Participation in Poverty Reduction Strategies in Africa: a Democratic Innovation? Toward a case study of Tanzania

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Introduction

Since the start of the new Millennium, African countries receiving international aid and loans must prepare a comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in a participatory process. This form of ‘process conditionality’ imposed by aid donors (led by the international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) not only represents an effort to change relations in the donor-aid-recipient relationship towards a more equal partnership, but may also be considered a highly interesting potential democratic innovation. This paper provides the contextual and conceptual background to examine the questions of who participates in this process, what form the participatory process takes and to what extent the participatory exercise results in influence on the content of poverty reduction strategies in the case of Tanzania.

The new approach is often referred to as the Post-Washington Consensus. The new process conditionality is a departure from – and a response to – donor conditionality in the framework of structural adjustment policies, initiated during the 1980s and often referred to as the Washington Consensus. This ‘policy paradigm’\(^1\) required aid receiving governments to adopt a set of neo-liberal policies aimed at macro-economic stability, including liberalization, privatization, budget cuts and deregulation. By the 1990s, these policies were criticized for their ‘one-size-fits-all’ character, their neglect of poverty and their failure to bring sustained economic growth. While it is debatable to which extent this kind of policy conditionality has actually ended, since poverty strategies that receive donor funding all include the basic reforms directed at macro-economic stability, donor discourse has shifted to the new policy paradigm of ‘process conditionality’.

The new process conditionality also can be traced to several developments within the donor community during the 1990s. With increasing criticism on international aid and continued aid dependence in Africa, problems of coherence, coordination and effectiveness of aid became highlighted. From the perspective of aid receiving countries, the transaction costs of aid and multiplicity of donor demands and conditionalities were impediments to a coherent home-grown policy for development. A lack of ‘ownership’ was identified as a key obstacle for aid effectiveness. Aid receiving governments ‘sang the donors tune’, but often failed to truly implement reforms. The Paris Declaration, agreed between donors and aid-recipients in 1995, sought to overcome some of these problems through a strategy of aid harmonization (among donors), better alignment of aid policies to the policies of recipient governments, ownership through the creation of a ‘partnership’ and a results oriented approach. By the end of the 1990s, the latter ideas became central in the Poverty Reduction Strategy

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\(^1\) Sarah Babb considers the Washington Consensus a ‘policy paradigm’, based on Peter Hall’s notion of a policy paradigm as an ‘powerful and enduring framework of related ideas and standards about policy’ (Babb 2013: 270).
Paper model adopted by the World Bank and IMF. While the PRSP is a paper agreed in this ‘partnership’ between the government and donor institutions, the essential innovation is the requirement to formulate the policy in a ‘participatory’ manner, including all ‘stakeholders, and ‘civil society’ in particular. Participation in the formulation of poverty policies is thought to enhance the ownership and effectiveness of poverty reduction policies in the developing world. The idea is that ‘process conditionality’ may achieve what previous policy conditionalities failed to achieve: ownership of development policy and commitment to implement agreed reforms.

However, both ‘participation’ and ‘partnership’ are problematic concepts, per se and especially in the world of international development assistance: the precise meaning, means and goals of participation are ambiguous and the notion of partnership sits uneasily within the inherently asymmetrical donor-aid recipient relationship. Partly due to these conceptual ambiguities, views on the results of this participatory process diverge widely. Based on studies of the first round of PRSPs, proponents of the new process conditionality see it as a promising innovation likely to increase both the ownership and effectiveness of poverty policies; intermediary positions argue that despite the superficiality of the participation processes, the process has opened public debate (Booth 2001, p. 9) and creates effects of mobilization of civil society actors and increased capacity on their part. Evans and Ngalwea (2003) argue that their potential should not be overstated as wider reforms remain necessary and poverty reduction is a political rather than a technical issue. Other critics point to the selectivity as to who participates, pre-emptive effects through the dominance of a new class of transnational development experts and even the ‘disciplining’ of domestic participants into the procedures and styles necessary to gain access to donor funding (Gould/Ojanen 2005).

From a political economy perspective, the current ‘Post-Washington Consensus’ framework reflects an uneasy marriage between the dominant neo-liberal policy paradigm concerning macro-economic growth and stability and a renewed emphasis on poverty alleviation (as also evident in the Millennium Development Goals and the successor Sustainable Development Goals). According to its proponents, among which is world famous economist Jeffrey Sachs, the world community never before converged around such a package of policies aimed at poverty reduction; it represents a promising window of opportunity, if properly implemented, to achieve poverty reduction. Booth (2003) sees the new approach as ‘plausible’, opening many opportunities for policy dialogue, but he also sees constraints related to state weakness and the legacy of neo-patrimonial politics. In another article, Booth (2001, p 9 and 12) warns for ‘process overload’ in view of state weakness. An important advantage of the new strategy is that poverty is taken out of the ‘social sector ghetto’ and brought into the mainstream of national policy making (Booth 2001, Cheru 2006, p. 357). At the same time, both Booth and Cheru argue that the poverty reduction strategies do not sufficiently link
growth to poverty reduction, that growth strategies have in fact not been sufficiently pro-poor, and
do not include measures to redistribute wealth (Cheru 2006, p. 359, Booth 2003).

These perspectives lend some credence to Babb’s suggestion that IFIs have not really abandoned the
Washington Consensus, but have adopted the tactic of ‘loose coupling’ by using the rhetoric of
poverty reduction and a kinder or gentler consensus, while in fact adhering to the same neoliberal
policy package (Babb 2013: 289). Indeed, several authors find the content of the first generation
African poverty strategies to be very similar and a reflection of the 2000/01 World Development
Report ‘consensus narrative’ which views poverty as a depoliticized and technical issue (Cornwall and
Brock 2005). Because the overall content of the strategies does not depart significantly from earlier
adjustment strategies, Stewart and Wang (2003) conclude that the new strategy does not empower
poor countries, and barely gives a role to civil society. Such critics see no real departure from earlier
neo-liberal policies: it represents a strategy to give a human face to the hegemonic neo-liberal
paradigm though social sector spending (an ‘inclusive neo-liberalism’), which diverts attention to
sustainable and structural transformation of the economy. Gould refers to ‘populist neo-liberalism’
because the paradigm is based on ‘a vaguely defined and amorphous notion of ‘the poor’ (2005: 7).

From a Marxist perspective, Cammack (2004) argues that the Post Washington Consensus is just a
way to mobilize the human capital of the poor for global capitalist development, leading in essence
to their proletarianization. Other critical perspectives hold that the PRSP process, as the millennium
goals, fail to acknowledge the multidimensional nature and structural causes and consequences of
poverty. Critics from a post-development angle view the policy as another grand narrative aimed at
maintaining the status quo of western dominance, amounting to a policy of poverty ‘containment’ at
the expense of a local bottom-up approach based on alternatives to ‘development’. This paper will
focus on the content of the PRSP documents in so far as it sheds light on the question of participation
of civil society actors in the process, in particular by those actors who are seen to represent the poor.

This paper gives contextual and conceptual background to examine the participation process in
PRSPs, making use of conceptualizations of participation and distinctions between forms of
participation, all with an eye to assess the significance and effects of political participation. The paper
presents material on one case, Tanzania, as a stepping stone to field work and broader comparative
research. The content of the poverty reduction strategies in Tanzania will be discussed with an eye to
identify the overall visions and ideas on development and poverty reduction explicit or implicit in the
strategy. As to the participatory process, the questions to address are: how are participatory
processes in these poverty reduction strategies shaped and which groups/organizations participate
(with particular emphasis on the relation between internal and external (donor) actors? And finally,
did the participatory processes result in influence on the content of poverty reduction policies on
the side of aid recipients – be it African governments or African non-state actors? Are competing views and visions on development and poverty reflected in the policy documents? The analysis will be qualitative. The empirical material for this paper is provided by the poverty reduction strategy papers available via the World Bank/IMF, besides evaluation and review reports. Secondary sources will complement the analysis of these primary sources. This material forms the basis for the second phase of this project in which data will be collected through semi-structured interviews with individuals who have taken part in the policy process.

Participation and power

Almost nobody will be against ‘participation’ in policy formulation, but the buzzword now prevalent in international assistance has many different meanings and serves different purposes. Some of the relevant questions to ask are: what constitutes participation? What forms does participation take? What purpose does it serve? And, very important, who participates and does it lead to influence? Most analyses of participation draw from a classic article by Arnstein which differentiates eight rungs of a Ladder of Participation, based on the question whether it actually results in redistribution of power (Arnstein 1969). The levels of participation reflect different degrees of citizen power, from outward manipulation at the ‘Nonparticipation’ end, to placation, consultation and informing in the ‘Tokenism’ middle of the ladder, to citizen control, delegated power and partnership at the high rungs, reflecting high degrees of citizen power. While emerging from urban community development and anti-poverty programs in the United States, the conceptual scheme remains useful in other contexts involving efforts to involve the poor in the policy process. In an effort to ‘unpack’ participation in the context of international development, Cornwall (2008) draws on Arnstein’s ladder with respect to the power dimension and couples it to Pretty’s typology which incorporates the perspective of the ‘users’ of participation. The public official’s goal or motivation for participation of poor people or beneficiaries of social programs may range from manipulation, to gaining information and providing material incentives, to obtaining efficiency, legitimation or empowerment. As Cornwall notes, in third world development contexts, ‘functional participation’, which involves participation to reduce costs and meet goals which are determined by external actors more efficiently, long predominated. Certainly this type reflects the kinds of participatory development that were long dominant in so-called ‘self-help’ and community development projects in East Africa.

Based on these dimensions in participation, Cornwall arrives at four types of participation: nominal, instrumental, representative and transformative participation (2008: 273). In nominal participation, the agency’s goal is legitimation, while those at the receiving end hope for ‘inclusion; ultimately this type of participation is for purposes of ‘display’. This form looks much like Arnstein’s forms of
Nonparticipation. In instrumental participation, the agency’s goal is efficiency and cost reduction, while for the receivers this form of participation implies ‘costs’ (in third world context, many self-help community development programs in fact merely imply the provision of voluntary labor in the implementation of projects). The point of the exercise is cost-effectiveness and providing local facilities. The third type is representative participation, where the agency’s goal is sustainability and beneficiaries expect to achieve leverage to influence the project. This form would be close to Arnstein’s notion of partnership. The overall purpose is to give people voice. Lastly, in transformative participation both the agency and the beneficiary strive for empowerment and the participation is both means and end. Cornwall (2008, p. 273) concludes that the context determines part of what these forms of participation mean in practice, in other words, even nominal forms of participation may be significant if they give certain groups a ‘foot in the door’. These conceptualizations of participation will be helpful to examine the formulation of Tanzania’s poverty reduction strategies.

The Actors: mapping the field

These conceptualizations need to be complemented with an analysis of the kinds of actors involved. We need to add the important question about who participates, in particular when it concerns efforts to involve the weak, often excluded, or poor sectors of society. In Africa, these groups are often dispersed in rural areas, not well educated or even illiterate, unorganized and they lack access to information. Most African countries do not have a strong civil society, and the field often regarded as such is highly populated by NGOs that purport to speak for the poor or cater to their needs. The next section will look at these various actors.

In line with much policy research, this paper examines the field of actors involved in the policy making process. In domestic policy making various forms of ‘iron triangles’ have been used to analyze the way the policy process tends to be locked in between political, bureaucratic and private sectoral actors. For development policies such triangles need adaptation to include important international actors. Gould (2007) adapts this notion to the development context by presenting an iron triangle of core actors on the donor side, the aid receiving state’s side and the side of non-state actors. The three core sets of actors are surrounded by more peripheral actors. As Gould argues, emphasis must be placed not only on the distinction between government and non-government actors (the public-private dimension), but also on the distinction between domestic and transnational actors (the domestic-international dimension). In the field of development cooperation it is evident that both international governmental actors (such as the IFIs) and transnational non-governmental actors are extremely influential in policy making and should be considered ‘core’ actors. This is not only apparent in the various conditionalities imposed by IFIs and donor governments in allocating aid, but
also in the simple fact that all donors, including non-governmental ones, pursue certain policies (themes, targets, et cetera) in their allocation of funds. Some authors claim that their influence goes so far that transnational actors would have to be considered as part of the state itself. The research of Gould et al. (2005: 6) looks at the reconfiguration of interests and the emergence of new actors in the policy process, the changing relations between the actors and the question whether the process leads to empowerment or marginalization of policy ideas and agenda’s. Their research on the first generation of PRSPs clearly points to the rising influence of transnational political actors and development ‘experts’ who purport to speak for ‘the poor’.

In analyzing the position and influence of various non-governmental actors in this policy arena, it is also important to differentiate between different kinds of NGOs in the chain of relations between donors and eventual receivers of aid (the poor). Beginning at the donor side, various kinds of national and international NGOs in the global North collect funds (via fundraising or in many cases through receiving a part of the their governments’ aid budget) and disburse these funds to partner NGOs in the global South. These Southern NGOs are often national and sometimes international organizations fulfilling an intermediary role, i.e. which transmit the funds received to more locally based NGOs, often referred to as ‘community based organizations’ (CBOs). Whilst even these organizations in most cases are not membership based organizations, they can be said to be closest to ‘the poor’ at the receiving end of the development aid chain. This implies that when participation in the policy process is sought, we must carefully examine which organizations precisely gain access to the policy process and which organizations are not.

The case of Tanzania

Tanzania was one of the first countries to embark on the PRSP process. Marked by high levels of income poverty, a human development rank of 0.521 in 2014 and severe debt, it was an obvious candidate for the new approach. The country has long received generous donor support from western countries. Economic performance remained weak, however, and economic crisis from the 1970s through the 1980s was severe. Disagreement with donors led to decreases in aid during the first half of the 1990s. Historically, the Tanzanian government (in line with the dominant party CCM’s ideology) was committed to social development and government regulation more than to economic growth and free markets, while donors, and particularly the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) were focused on free markets, macro-economic growth and stability since the dominance of the Washington Consensus. By the mid-1990s, the government of Tanzania, at first reluctantly, accepted structural adjustment programs with severe consequences for social development and poverty
reduction. Economic performance, however, remained disappointing through the 1990s. The tide turned by the end of the 1990s due to changes on both sides: while the Government of Tanzania saw the need for macro-economic stabilization and growth strategies, donors, as outlined in the introduction above, had come around from the one sided emphasis on markets, macro-economic growth and stabilization and embraced social development and poverty reduction. Moreover, the global commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, a new approach of ‘pro-poor growth’ and the commitment to increase participation and ‘ownership’ of development policies provided room to converge.

Tanzania’s first PRSP uses a distinction between income poverty and non-income poverty (the latter consisting of human development issues such as health, education, water and sanitation). The document states that poverty is concentrated in rural areas and among subsistence agriculture, although urban poverty is rising. The strategy aims to reduce income poverty, improving human capabilities, survival and social well-being and containing extreme vulnerability among the poor (URT 2000, p. 14). Four strategic areas are identified: sound macro-economic policies and reforms to raise market efficiency and raising factor productivity; channeling Tanzania’s limited resources to the programs and social services under the poverty reduction strategy; promoting export orientation and diversification of the ‘pro-poor’ sectors ‘with a view to enabling the poor to share increasingly in the benefits of globalization’; and finally raising investment (URT 2000, p 14-15). Strategies for raising human capabilities aim at raising the quality of social services, enlisting ‘strong and coherent support’ of the donor community and assessment of the financial requirements for the poverty reduction programme (URT 2000, p. 19). The document counts 37 pages excluding annexes. In Figure 1 (see also the Appendix to this paper) a word cloud of the policy document is presented and Table 1 lists the most frequently used words based on a word count of the tool used (www.woordwolk.nl). The words ‘poverty’ and ‘poor’, ‘(poverty) reduction’ and ‘rural’ appear at the top of the list, with health, education, services and strategy included in the list of 24 most frequently used words. This word count does reflect the emphasis on poverty reduction primarily through social services in the policy document. This strategy, dominant at the turn of the Millennium and also evident in the adoption of the Millenium Development Goals, is much criticized by those who consider development a process requiring structural changes in the economy such as increased productivity or redistribution of assets.
Annex 1 to the PRSP document reports on the stages of the participatory process. Although no details are presented as to which civil society actors participated, the annex reports broad participation in zonal workshops and a final national workshop. Some scholarly work on the first PRSP in Tanzania provides important clues to understand opportunities and constraints emerging from the new participatory approach, although it is evident that the process evolved considerably since then. The Interim and first PRSP were produced in a very short time period. The approach was intended to be participatory and efforts were made to include ‘stakeholders’ in the formulation of the policy document. However, it emerges from the available literature that in practice constraints of time and capacity precluded meaningful participation by civil society actors. The government had involved two Dar es Salaam based research institutes to prepare drafts. The NGO network Tanzania Coalition on Debt and Development (TCDD) was invited to coordinate the process of ‘consultation’ with civil society actors, but the network withdrew because of differences with the government on the timing of the process and the question who would be invited to participate (Evans 2003, p. 5, Gould/Ojanen 2005). The regional and local workshops that were held were merely a consultative process and participants felt their views were not reflected in the final document (Evans 2003, 282). A major constraint was time, as lengthy drafts of the document were distributed late, and capacity on the part of CSOs to analyze and criticize policies was too limited. Several authors conclude that the consultative process was superficial and did not lead to influence on the content of the document (Evans 2003). Some authors go further and suggest that the governments’ and donors’ efforts to involve civil society actors actually amounts to an effort to ‘professionalize’ NGOs. Gould
and Ojanen (2005, p. 50-51) view this effort as a way to ‘discipline’ CSOs into the dominant donor-inspired policy discourse, which aims at ‘containment’ of poverty within the neo-liberal paradigm.

The second PRSP (2005), called the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP), was developed based on evaluations of the first PRSP – the PRS review. The strategy continues with the distinction between income and non-income poverty, and highlights the importance of crosscutting issues such as HIV/AIDS and gender (URT 2005, p. 15). The poverty reduction strategy has three clusters of poverty reduction outcomes: (1) growth and reduction of income poverty; (2) improvement of quality of life and social well-being; and (3) good governance (URT 2005, p. 27). High economic growth is identified as a condition for poverty reduction (URT 2005, p. 28). The paper highlights the relationship between the three clusters, with high growth leading to raised incomes and reduction of income poverty (assuming equitable distribution) and higher incomes leading to higher human capabilities through higher social well-being (URT 2005, p. 28). Compared to the first strategy paper, the paper clearly puts a higher emphasis on economic growth. The document is longer than the first PRSP, counting 73 pages, followed by 38 pages with annexes. Figure 2 presents a word cloud for this policy document, and a list of the most frequently used words is presented in Table 1 (see Appendix). ‘Poverty’, ‘services’, ‘education’, ‘health’ and ‘social’ remain at the top, but the word ‘development’ appears as the second most frequently used word, and the word ‘growth’ is now included in the list. This reflects a new emphasis on macro-economic growth and development as a prerequisite for poverty reduction. New words entering the list are ‘women’, ‘children’, and ‘vulnerable’, mirroring a new focus on vulnerable groups. ‘Water’ and ‘private’ also reflect new themes, with the latter often referring to public private partnerships and private sector involvement. Indicative of the greater attention given to the process of involving civil society actors, Local Government Agencies (LGAs) and Civil Society Organizations, (CSOs) entered the list of frequent words.

The evaluation and review process had provided room for input from civil society and there was more time in this second round to prepare consultations. The preparatory phase took three months and a Poverty Policy Week was held in October 2003 to raise awareness on the policy nationwide. The government aimed at making the participatory more inclusive compared to the first experience (URT 2005, p. 17). Nationwide consultations in 2003 were led by local authorities. The idea was that the consultation process for the second PRSP should be led by stakeholders, as opposed to the government as in the 2000 experience (Afrodad 2007, 19). At the district level all kinds of organizations, from faith based organizations to women’s associations and people with disabilities, were invited to be involved. The poverty reduction strategy was increasingly referred to with the Kiswahili term ‘MKUKUTA’ in efforts to communicate widely about the process and facilitate
participation at the district level. In this second round, many more opportunities for participation were present. The exercise led to the formation of the NGO Policy Forum, dedicated to policy advocacy and lobby.

However, the process still led to frustration among participants that participation amounted merely to ‘being heard’ (Cheru 2006). Donors and IFIs were strongly influential in the process and the simultaneous process on debt relief (HIPC) and the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) was not governed by the participatory PRSP process. This negotiation with IFIs on the PRGF was much structured by donor conditionality (Afrodad Report 2007, 21; Booth 2003, Cheru 2006 and Evans 2003). On the government’s side, there appeared to be more openness to civil society actors than in earlier phases. However, within the government some concerns were raised on the representativeness of the NGOS en CSOs involved in the process (Afrodad, p 23). As mentioned in many other reports and research, lack of capacity is indicated as a major weakness on the part of NGOs and CSOs involved in the process.

The list of participants in the consultation process provided in the Afrodad report suggests a predominance of NGOs and CSOs closely linked to donor organizations. With the association of local authorities (ALAT) coordinating, the list includes some governmental and intergovernmental donor agencies (the Embassy of Sweden, UNFPA and UNAIDS), some larger non-governmental donor agencies such as ACCORD, Acton Aid and OXFAM and further about 35 Tanzanian (intermediary) NGOs, CSOs and networks (Afrodad 2007).
Summing up the 2005 experience, it seems that consultation processes were more inclusive than in the first PRSP, but at the same time did not represent more than exactly ‘consultation’: in other words, opinions were voiced and heard, but did not significantly influence the content of the document. The document still reads like a long ‘wish list’ of desired outcomes and targets, while the limited availability of resources would require more priority setting (see also Cheru 2006). Moreover, it is not always very clear how economic growth would lead to poverty reduction. On the positive side, civil society actors have organized more effectively for policy advocacy, and the issue of developing their capacity for this purpose in high on the agenda. However, what ‘capacity’ in this context precisely means remains unclear. Finally, while the PRSPs can be said to have been produced in a process of consultations with civil society, simultaneous negotiations on the TPGF and debt relief remained much structured by donor conditionality. Cheru (2006) further points out that despite the effort to streamline aid within the poverty strategy, some 50% of aid to Tanzania remains channeled outside of the state budget, and thus outside of these efforts to coordinate poverty reduction in a participatory process.

The 2010 Poverty Strategy is called ‘National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty II’ and builds on the strategy of its predecessor in 2005. The emphasis on macro-economic growth is developed further, and the document identifies strategies for growth that should contribute to poverty reduction. More than before, the strategy prioritizes efficient use of the factors of production, strengthening institutions and markets, infrastructure, ‘good economic governance and resource mobilization’ (URT 2010, p. 28). Three clusters of outcomes are aimed for: (1) growth for reduction of income poverty (‘equitable and employment generating growth’); (2) Improvement of Quality of Life and Social well-Being ‘focusing on the poorest and most vulnerable groups’, and (3) Good Governance and Accountability (URT 2010, p. 30).

The 2010 document counts 121 pages of text and is again significantly longer than its predecessor of 2005. Annexes detailing operational targets for all goals set take 47 pages. Figure 3 presents a word cloud for this document and Table 1 presents a list of most frequently used words. Strikingly, ‘growth’ has reached the second highest place in the list and ‘development’ now reached the sixth place, re-appearing on the 17th place when spelled with a capital. ‘Education’, ‘health’ and ‘services’ retain their high rank. Significantly, however, the word ‘poverty’ is off the list (having moved to the 27th place) and ‘poor’ is used very infrequently. ‘Intervention’, ‘management’ and ‘implementation’ now appear in the list and ‘capacity’ has entered the list of most frequently used words. The word frequency count reflects the document’s rather technocratic approach and the renewed emphasis on macro-economic growth evident in international donor discourse. At the same time, however, the word MKUKUTA reached the fifth place in the word frequency list. This reflects the increased use of
Tanzania’s lingua franca, Kiswahili, to refer to the poverty reduction strategies and the effort to involve the population at the grass roots level. To further this, the document was now translated into Kiswahili. This presents a paradox in view of the rather technocratic tone and content of the document referred to above. The use of Kiswahili and the translation of the document appears to function as an instrument to popularize and legitimize the government’s effort to formulate the poverty reduction strategy.

The number of operational targets for the goals set are dazzling. While all targets are worthy and in line with millennium goals and the idea of inclusive or social development, the sheer number suggests that in fact no real priorities have been set. The tendency for the PRSPs to present a long ‘wish list’ for poverty reduction without taking account of resource constraints remains evident (as Cheru 2006 observed for the 2005 document). The gap between the targets set and the available resources is great. At the same time the ‘wish list’ character of the document reflects the tendency to represent ‘development’ as an inherently good, non-conflictual and harmonious process. The language is professional, with a tendency to present strategies for poverty reduction as politically neutral, non-controversial and technocratic. Examples of technocratic language are: ‘This Chapter presents details of the strategic interventions, and how the outcomes will be achieved’ (p. 35). As Booth (2003) remarked on the first round of PRSPs, the way poverty reduction and growth is presented is more often reminiscent of modernization theory of the 1950s and 1960s, but now it is packaged in the language of sustainability and social development within a neo-liberal framework. A good example is:
The thrust of this goal (goal 2 ‘reducing Income Poverty through Promoting Inclusive, Sustainable and Employment-Enhancing Growth and Development, OvC) is to achieve poverty reduction through broad based and sustainable undertakings. The thrust calls for interventions to modernize the economy of Tanzania. Underlying this thrust is the strengthening of private sector capacity to contribute to pro-poor growth.’ (p. 40).

While examples of technocratic policy language representing the donor consensus on growth and poverty reduction abound, the document never uses language suggesting that development is a process with winners and losers, that some groups may struggle or wish to emancipate from their socio-economic or cultural condition, or that elites may have a different view on policy priorities than groups at the bottom of society. However, this does not imply there is no reference to buzzwords in vogue in academic circles. Evidence of the involvement of academically schooled experts with some notion of such divergent views is present, as shown by a sentence such as: ‘The narrative for each cluster is supported by the annexed Results Matrix’ (URT 2010, p. 35). However, the use of the term ‘narrative’ is entirely divorced from the post developmental and post-positivistic context to which it belongs, as the deeply critical perspective of this school of thought is entirely lacking. As Cornwall and Brock (2006) observed about the first and second round of PRSPs, there appears to be no room for more structural issues or dissident meanings and views of development. For example, although the 2010 paper emphasizes productivity of factors of production, with the exception of access to credit for rural producers, next to nothing is mentioned in the document about access to productive resources such as land. It is hard to find text in the document that represents views and visions of Tanzanian civil society actors at a grass roots level.

In sum, the content of the 2010 poverty reduction strategy strongly mirrors the discourse used by international development experts, suggesting a broad consensus on a twin approach oriented to economic growth and poverty reduction. The latter represents an ethical imperative mirroring the global community’s moral commitment to the Millennium Development Goals. However, this commitment is translated into a technocratic and a-political strategy which assumes that development is a harmonious process, something inherently good with only winners and no losers. Language reflecting perceptions at the bottom of society, referring to questions of power and inequality is entirely absent. In view of the above, the hypothesis seems worth further investigating that ‘participation’ in this third round of Tanzania’s PRSP involved at most forms of participation representing the middle rungs of Arnstein’s ladder of participation. The literature examining the first and second round of PRSPs had shown the process to entail little more than consultation and this round is unlikely to depart significantly from this trend. Although donor discourse is full of references to partnership, the process does not appear to reflect the degree of power and influence that
Arnstein implies by the concept. Adding the dimension of the ‘users’ of participation, donor and government motives to involve civil society actors in the PRSP process seem to include acquiring information (f.e. on poverty patterns and needs for social services), and legitimization of national development strategies. Cornwall considers legitimization the mark of ‘nominal participation’. Cornwall’s notion of instrumental participation also may apply, as the government and donors wish to involve communities in the implementation of development policies. However, it is possible that second order effects will occur as noted by Cornwall and by Booth: despite the limited nature of the participatory process, civil society actors may have gained a ‘foot in the door’ by which their potential role in the future could grow in significance.

Gathering data on participation in the 2010 PRSP: who participated and how?

To further examine these hypotheses on participation in the process of formulating poverty reduction strategies, field work will be necessary to gain data on the participants in the 2010 PRSP, as no data is available providing the details on the precise participants. I expect the list of participants to the 2005 process to be representative of the core actors in the 2010 policy process, although new CSOs and individual actors may have been added. As to the question how participation took form, field research will consist of interviews with individuals who have participated in the 2010 round on behalf of civil society groups. Semi-structured interviews will contain questions as to the perceptions on the form and effects of participation and whether views and visions from civil society actors about poverty and development have actually influenced the content of the policy paper.
REFERENCES


Figure 1 Tanzania PRSP 2000

Figure 2 Tanzania PRSP 2005

Figure 3 Tanzania PRSP 2010
Table 1. Most frequent words in Tanzania’s PRSPs 2000, 2005 and 2010 (top 24 words)

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Based on the word clouds represented above in Figures 1, 2 and 3 generated by the word cloud tool on [www.woordwolk.nl](http://www.woordwolk.nl) by uploading the entire pdf documents.