which has such an impact on day-to-day life that it forms the solid basis for the 'them' identity. Most interviewees stated that little of the democratization process could be felt on the grassroots level[27]. It are the everyday happenstances of political repression and injustice that have solidified the 'them' identity instead.

So how did Generation Wave utilize this identity? The cultural process of framing a situation as unjust or unacceptable was started with awareness raising, a process of identity formation and last the construction of solidarity (Shock 2011: 13-14). A good example of how Generation Wave tried to construct solidarity was their kick-off event for the next step: collecting 676767 signatures. These 676767 stood for the age of Aung San Suu Kyi and the age of President Thein Sein. To increase their target mobilisation and to deepen the boundary formation their opening event at which I was present went as follows[28]:

The audience entered a large, low-lit room with a big stage. Behind the stage was a large screen. When the audience was inside the doors were closed and the room turned dark. Music in the form of a war drum was played, like one was marching across a battlefield. Photos and short film clips were shown of battlefield brutalities. Afterwards many prominent activists took the stage imploring the audience of the gravity of the situation both through speech, poetry and song. These were recently released political prisoners of the 88 Generation, famous 88 student leaders like Min Ko Naing, a well-known HipHop artist who is also involved with the NLD and is a Generation Wave

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26 Concluded from author's survey distributed under 25 politically and socially active youth on the social and political situation before and after the 2010 elections between April and June 2012. When asked the following question "To what extent do you have trust in the following institutions? 1='not at all'; 7='a great deal', 8='I don't know', 9 = 'Refuse to answer', 4 = 'Neutral'. You can choose 2,3,4,5,6 if you believe your opinion lies in the middle"

27 Author's interview on 8 April 2012 with Oo Aung, political analyst for the British Council.
Author's interview on 23 March 2012 with Maung Maung, political analyst for ActionAid Myanmar.
Author's interview on 18 May 2012 with Soe, member of the executive board of Generation Wave.
Author's interview on 20 February 2012 with Than Oo, ex-political prisoner and former secretary of ABFSU.

28 The kick-off of the 'Ever Peace 67' campaign was on the 25th of May at the Royal Rose Restaurant in Yangon. There were around 100 participants consisting of well-known political activists, musicians, celebrities and various other artists and of course Myanmar youth.

alumnus, and many other artists. The frame resonance was thus enforced through empirical credibility and the credibility of their frame articulators. Through this they tried to both implore on the moral sensibilities of their audience as well as give them a chance to empower their political voice via the signing of a petition. They stated that these signatures would go to the President, Aung San Suu Kyi and many international organisations.

Linking 'them' to the unaccountability of 'the State' and giving Aung San Suu Kyi a positive prominent position, does show a form of duality. Aung San Suu Kyi is now part of that governmental system. But fame sells, in that respect Myanmar is no different than any other country. When interviewing a Generation Wave leader he simply stated that by incorporating Aung San Suu Kyi nto their campaign slogan and strategy they would be able to draw a much larger audience[29].

Through the mechanism of boundary formation I have tried to show that identities are infinitely malleable and necessary for collective action (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 81). The social movement for accountable governance has tried to create a boundary between 'us' diverse youth of Myanmar with similar need for accountable governance (albeit on fronts that overlap and fronts that do not) and 'them' the unaccountable government of Myanmar. Boundary formation is an important part of the collective action frame, which is necessary to get people of their balconies and into the streets (Benford and Snow 2000: 616).

In this paragraph I have mainly focussed on Generation Wave so I could explain in more detail who they formed boundaries between and how. Their formation of 'us' is quite weak. They try to fit youth with diverse communal backgrounds into the same goggles and try to direct their view on a cause which is far removed and therefore blurry. In other words the overall experiential commensurability was low, as it did not resonate with their every day experiences (Benford and Snow 2000: 621). The reward sketched is better infrastructure, an interest and not a need.

The 'them' identity has been solidified over the years and is therefore quite strong. The weakness here is that the input of 'them' is so strong, that also with different goggles they are viewed in the same way. The social movement organisations should therefore find a better common ground on which to built an 'us' as to better tie their public to themselves and stop them from shopping around.

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29 Author's interview on 18 May 2012 with Xiao, member of the executive board of Generation Wave.

2.2 Attribution of Similarity

The social movement for accountable governance falls under the return to democracy frame (Noonan 1995). This frame is flexible and inclusive and creates space for movement-specific frames, such as the one for accountable governance (Benford and Snow 2000: 619). Even though the goals of the social movement organisations are diverse the collective action frame fits with the master narrative of the quest for democracy and in this case provides a fruitful ground for collaboration. In this section I will focus on the grassroots level and how the social movement organisations I interviewed identified each other "as falling within the same category as [their] own" and how this influenced their achievements (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 215).

Attribution of similarity can be viewed as an encouragement mechanism necessary to sustain the movement for accountable governance and so stimulate change (Beatty 2011: 54). Since their contentious performances evolve around nonviolent action attribution of similarity can improve the level of soft power by attracting a wider base of support (Popovic et al 2007). Through this they can empower the oppressed by diffusing power via social interaction and thus increase the resonance of their frame (Benford and Snow 1988).

So how is attribution of similarity deployed by the social movement organisations I researched? The mechanism is used in an ad hoc fashion, where organisations only work together if they agree with the other's goal, or are in need of their resources. An example is the 'Food and Nature' awareness raising activity, which saw eleven organisations working together in Peoples Park.[30] All organisations focussed on a different issue. For Activista, INGO ActionAid's youth wing, this was their first public campaign in which they openly worked together with others. Their campaign was on hunger justice. According to Tar Zin Oo the State of Myanmar claims that there is no hunger. However, according to Activista, there are enough cases of (landless) people, who do not have a substantial intake of food per day or a varied enough diet[31]. Activista used flyers, t-shirts, a puppet show, fun pictures – in which participants needed to portray hunger/ feeding the hungry, a quiz, and an information booth to spread awareness. Other groups campaigned for sustainable growth, organic food, overall bio-friendly agriculture and against land-grabbing, through demonstrations of a natural water purification system with charcoal, by selling bio-friendly products and by educating

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30 The event took place on the 25th and 26th of May 2012 in Peoples Park, Yangon. I observed and interviewed people on the 25th of May.

31 Author's interview on 18 April 2012 with Tar Zin Oo, head of Activista Myanmar.

the visitors with the help of posters. Generation Wave used the venue to collect signatures for its 'Ever Peace 67' campaign.

Although all focussed on a different aspect of food and nature this event shows a form of consensus mobilisation through which all tried to obtain support for their view on this part of accountable governance (Klandermans 1984: 586-587). But can change be achieved through this form of collaboration? I do not believe this to be the case. A theme like 'Food and Nature' is broad. Grow, which is part of Oxfam, had a sign against land-grabbing. This issue is still too sensitive. They were planning on a full-out campaign as soon as the political climate was right[32]. When taking Grow as an example it is clear that they have not formulated any functional objectives yet, which is, according to Peter Ackerman and Christopher Kruegler, prudent for strategic nonviolent action (1994: 24-26). By only hanging up an A4 white sheet of paper with on it the words 'Food Injustice' accompanied by four arrows pointing towards 'land-grabs', 'climate change', 'small scale farming' and 'food price' it is unclear what their angle is. Are they environmentalist wanting to raise awareness about climate change and the consequences thereof? Are they political activists wanting to make people aware of the land-grabbing taking place in the northern states and the role the government plays in it? Because of this it is hard to establish even a 'them' identity. Without a clear goal, which is understood by all parties, they do not have a clear direction and cannot "gauge the extent to which [their] actions are bringing about the desired change, thus permitting an alternation in [their] actions, if necessary" (Shock 2011: 164).

When individual messages are weak it complicates the process of *upward scale shift,* which could create leverage that the social movement currently lacks (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 95). Events in which many organisations collaborate could create a *mediated route* through which not only individuals but organisations themselves are connected and thereby creating a higher level of collective action (Ibid). But is this the case when looking at the collaboration between social movement organisations I researched in Myanmar?

Tilly and Tarrow break upward scale shift down into four elements:

1. "It moves contention beyond its local origins,
2. "touches on the interests of and values of news actors,"
3. "involves a shift of venue to sites where contention may be more or less successful,"
4. "and can threaten other actors or entire regimes" (Ibid).

32 Author's interview on 25 May 2012 with Pwint and San (pseudonyms), leaders of the Grow campaign.

When analysing the collaborations through the mechanism of attribution of similarity it is clear that the first three elements are currently taking place in Myanmar, albeit weakly. Grow was first only active on Facebook[33] where their header states "How can we justify? We need your discussion and ideas!" and their aim is for all to have food. While moving from a virtual world to real life is not part of Tilly and Tarrow's definition of upward scale shift, I believe that this can also be seen as a form of moving forward, thereby falling under the first element. For Activista this is not the case, although it is the first time it shows attribution of similarity it has worked on the local level extensively. It has moved forward to a higher level on an individual scale through its contentious performance of 'Biking for Change', which took place of the 5th of June 2012, World Environment Day. This event had over 200 participants and took place in over six locations throughout the country[34]. A first for Activista. This mediated route was however not linked to any other organisations and therefore does not fall under the mechanism attribution for similarity.

By holding their activity in such a public place, like Peoples Park, they managed to not only inform the public about their cause, but also spread the message that campaigning for a contentious cause is now possible. In this way the activity is not only appealing to new actors content wise, but also through the shaping of a new repertoire of performances, which can be used for emulation.

By bundling their resources they managed to get a permit to perform in Peoples Park. When I was there on Saturday the 25th of May the venue was busy[35]. By choosing a public area they managed to reach an eclectic group of people, whose awareness was raised in a low participatory manner. In this way the shift of venue was a quite successful.

Even though attribution of similarity plays a positive role when looking at shifts of venues and levels of collective action it does not yet aid the element of threatening the regime. The creation of new political space has the Myanmar youth bursting with ideas making them forgo the analytical process of making a coherent strategy and a set of goals that is understood by all parties involved. The lack of leverage, necessary to threaten the current unaccountability of the government, is also still missing. Creating leverage is challenging in the political context of Myanmar where there are small elite divisions, few autonomous institutions, and little effective pressure against the lack of true reform by international players (Shock 2011: 108). However it is necessary to reach the stage of nonviolent coercion. When this mechanism is active "change is achieved against the government's will as a result of the challengers' successful undermining of the government's power, legitimacy, and ability to control the situation through methods of non violent action" (Sharp 2012:

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33 www.facebook.com/groups/growbetter Accessed by Author on 1 June 2012.
34 Author's interview on 14 April 2012 with Tar Zin Oo, head of Activista Myanmar.
35 Based on my observations they were able to reach around 500 people that day as people visited their stands, participated in their games and received flyers with information.

55). Attribution of similarity as part of upward scale shift can make contentious performances so widespread that it is no longer possible to be controlled by the State. The social movement for accountable governance has not yet reached this change of nonviolent coercion, but through their collaboration they are building an infrastructure for accountable governance necessary to promote political change (Chigas 2007: 569).

Chapter Three: Organisation
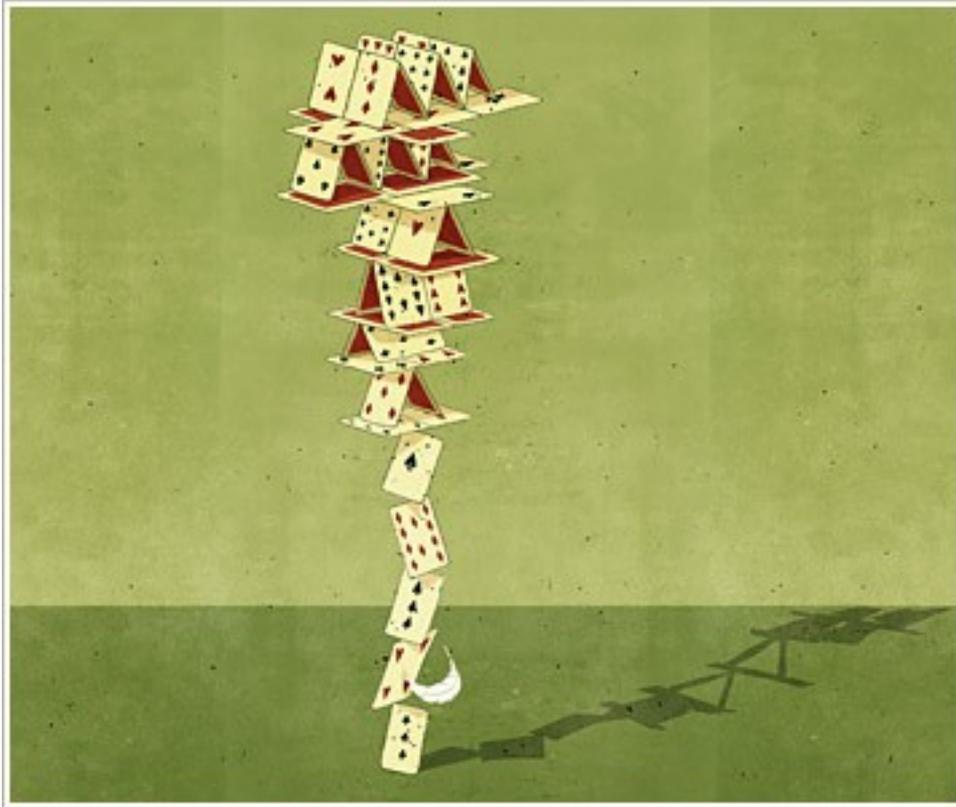
36

36 8) Arts of the Future, 2011. *Stability of the financial system.* [electronic print] Available at: http://artofthefutureofwork.blogspot.nl/ [Accessed on 26 July 2012]

There is a whole world outside of the mighty fortress that cannot be ignored. Remember that I mentioned an active tunnel system beneath the fortress, well this is also used by organisations like the British Council, ActionAid and other transnational actors supporting a democratic transition. Since the installation of the civil government in March 2011 doors have opened above the surface allowing external Western parties willingly into the seemingly closed-off realm. The military junta has always had good contact with countries like China and North-Korea, has membership of economic organisations like the World Trade Organisation and Asian Free Trade Organisation, and has been part of ASEAN since July 1997 (James 2005: 9). In other words, where it appeared to be an interstate affair, there are distinct intrastate elements that cannot be overlooked. In this final chapter I will therefore analyse the organisational structures and resources of the social movement for accountable governance linked to the scope and nature of external ties that help sustain it (King 2007). I will make my analysis from the information gathered from, and thereby the perspective of, Myanmar movement actors and their audience and not from the view of international actors. Future research will be needed to research their reasoning for assisting this movement.

To be able to make this analysis I have once again picked two mechanisms, which I believe are at work and influence the goals and the achievements thereof, of the social movement for accountable governance. These are *certification* and *brokerage* (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 215). By using these two mechanisms I will analyse what role organisational resources and structures play in persuading people to engage in collective action. With resources I mean both tangible, such as financial resources, and intangible assets, like personal skills of organisers. When it comes to structures I include how the organisation itself is built up, as well as the possible larger framework it is attached to and how in that case the same format is deployed in different states. I believe this to be relevant as structure and especially resources are important elements when looking at survival and competing capabilities of social movements. Organisations are the claim-makers and motivators of a movement (Gamson 1975; Staggenborg 1988), if they would fall apart it would be difficult to sustain a movement (Tarrow 1998). In this way this chapter will focus on resource mobilisation, after first having discussed the contextual conditions, and framing processes this is the final element of the political opportunities framework (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald: 1996: 3).

3.1 Certification

Certification is "an external authority's signal of its readiness to recognize and support the existence and claims of a political actor" (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 215). This is currently taking place on both the governmental level as well as on the level of social movements. Western states have certified the civil-government by starting to lift their sanctions and initiate trade opportunities. While this kind of certification has reached the international headlines in last couple of months, certification on the level of social movement organisations has been taking place for a much longer period of time and on a more underexposed level. So in what way did this take place in such a high-capacity, low-democracy regime as Myanmar? In order to answer this question I will analyse the certification of the international actors linked to Generation Wave and ABFSU. By doing this I will explain how this mechanism influenced the achievements of these social movement organisations and thereby the social movement in total.

I will start of with Generation Wave, which (of the organisations I researched) has the most foreign investment opportunities right now. The organisation started out as privately funded group in 2007, with the organisers themselves spending their own money. They got pocket money from their parents and used their own computers and printers to spread their message. After the 2007 revolution they were forced the flee the country and went to Thailand. This is where they met American donors, which from then on financed their projects[37]. Foreign investment on this kind of level is shrouded in secrecy. I discovered it during my interview with a Yangon-based political analyst and could therefore ask more direct questions about it during my interviews with SMO leaders[38]. Still the answers of Generation Wave remained vague when directly asking who their sponsor is. They did indicate that after 2008/2009 they received the first small financial opportunities, which only grew after the installation of the civil-government in 2011. It is not strange that the United States is involved at this level of operations as Hillary Clinton openly acknowledged that she supports "leading through civilian power" (Clinton 2010: 13-24). This emphasis on the promotion of connectivity within local networks and thereby the promotion of civic capacity is an approach which has resonated throughout the twenty-first century (Holliday 2011: 197). The increased financial opportunity meant that Generation Wave could buy a car in 2011,

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37 Author's interview on 18 May 2012 with Soe, member of the executive board of Generation Wave.
38 Author's interview on 25 May 2012 with Maung Maung, political analyst for ActionAid Myanmar.

which in Myanmar always needs to be paid completely in cash with no payment options[39], and rent offices in various states. In return the donors demanded a level of professionalisation. After each activity an evaluative report is requested matching a set guideline, which my interviewee indicated costs a lot of valuable time. There are furthermore restrictions on what kind of activities they can do. Graffiti, for example, a method of nonviolent action utilized quite often to spread a message to a large audience in high-capacity low-democratic regimes, is not allowed (Sharp 2012: 124). The Generation Wave leader I interviewed indicated that in these cases, they simply do not report back to their donor and use their own funding to buy spray paint[40]. Another form of professionalism was requested in their organising structure. They have now fifteen central executive committee members, who work full time and are Yangon-based. When they initiate a campaign they form a new committee consisting of five members of the afore mentioned central committee. These five are responsible for the entire campaign and are assigned different roles: media, finance, network, operations and logistics. They also lead big groups of volunteers that help out at campaign activities [41].

So did certification play a role in the recent achievements of Generation Wave? Yes, I believe it did. In a way it forced Generation Wave to make a strategic analysis on various fronts. By reporting back in an evaluating fashion it learned to how to make a clearly defined goal, which is understood by all parties involved. This gives direction and way to reflect on how and if their actions are bringing the desired change, stimulating alternations in their actions if necessary (Shock 2011: 164) (Sharp 2012: 79). It also made them evaluate the role of external assistance. My interviewee indicated that Generation Wave has rejected several new funding offers due to the extra rules and regulations they require. They want to simply focus on their work alone and have their ideology at heart[42].

Thanks to American funding they were able to open several offices in different cities, making it easier for their contentious performances to spread from site to site and thus stimulate broader social networks. Social networks are vital for collective action as they are "the crucial building blocks of social movements" and thus provide them with a social movement base needed to keep

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39 Author's own observation: As an experiment I tried to buy an eight year old BMW at a local retailer. The price was 100.000 dollar to be paid in cash. When asked about payment options I could pay 95% now, and the other 5% at a later date.
40 Author's interview on 18 May 2012 with Soe, member of the executive board of Generation Wave.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.

them in motion (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 117). As explained in the previous chapter this is not yet happening at large scale, but by having the resources there the threshold to establish a trust network is lowered and broad and equal participation is promoted (Tilly 2004: 18).

There are, however, also various downsides to international financial support. Next to the restrictions put upon them by donors Generation Wave also has to deal with legitimacy issues. In Myanmar there is a tradition of fearing outside interference dating back to the colonial period, during which stable economic growth and political reform was replaced by economic and social competition (Taylor 2009: 148). The colonial period is framed by the Military as the root cause of all problems the State is facing today, due to the divide and rule tactics of the British, their policy of unlimited Indian immigration, and minimal industrial development which merely served foreign interests (Steinberg 2010: 38). More contemporary examples of foreign mistrust are due to mainly Thai and Chinese companies extracting natural resources without any concern for the Myanmar population as they create IDPs by flooding and reaping the lands for their benefits (Waring 17 May 2012). While Myanmar lacks enough electricity to power its country gas is being pumped to Thailand and China. This could be easily converted to electricity and so solve a major point of dispute (Collier 25 May 2012). The same negative feelings are directed towards Western States and their sanctions, who many claim have caused much suffering on the grassroots level and are now only being lifted to exploit Myanmar (DVB 4 July 2012). These sanctions included the withholding of aid money (BBC 23 April 2012). A political analyst I interviewed stated that the SMOs receiving foreign money should be careful about the hidden agendas of their investors. They should ask themselves why do they want to invest in us? And does this create a disadvantage in opportunities for other SMOs[43]? These elements once again go back to the analytical assessment SMOs should make before writing their strategy. When questioning Generation Wave about this they answered me that their donors simply wanted democracy in the country, which might be a right assessment or an underdeveloped analysis[44].

ABFSU used to receive financial and human resources from the British Council until 2011 when the funding was cut back and eventually completely stopped. In their case we can speak of *de-*

43 Author's interview on 23 March 2012 with Maung Maung, political analyst for ActionAid Myanmar.
44 Author's interview on 18 May 2012 with Xiao, member of the executive board of Generation Wave.

certification as their international resources were cut back as the country opened up and new political actors were recognized and supported (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 215). So why was that?

The head office of ABFSU is in Chiang Mai, but unions are being reformed in Myanmar. It is therefore an organisation, which operates partly in exile. From Thailand they do supportive and logistic work, like collecting data, preparing publications and the translation of documents. They furthermore coordinate the creation of new student unions all over Myanmar and guide their members who were released from prison in January 2012[45]. Stephin, a board member of ABFSU, explains that they only received money to run their office and stipends for themselves. This money was cut back and finally stopped over the last couple of months because their donor indicated that the 'activities is not well enough' and 'they will go inside and directly support there'[46]. They did not branch out to other donors, because of fear of the consequences. As Stephin explains: 'if you run your activities by outside, you will get more severe punishment'[47]. He fears to go back to Myanmar and fears for his life in Thailand as well. The feeling of fear, whether real or imagined, has the organisation in a deadlock and can lead to *disillusionment* as certification is withdrawn and their activities are marked as unworthy (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 216).

In this case de-certification has negatively impacted the achievement of this SMO in the way that it no longer has the funding to do activities. This can lead to a negative *self-representation* on the ground as they are unable to perform "public display of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment" (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 217). To counteract this and to regain their funding they are now professionalising their organisational structure, updating their website on a regular basis and so report their statements and activities. They also cooperate with others and so enforce attribution of similarity. They promote the students within the country to apply for money and form their own unions, which can then become part of ABFSU. By labelling these unions as part of their organisation and making them wear the same attire (white blouse, dark longhi, and brooch with the red and gold peacock flag) their self-representation can increase. This drive for professionalism, increased numbers and so overt display of symbols is a positive influence of de-certification. It also forced them to re-evaluate their repertoire of performances and they have now incorporated contentious nonviolent methods like sending joint statements to the media and political figures, and

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45 Author's interview on 20 May 2012 with Stephin, exiled member of the central executive board of ABFSU
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.

writing analyses[48].

Certification has both had positive and negative influences on the achievements of SMOs. It has forced them to become more professional by rebuilding their organisational structure and outline their strategy. It has made them re-evaluate their methods and so allow them to move forward towards an upward scale shift, or the stage of nonviolent coercion, which Sharp sees as the stage in which there is no point of return for the government (2012: 55).

Certification can effect the level of legitimacy, due to the mistrust given to outsiders. It also restricts the activities of the SMOs by not allowing them to utilize all nonviolent methods available to them. In the eyes of ABFSU it also makes one a bigger target for the government and so increase the risk for those operating from exile. In their case de-certification influenced their self-representation negatively at first, but as they adapted to the situation they have come stronger on top.

3.2 Brokerage

In this final paragraph I will analyse *brokerage* as part of the process of *internationalization* and I therefore relate this mechanism to transnational alliances conducted by transnational agents (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 177). In the previous paragraph I analysed the role of certification by international donors linked to two researched SMOs. Activista and Grow are however directly linked to transnational agents, in this case INGOs. They are part of a format which is deployed at various sites of contention across the globe. In this way brokerage, the "production of a new connection between previously unconnected or weakly connected sites", is triggered due to a link between domestic and transnational actors (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 215). According to Boli and Thomas it is easier to use similar framing techniques, as well as the adoption in a wide variety of places when there is cultural and/or institutional standardisation (1999). This is certainly the case when looking at Otpor! and how their framework was easily adopted by similar youth movements in Georgia and Ukraine and quite effective (Arens 2008: 44). Can the same be said for when brokerage takes place between social movements and INGOs?

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48 For example: ABFSU, 2011. Analysis of ex-General U Thein Sein Government and Report to the People. [online] (2 May 2011) Available at: http://abfsu.net/?cat=25 [Accessed on 12 July 2012]

In the case of Grow, which was deployed in the beginning of 2012 by Oxfam in Myanmar, the institutional standardisation is giving them problems. The programme supports people who want to make positive and practical changes in a country. It wants to mobilise people all over the world to engage in global conversation and action on topics related to food, life, and the future of the planet. It aims at pressuring governments "to reform bad policies, to preserve scarce resources and share them fairly, to ensure that everyone has a voice in the system and to support the billion-plus small-scale food producers to grow more and grow better" (Oxfam 2011).

In this information age sharing creates a form of soft power that *can* encourage others to cooperate even on sensitive topics. This could lead to the formation of common outlooks and approaches that improve the ability of social movements to face new challenges (Nye 2007: 396). Grow Myanmar however does not have the capacity, due to the political context and lack of Internet users, to engage its audience with these topics. The threshold for participation is too high and their framing too weak. Furthermore, the Myanmar branch of Grow has to deal with high expectations of Oxfam, which they cannot meet at this moment of time[49]. In my interview with two of the main organisers they indicated that '[t]he future is unsure. Only if our activities are successful we can get more funding. Also the Grow campaign is not a right timing for Myanmar, because of their rules and policies […] According to the Oxfam policy, Grow is not suitable for Myanmar right now. […] We requested for the campaign anyway'[50]. Like a house of cards a social movement is only as strong as its constitutive parts, its organisations, and by incorporating weak elements like Grow through attribution of similarity it can damage its collective action framework.

Brokerage as part of the process of internationalisation can however also strengthen a social movement. ActionAid has been active inside Myanmar since 1999 and "supports local organisations through intensive training and deployment of 'change-makers' (youth leaders) in target communities. Change-makers mobilise and organise local communities and facilitate their analysis of community problems, undertake participatory planning, promote democratic norms and forms of decision-making, mobilise community resources (including that of local government), and facilitate the implementation of community prioritised action points"[51] (Bakx June 2012). Activista Myanmar

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49 Author's interview on 25 May 2012 with Pwint and San, leaders of the Grow campaign.
50 Author's interview on 25 May 2012 with Pwint and San, leaders of the Grow campaign.
51 This quote comes directly from the main page of the site of ActionAid Myanmar, which was written and created by me in June 2012, and can be accessed via the following link:

has the unique position to be linked to this so-called Fellowship programme in that it can utilize the Fellows (or change-makers) to spread its activities from site to site as it has members all over the country in both urban and rural places. The Fellows are young active citizens, bounded to ActionAid and trained in its methods, and can therefore easily be mobilised and can spread their message in a coherent matter.

The Activista board members can attend all trainings, seminars and workshops organised by ActionAid and its partners and have therefore direct access to analytical frameworks on shifts in the political context. They can utilize ActionAid's field offices all over the country and have a stable budget with not many strings attached[52]. They can also collaborate with the Global Platform, a Danish initiative, which gives trainings and workshops to promote active citizenship for governance, which is fair and democratic. Combining these opportunities they can initiate activities that connect civil societies and the grassroots level by identifying and responding to new issues quickly (Chigas 2007: 553). Especially since ActionAid is committed for a longer period of time and has taken on a facilitative and educational role towards its youth wing Activista and the social movement for accountable governance.

Because of these opportunities Activista has the potential to become a stable force within the social movements for accountable governance. Unfortunately this is not yet the case. As I had my internship with ActionAid Myanmar, and worked in the same room as Activista, I was able to observe and discuss their development process in detail[53]. The country-director tried to stimulate them to focus on one tangible subject. In one case he suggested they should focus on health-care and than the tangible goal of increasing blood donations. This practice is not promoted by the government and receiving blood in a hospital is therefore a costly affair[54]. In response Activista distributed a sign-up sheet for blood donations (without little explanation) throughout the office and that was the end of it[55]. There are no repercussions for their ad hoc activities. Still they realised they were not utilising the full potential of their opportunities and have therefore requested assistance of a campaign analyst, who will start in late 2012.

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http://www.actionaid.org/where-we-work/asia-australia/myanmar
As explained in my internship report I have based this work on meetings, observations, workshops, seminars and articles which I attended during my time at ActionAid Myanmar.
52 Author's interview on 14 April 2012 with Tar Zin Oo, head of Activista Myanmar.
53 I was an intern for AAM from 15 March to 15 June 2012.
54 AAM Meeting between Activista, C-D, Su Ei and author on 12 April 2012.
55 Observations from 13 April onwards at AAM head office.

In this way brokerage through the deployment of Activista in Myanmar through ActionAid has all the potential to be a huge success. The format does not have the advantage of the Fellowship programme in other countries as this was specifically developed for the Myanmar context. Also the Global Platform is only active on five other locations. Through this strategic programme design Activista is, on paper, one of the strongest SMOs within the social movement for accountable governance when looking at their organisational structure and resources. They do however lack intangible aspects such as authentic, credible, leaders that can convey and represent their values and aspirations (Nye 2007: 391). They should therefore also focus on "non-coercive powers – communication, co-optation, attraction, and legitimacy – and apply them strategically to force change in their own society" (Aall 2007: 490).

In the end, transnational agents provide brokerage through encouragement of attribution of similarity and via the deployment of internationally used formats. On the international front this works one-sided. Formats and frames are used from other countries, but no new connections are made the other way around. At least none that I could observe from my research. A two-way street might be created now the country is opening up and the social movements grow more strongly enabling them to create their own positive examples. When done correctly brokerage can aid a social movement due to usage of cultural and institutional standardisation, human and financial resources, and the encouragement of attribution of similarity. When linkages are made and formats are deployed without making a contextual analysis the usage of brokerage can be seen as a hindrance. As SMOs, like Grow, with which many organisations currently collaborate will either disappear or leech from its companions.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have analysed what the nonviolent youth social movements for accountable governance have tried to achieve from the 2010 elections onwards within a political context dominated by Myanmar's high-capacity, low-democracy regime. I have done so by linking a mechanical explanation analysis to the overall concept of political opportunities and split it into three parts: (pre-existing) contextual conditions, frames, and organisations. I believe I can draw several conclusions of my research.

First, the political reforms taking place since the installation of the civil-government in March 2011 have launched the State in a transition towards democracy, albeit slowly. The new political space, formed by this transition, has created an atmosphere of uncertainty, fuelled by the reflexive power of mobilisation. Social movements for accountable governance are expecting violent repression to be utilised once more by the government to suppress their quest for accountable governance. The mechanism repression is thus keeping them from reformulating their strategies and boldly use new forms of contentious performances. To lower the perceived costs for both the organisers and their audience SMOs focus on awareness raising campaigns. In this way they can slowly test the levels of repression and indirectly measure the progress made. By taking this cautionary path they are lowering the costs for participation of their audience, informing them that sensitive topics can now be openly discussed. Through educating the public and making them aware of their political voice they will increase their level of leverage and resilience necessary to keep promoting accountable governance via more high risk performances in the future.

Second, the co-optation of the NLD into the civil-government is an indirect achievement of the social movements for accountable governance, as they have supported this democratic party since the late eighties. The presence of a democratic, civil party, however small is an important step for its path towards democracy. Through fair elections and the collaboration between the NLD and the social movements for accountable governance active citizenship is promoted both via a top-down and bottom-up approach. As the NLD is using a similar peacock flag in honour of the active role of students in the struggle for democracy the resonance of the collective frame of ABFSU has increased. The social movements should question themselves whether they want to solely support the NLD or whether there is also room for another democratic non-ethnic political party to enter the government and thus increasing its accountability. Another important element is the presence of constitutional and judicial constraints that promote accountability, which need to be present next procedural and electoral elements of democracy. A goal which is yet actively pursued.

Although social movements have managed to mobilise the public for a variety of goals their collective action frame contains a fragile version of boundary formation. Their deployment of frames is the weakest link when it comes to achieving their goals. There is a low level of group salience, obtained through classifying them as being in a similar age group. The goals set do not match the centrality, experiential commensurability and narrative fidelity of the group as a whole. Although they have tried to overcome this via low participatory costs, and credible leaders, this is not enough in a high-capacity, low-democracy regime, such as Myanmar.

Even though the 'us' formation is quite fragile, the 'them' narrative is strong. If they therefore would reformulate their goals into tangible, central, needs-based aspects needed for accountable governance their collective action frame would thrive.

A way through which they try to solidify their collective action frame is via attribution of similarity. Even though the goals of the SMOs are diverse they all fit under the master narrative of the quest for democracy. This encouragement mechanism helps built an infrastructure for accountable governance necessary to promote political change. When they have found several all-inclusive goals they can utilise this infrastructure to start an upward scale shift, making their contentious performances so widespread that it is no longer possible to be controlled by the State. In a short time span they have achieved to built the groundwork for nonviolent coercion, necessary to threaten the current unaccountability of the government. The next step is using it strategically.

The fifth mechanism at play, in the recent achievements of the social movements for accountable governance, is certification. It was active both in a positive and a negative way. When looking at Generation Wave it forced them to make a strategic analysis on various fronts, which is needed for the movement to obtain it goals. It gave them direction, as their American donors demanded that they reflected on their actions, thereby stimulating alterations in their actions if necessary. The money received by their donors allowed them to create social networks throughout Myanmar, needed for effective collective actions. Although this is not yet happening at large scale the base of the trust network is already in place, ready to be utilised in the near future and so promote accountable governance in urban areas throughout the country.

Dependence on this form of certification brings with it various risks. For ABFSU the withdrawal of this mechanism lead to disillusionment and isolation at first, before it obtained a drive for professionalism. It also increases the risks for those SMOs receiving foreign aid, whether this is real or imagined is a question that needs further resourced. Receiving human and financial resources may cause legitimacy issues, due to the mistrust given to outsiders. Depending on the actions of foreign linkages in the upcoming years this level of mistrust may alter. Last, certification can lead to restrictions for social movements. They should therefore make an cost-benefit analysis to judge

whether the reciprocating the certification is worth it.

Last, brokerage as part of the process of internationalisation both had negative and positive consequences for the achievements of the social movements for accountable governance. As I found out during my research, in the case of brokerage between SMOs and INGOs, it is not always easier to use similar frames in a wide variety of places when there is cultural and/or institutional standardisation. It can weaken a social movement when no contextual analysis is made before a format is deployed. Especially, when through the mechanism attribution of similarity those weak organisations are incorporated into social movements and linked to other SMOs. They will only weaken the collective action frame as their goals are not suitable for the political context in which they operate.

Brokerage via transnational alliances conducted by transnational agents can aid social movements in obtaining their goals due to the contribution of human and financial resources. Although this is a similar effect to that of certification, I believe that this form of brokerage is more effective. In the case of Activista, they had a wide array of facilities they could use. Plus, as they are part of ActionAid there is no talk of a hidden agenda on either side. The SMOs deployed via this format are quite obviously linked to an international agent and there is therefore no secrecy shrouding their financial resources. In this way, their own actions are accountable.

Still the mechanism is currently working one-sided, as no new connections are made the other way around. If they utilise this path to create a international narrative future it can aid their collective action frame as their audience is made aware of similar positive transitions towards democracy and the consequences this could have on their day-to-day life.

Due to the currentness of the political reforms taking place in Myanmar the overall achievement of the nonviolent youth social movements for accountable governance is the building of an infrastructure, necessary for a smooth transition towards democracy. As time goes by they will have to make continuous strategical analysis to promote accountable governance in a way that is both tangible and all-inclusive. Perhaps then will their quest for accountable governance eventually be completed without in a mainly peaceful fashion.

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