Swaziland in Transition

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ABSTRACT. The focus of this paper is on the structural and cognitive challenges civil society activists meet in their struggle for democracy in the Kingdom of Swaziland. The research is motivated by an internship with the Danish labour union federation LO/FTF Council and its affiliate in Swaziland, SFTU, while collaborating with grassroots activists who fight for democracy. The research is based on a survey of 100 Swazis and on presentations of two leading democracy activists. The empirical data is contextually analysed with a range of complementary theories within the social sciences. The analysis explains the complexity in the challenges from different approaches both focusing on the power of tradition and political modernisation. It is concluded that the challenges are related to more than rational issues but rather to a set of cognitive and structural factors relating to the power of tradition and the dilemmas in political modernisation.

Introduction

Swaziland is a small landlocked country centred in South Africa. It is a dualistic society with both a strong traditional nationalistic identity and a modern British influenced identity; rural homesteads of stray huts next to shopping malls, or loincloth and axes next to suits. Swaziland is formed on one tribe and thereby not divided between different tribes. A sovereign and conservative monarch controls the country, but civil society groups and especially the labour unions are active in a battle for democracy. There exists an immense amount of academic writing on democracy, democratisation, civil society, group theories, and on Africa, but very little research has been done specifically on civil society and the underground political movements in this tiny monarchy.[1]

My interest in delving into these political and nationalistic clashes is based on my internship in Swaziland in 2009 with the Danish labour movement federation LO/FTF Council that supports unions and democracy projects in developing countries. In Swaziland, I became close to strong and charismatic personalities involved in the battle for rights and democracy—people who did not want to sacrifice their cultural pride and traditions to follow western practices—and in the unions and other civil society groups who fought for the possibility to form Swaziland into a nation of strong democratic minds embedded in a strong cultural setting.

For over two months, I collaborated with Swaziland Labour Union Federation (SFTU) and its affiliate Coalition of Informal Economy Associations in Swaziland, an informal workers association, to understand their struggle for workers' rights, basic human needs and for political freedom and democracy. To understand the challenges of the unionisation of the informal workers, I surveyed 100 informal workers with a questionnaire and the possibility to express their views. The results of this research will be presented in the empirical presentation section alongside with a presentation from a public meeting I attended in Copenhagen where two

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leading civil society actors from Swaziland discussed the possibilities of dismantling the monarchical system. During my time in Swaziland and fieldtrips around the country I realised that there is an active civil society and a will to evolve, collaborate, and make change. The underlying conditions for activism are not good, due to the strong, almost dictatorial monarchy, and widespread poverty. I was eager to understand the practical and cognitive challenges they faced in their struggle for democracy and freedom.

Central to this research is an exploration and elaboration of the challenges for civil society to change the political structure towards multiparty democracy in a politically hostile society; split between fixed traditional mind-sets and those aspiring for some dispensation of democracy. Its focus is on civil society actors and the people at the grassroots level in Swaziland since it is their lives that are being affected. What interests and puzzles me are the challenges that impede civil society in the process of democratisation and how civil society contributes to this process.

The main focus of the research is not to find a clear solution for Swaziland, but rather to illuminate the diversity of challenges they face as they aspire to become agents of democratic change. The obvious obstacles such as police violence, legislation, and bad governance are tangible and may be possible to change with support from the international community. Such actions directed against the monarchy and the government would indicate a top-down approach. But there are several underlying layers of the challenges that cannot be overcome immediately using a top-down process, but rather need to be handled from the bottom-up via empowerment projects, debates, and inclusions in the population in the rural areas via civil society.

The paper briefly presents the country, then considerations on the research and a presentation of the empirical data, followed by a deeper reflection and analysis of the topic. The analysis is divided into four main sections. The first is about how important are effective and strong organisations to mobilisation for change. The second is an examination of how legitimacy of the King is important for the power structures. The third explores how change of mentality and democratic awareness is based on structures of social and individual identities. And the fourth covers how the elements of national identity, tradition, and cognitive structures have a strong position in social changes. The paper concludes with a summary and makes some points for reflection.

Swaziland, a Monarchy

Few people around the world have heard about Swaziland, as it is a peaceful monarchy with only 1.1 million inhabitants landlocked in South Africa. But the country holds a few notable world records. Besides Sibebe, the second biggest rock of the world, Swaziland has the world's highest HIV rate at around 40%, with a life expectancy at 32 years and it is the last absolute monarchy in the world. In addition, a unionist has been allegedly killed in police custody for wearing a t-shirt with the logo of a political party on it. Since my visit to Swaziland there have been continuously more human rights violations and civil discontent is mounting. This is an example of why light needs to be shed on Swaziland.

Swazis are proud nationalistic tribal people who find community spirit in their narrative on culture and traditions. As indicated, Swaziland has a vibrant and outspoken civil society that demands reforms for rights and democracy, although through different means and political ideologies (Mzizi 2002; ACTSA 2008; Word Food Programme and Hershey 2009). Besides the political system and repression the monarch is criticised for extravagant use of money, while 70% live in abject poverty. The King has 13 wives as part of the traditional way of living and as part of the western way of life he feels it is necessary to have a jet plane when

they need to go shopping in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the small country spends a lot on their military (Mzizi 2002).

The country was under the rule of the British Commission, 1906-1968, and has thereafter adopted element of the Westminster Model, which is now combined with a system of chiefdom called *Tinklundha*. The system holds democratic elements but King Mswati III is the sole ruler. The political unrest started in the 1980s when the former King died, it was seen as a chance for change, but instead it became a strengthening of the monarchy. During the same period, other African countries started experiencing battles against dictatorial systems, including apartheid in South Africa (Mzizi 2002).

Political parties are banned and are categorised as terrorist entities, although a few still exist. Because of these restrictions, political groups are politically active in worker unions that are legal; however, political and democratic forces are often limited in the worker union as well. An example of this would be that just before a legal demonstration in September, 40 to around a hundred unionists were brutally arrested for no apparent reason (Livbjerg 2010). This shows the limited space unions have for manoeuvring. The majority of the active civil society groups call for multi-party democracy, and 60-65% of the workforce are unionised, most in the political unions of SFTU and SFL (Mzizi 2005). The rural and informal workers (e.g., street vendors, craftsmen, traditional healers and small-scale farmers), most often women, are the less unionised groups, and due to the global economic crises in the late 2000s the number of informal workers is growing. These groups are in these years getting unionised by CIEAS, an affiliate to SFTU, with whom I collaborated about parts of the research during the practicum. The organisation is constitutionally apolitical, nevertheless it is still unionising this big group of civil society.

Other groups are formed to unite the active civil society to form a united front. Swaziland United Democratic Front (SUDF) is a recently formed collective advocacy movement aiming to bring together different parts of civil society including both major radical movements but also more conservative fragments within political parties, unions, and churches. Their goal is to have a united front in the struggle for multi-party democracy. Foundation of Socio-Economic Justice (FSEJ) started in 2003 and concentrates on civic education to encourage participation and to raise awareness on human rights issues and democracy. The biggest democratic initiative is Swaziland Democracy Campaign (SDC). Statements from representatives of the leadership of FSEJ and SUDF are part of the empirical data (FSEJ and SUDF Activists 2010; Mzizi 2002).

Considerations on Methodology

The research is aimed not to be normative, however it cannot be assumed to be objective either. My involvement with the activists and the local community, as well as my personal background has coloured my view. Ontologically, the approach is based on the perception that social phenomena are created and viewed through human understandings and attitudes. Clifford Geertz (1993) has, on the basis of Gilbert Ryle, formulated the concept 'thick description'. It explains that objectivity is not possible (or desirable) when observing and understanding actions or phenomena. Thus, I will not avoid, but rather accept and embrace my own conceptual structures as a point of departure. The data collection is directly from the source, but it is still somehow a product of my interpretation based on my background. Multiple types of empirical data, theories, and analysis methods are included to avoid one-sidedness and to acknowledge most possible viewpoints and approaches.

It should be noted that the empirical data is not representative sample of the country, but rather it is a survey undertaken among informal workers. In that way, the survey results

should be understood as a presentation of some views and an indication of ideas and not as exact presentation of the Swazis' general mind-set. It would, however, be really interesting to undertake a general and more in-depth investigation to enlighten and understand the mind-set of the Swazis.

Two of the central concepts in the paper are democracy and civil society, both terms with multiple definitions. The word democracy in this context is understood as a version of a multiparty system where basic rights such as the right to assembly are fulfilled.[2] Exactly what political version and how the political structures should look like are not discussed fully here. The definition that is used builds on a relatively unequivocal although not thorough definition of democracy expressed by the activists. The definition used is therefore a multiparty system with the King as cultural figure without any political power, and as a democratic mind-set of the masses (FSEJ and SUDF Activists 2010).

Civil society is another term with several definitions. It is the pathway between the individual citizens and politics and it covers the organisations formed by citizens as a participatory practice. In this research the focus is on groups related to political struggles, but civil society also includes: religious groups, more practical-related groups such as cooperatives, or other non-political NGOs. Civil society also includes less organised entities as it include all *civil* parts of the *society*. In Swaziland, it is the labour union federations who are key actors on the civil society scene. Civil society does not fully represent the population, as some social groups are more engaged and active than others. This is apparent in Swaziland where it is dangerous to be politically engaged and where scarce resources in rural areas limit the level of participation. Nonetheless, as the empirical data will show, also the rural areas in Swaziland are getting more and more organised and active.

Empirical Foundations – the Swazis' Statements

Two types of independently collected empirical data are fundamental to the exploration of challenges to democratisation. The first is a survey undertaken in 2009 among 100 informal economy workers from around the country, some organised and some not (Pejstrup 2010). The questionnaires were formulated with around 25 questions on organisation, hopes, and democracy. The answers were not pre-formulated but the participants expressed themselves in their own words. As shown below, the answers were then analysed and collected into groups of replies to be able to make an overview.

The survey showed that the associations the workers are organised are often small and mainly formed for practical reasons in connection with vending, transportation, or collaborations in building a poultry farm. Some are slightly political in the sense that they, for example, come together to formulate petitions about the market place for the city council.[3] However, the associations are democratic arenas where Swazis from rural areas also have knowledge sharing and debate. The questions reflected different aspects of their lives—for example, on whether the workers were optimistic about their associations, they gave a series of good ideas for development of CIEAS and SFTU. The responses of key relevance for this paper are the ones relating to SFTU and democracy. The responses and lack of the same on the questions on SFTU and democracy provides data on how the Swazi population thinks of democracy (the full survey results and reflections can be found in my master's thesis, Pejstrup 2010). The prevailing majority was positive about SFTU. Few responded to the more forward question about the sensible subject of democracy, but only one out of 100 said that he disliked democracy (see Figure 1) and the answers about how it should be reached reflected a high degree of willingness for communication (see Figure 2). The results are shown in the figures below.

Figure 1
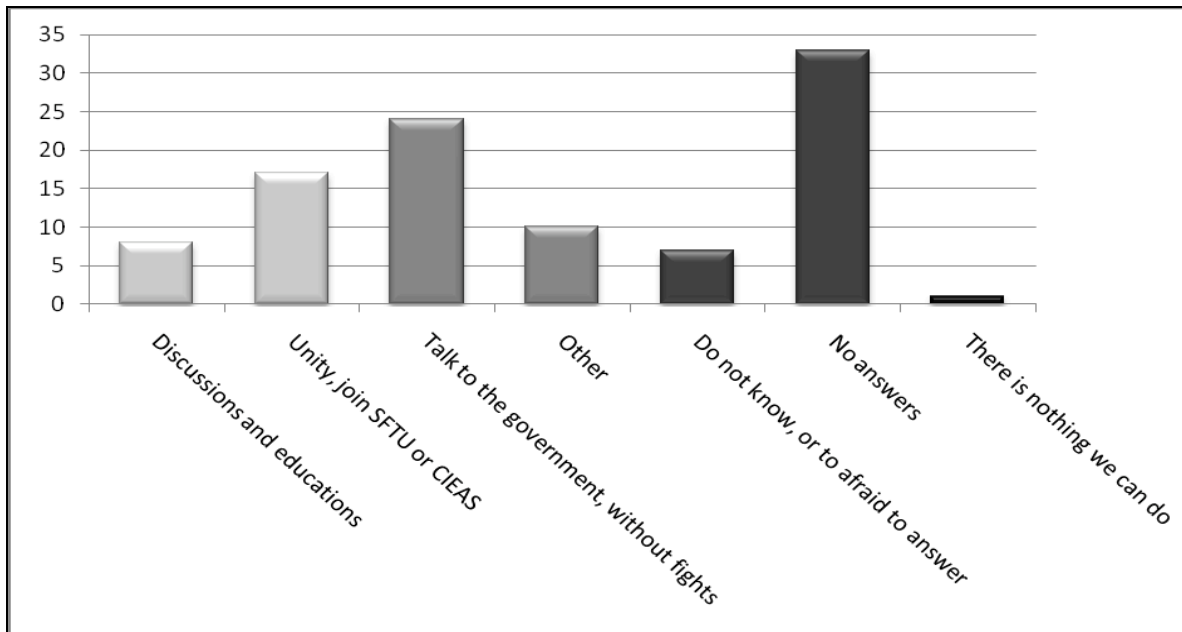*"Do you wish Swaziland was more democratic? (Please elaborate on your answer.)"*
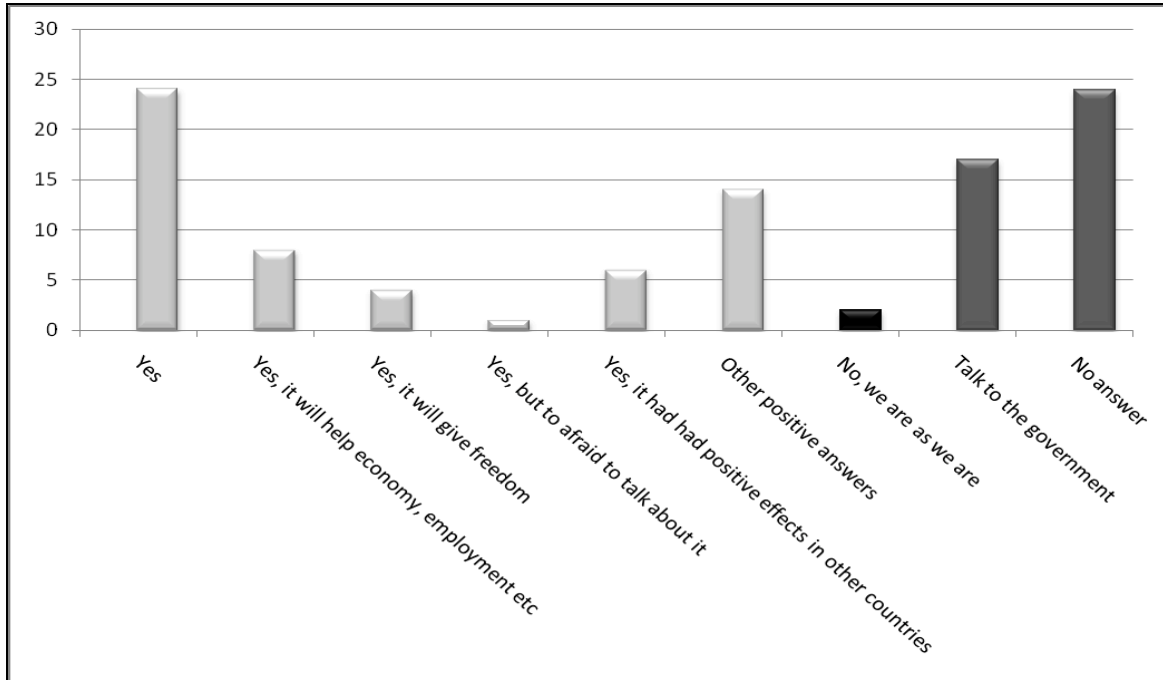
N:100
(Source: Pejstrup 2010)

Figure 2
"If yes, how could it be achieved?"

N:100
(Source: Pejstrup 2010)

It is not certain what the lack of answers could signify. Most likely it is a sign of the Swazis being insecure or afraid of debating democracy. It is unclear for them what it includes and

what it will result in. Furthermore, it would possibly be problematic for them to answer these questions openly.

The second part of the empirical data features recordings from a meeting held in Denmark with two leading civil society activists. It was arranged by the Danish NGO Africa Contact and held in March 2010 with the title "How to remove a despot?" The guests and speakers were: representatives from Swaziland Federation of Labour (SFL), SUDF, SFTU, and FSEJ (for a summary of the meeting, see Pejstrup 2010).[4] The whole meeting forms the basis for the analysis of the challenges.

The activists started their presentation by describing the problems they meet, especially in the rural areas that are controlled by chiefs and thereby indirectly by the King. However, the organisations have had success in civil rights education. They hope to make Swaziland look united so the international actors can see they wish democracy and can get help to change the situation. They are afraid it will look like the violent situation in Zimbabwe before they can get help from outside. Both activists have experienced being abducted or harassed in various ways by the police, even though the organisations are legal. Together with the lack of freedom, rights, and democracy, the activists are worried about the highly unequal income distribution. Moreover, they are explaining the role of women, as women are not treated as legal persons with, for example, the right to own land. However, women do come together to fight for their rights. Regarding the political system the activists explain that they hope for Swaziland to develop a multiparty system. It should not be an import from foreign countries, as they wish for a constitutional monarchy where the King is a national symbol without interfering in political issues.

Civic education, debates, and empowerment that are conducted on grass roots level are of key relevance for development, as they acknowledge that international restrictions cannot be used unless the Swazis speak with one voice. Since the transition process can be done in multiple ways and worked on several angles, civil society activists benefit from collaboration with, among others, Africa Contact, and the SFTU benefits from LO/FTF council, which supports workers rights as well as workshops with debates.

The two sets of empirical research reflected two sides of the civil society and used a method of triangulation. One of the key elements in both sets of materials is the strong will to be organised despite harsh conditions. To fight for democracy takes a lot of courage and resources, but even in the rural areas there is willingness to organisation and optimism about participation.

The Complexity of Transition

I will go further into the challenges on civil society that impede the process of democratisation in Swaziland and how they contribute to the following section. In order to explore these challenges, a range of complementary theoretical approaches is incorporated in the analysis on the democratisation and civil society of Swaziland. The theories chosen address the issues relating to the power of tradition and the issues of political modernisation. They are complementary as important element of the path towards the conclusion and will be used to address various dimensions of the empirical data. The analysis is divided into sections according to the issues considered and the theories and the empirical data will be employed in the analytical arguments.

The Issue of a Strong Social Movement

A political shift and a change towards a democratic oriented national mind beginning from the grassroots level can only be achieved with a strong movement. Results from both the survey and the activists showed that communication and unity were urgent needs to achieve the goal and hence well-functioning representational organisations are a key element (Pejstrup 2010).

Charles Tilly's framework of social movements focuses on the components of social movements and it can thereby support the examination of the challenges social movements encounter. He explains that a strong social movement includes a sustained collective claim, a repertoire of actions, and what he calls the WUNC displays (Worthiness, Unity, Numbers, Commitment) (see Tilly 1978; Tilly and Wood 2009). The first element is for the organisation or movement to have a sustained collective claim that extends beyond a single event. In Swaziland. the common campaign among most social movements is the desire for multiparty democracy and implementation of human rights. However, the strongest entities are based on the labour movements whose main focus is labour rights, which is more a practical element than a problem as civil society groups are organised in different fields and they need to stay legal to survive. The main campaign is divided into a repertoire of several actions, and the different movements have both their own and the collective ones. Despite the danger, participants of the social movements keep writing petitions, organise meetings, strikes and demonstrations. As the representative from FSEJ explained, their activities are related to civic education, discussions and empowerment projects that match the requests of the informal economy workers in the survey in order to achieve democratic development. The lack of open rallies and hence the possibility to declare or promote their positions to the general public give significant challenges for the mobilisation in social movements (FSEJ and SUDF Activists 2010; Tilly 1978; Tilly and Wood 2009).

According to Tilly (1978), there are four additional elements that are relevant for a social movement as illustrated in the WUNC displays (see also Tilly and Wood 2009). The first display is Worthiness, which suggests the necessity in presentation, particularly in a case where the national discourse portrays all political activists as terrorists. It is of key relevance for the social movements to show they are non-violent and that they are supported by all types of people and not just a minority group of extremists. Secondly, as the empirical data indicate, Unity is a key element for success. It is a challenge to avoid conflicts or disunity, but the civil society actors are working with the issue by shaping all-embracing organisations such as the SUDF. Unity is emphasised by symbols and actions, several of which relate to the struggle against apartheid like 'Amandla! Awethu!', which means 'Power! To the people!'. The third display is Numbers, which indicates that the movements can show support since a well-supported group gains more support. In the Swazi case, this becomes a challenge as the cause might have a lot more or maybe less support than what is shown publicly because of the danger of arrest in participation. The last display in Tilly's terminology of social movement is Commitment. This element reflects the challenges as it takes a high degree of commitment to be an active participant because of the risk of harassments and arrests. Even answering the questions on democracy in the anonymous survey was transcendent and only a quarter or a third did so.

It takes an extraordinary amount of commitment to fulfil the role of a movement that can change the political structure and to a certain extent the national identity of Swaziland. In conclusion, Swaziland is far from living up to the standards that Tilly presents but some good groundwork have been built and steps taken. Max Weber's theoretical framework on legitimacy will in the following section be used in the analysis of how the King still has legitimacy despite a broadly based wish for democracy.

The Issue of the King's Legitimacy

It is clear that King Mswati III's legitimacy to rule is based on aspects other than just his political and economic abilities. Obviously, rational fear for going against the King is of big importance to Mswati's supremacy. Max Weber's theory on power relations is a classic way of explaining legitimacy and domination. The three archetypes of legitimacy are tradition, charisma, and legal domination, and each will be used to analyse the power relations and the role of the King (Weber 1978 [1991]; see also Gerth and Wright Mills 1991).

   Legitimacy based on tradition has undoubtedly been a key factor as to why the monarchy in Swaziland holds power. While the world around the Swazis changes, the monarchy and its supporters rely heavily on the tradition, nationalism, and the history and national identity of the Swazis. Traditional power structures, ceremonies, rites and even clothing are important factors in the nation-building process. It is in the favour of the monarchy that the national identity continues to be built on traditions more than processes of modernisation or westernisation. Although it interesting to note that the system in its current version is no more than a few generations old, it is formed around a romanticised historic narrative from pre-colonial times. The calculated use of discourse and narrative and invented traditions will be analysed later. Respect for Mswati is not, at least not entirely, based on manipulations and ignorance as the King is a symbol of independence and national pride. A rapid change of institutions, structures, and symbols would most probably cause unrest. My own observations including Kuper's and Booth's research suggest a nation in political transition, but combined with a strong sense of belonging and proud culture (Kuper 1947, 1972; Booth 1983, 2000). Even if activists believe in democratic developments, only the most progressives believe that the King should be removed entirely. In casual conversations, several Swazis have expressed curiosity with the Danish governmental system of constitutional monarchy.

   Charisma is another explanation for the existing power structures. A strong superhuman and heroic narrative supports the charismatic legitimacy of the King. Most of this narrative is actually shaped by the former King and not by the present. However, Mswati III keeps it alive and the narrative sticks to the institution. King Mswati III is an icon and it is rather the system that is criticised more than the person. However, a strong spearhead is a valuable means for any organisation to connect to and formulate the identity of the organisation (Weber 2005). These three aspects illustrate some of the basic reasons about the challenges facing the advocates for transition.

The Issue of Social Identity and Self-categorisation

The works of Clifford Geertz, Stuart Hall, and Fredrik Barth are adopted for analysing issues related to identity, culture, and the narrative perspective (Geertz 1993; Hall and du Gay 1996; Barth 1969). Geertz defines culture in this manner:

> [M]an is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning. (Geertz 1993: 11)

The idea that one is suspended in a web of significance is a key point in the analysis and conclusion of this paper. Hall's (1996) version of a similar thought is that identities and identifications are constructed as reflections of one's surroundings and are always in process due to radical historisation. The constitutive outside both shapes and sketches the differences to the identity of an entity so they are marked and clear and the borders formulate the identity of the group (Hall 1996). Fredrik Barth explains that boundaries create identification and thereby that the dichotomisation of others as strangers implies internal common understanding and mutual interest (Barth 1969).

Michael A. Hogg and Deborah J. Terry have a more complex theory on social identities and self-categorisation processes (Hogg and Terry 2000). The theory is included to understand cognitive identity and social action in organisations. The main points are:

> (1) social identity processes are motivated by subjective uncertainty reduction, (2) prototype-based de-personalization lies at the heart of social identity processes, and (3) groups are internally structured in terms of perceived or actual group prototypicality of members. (Hogg and Terry 2000: 122)

The theory of Hogg and Terry on self-categorisation combined with Hall's and Barth's thoughts on social identity can be adopted in order to explain some of the complexities in social identification and why national, social, and individual identity has such a big impact on the struggle for democracy in Swaziland.

Even though both traditionalists and the activists are proud Swazis, there lies a battle in the formulation of the national identity as well as the societal structures. As social identity processes are motivated by subjective uncertainty reduction, it is thus the goal for progressive social movements to develop a strong united identity. The risk is that increased subjective uncertainty among the population makes them stick to the safe and well-known prototypical traditional Swaziness. A new societal and political system therefore has to involve a strong social identity that reduce uncertainty and rather develop unity and a common Swazi national feeling that is not deviant, strange, or un-Swazi for the individuals. According to the terminology it is a prototype-based de-personalisation that happens when one enters a group and adopts to it according to the mainstream idea of such a group. His personal will is not erased, but the risk of deviance and alienation keeps him consciously or unconsciously close to the prototypical group member, in this case the traditional Swazi. People are in general rather path dependent and follow the group's identity (Hogg and Terry 2000).

Some people come together and 'deviate' from the traditional structures collectively in unions and movements. A single person who brings changes or new ideas to a group becomes a vulnerable outcast, but as soon the individuals mould a group with their own prototypes, ideals, and identity the group will be alienated from the other group and together they have a social identity that forms them as a new cohesive group. The group has to shape a social identity that speaks for its members but at the same time a social identity that separates them from other groups. Unity reduces subjective uncertainty, and it makes one feel safe and makes one belong to a strong social identity. The challenge is to formulate a prototype that clearly separates them from the traditionalist but on the other hand does not demand a change too large between the identity as a proud nationalist Swazi and the identity as a democratic Swazi (Hogg and Terry 2000). Identity is a significant issue and even if it is changeable it changes slowly and according to its surroundings and its circumstances, as the self-perception and group identity is significant for people's actions and mind-sets. The change that is needed for democratic development and modernisation is therefore difficult to move. The democratic is not just a matter of political arguments, but also especially a matter of identity. The challenge in reformulating such issues is extensive but possible to overcome; however, it demands lot of time and work at the grassroots level.

The Issue of National Identity

This section has four parts that collectively indicate how personal and social identity and a national narrative strongly affect individuals' viewpoints and group mentality.

To execute democracy one needs not only to understand the premises but also to accept them as part of one's culture and national identity. Nevertheless, for many Swazis the political debate seems irrelevant and intangible, but the FSEJ and SUDF representatives argue that the

wish for democracy exists, but it needs to be found explicitly via empowerment projects (FSEJ and SUDF Activists 2010). The point about democracy is actually not political unity, as this removes the necessary individuality of the democratic process. Instead, empowerment is needed in order to facilitate people into formulating their own stance and thereby claim their democratic rights. The unity lies in the common goal of a democratic system that paves the way for such mentalities and strengthened individualistic mind-sets. The social identity of being a Swazi has tremendous importance and since that includes monarchical features it takes more than good political arguments for the Swazi on the ground to change the perception of their group identity as Swazis.

Considering Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's (2010) concept 'invented tradition', which refers to those traditions that are invented either intentionally or unconsciously as a response to a situation where the power of tradition is useful, we can understand how Swazi traditions are mobilised in the process of nation-building such as in the formulation of collective memory and national narratives.

Traditions are important elements of an identification process, both for the traditionalists and in the civil society. When naturally occurring traditions are not enough, traditions get invented. This often occurs during periods of rapid change, as people feel the need to a reference point in their lives. Thereby, it is also an effective means in the nation-building process, or in this case, in struggles over national identities. Invented traditions and narratives have a deep impact on identification, and even though the monarchy is no older than 70 years, it has positioned itself as a valuable piece of history. The monarchy has developed a range of traditions with a high degree of symbolic value, and going against any of these is symbolically equalised with support to the British colonial powers or other rootless and un-Swazi values. The other party and civil society actors also use invented traditions as a rallying cry and symbol of freedom in South Africa against apartheid (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2010).

The struggle on the national identity—democratic vs. conservative—is to a large extent fought discursively. Discursive acts can contribute to the restoration and legitimisation of the social status quo, as well as its destruction and transformation (Wodak, De Cillia, Reisigl and Liebhart 2009). The monarchy has had success in controlling the discourse and the national narrative to such an extent that it has been able to set a scene that is hard to change. That is of course emphasised by, among others, the control of the media. The current political system was formulated in a period when the border between nationalism and the colonial power was highly important to the construction of a national identity in which all structures and symbols that were Swazi—rather than British—were embraced. It has been an emphasised alienation of the British and this alienation has grown to include democratic ideas like westernisation. Barth (1969) explains such a process as 'a dichotomisation of others like strangers', which is an extremely strong social and psychological means in the discussion of group mentality.

These sections have shown that the challenges the civil society actors meet are more profound and complex than can be addressed by a single solution. However, civil society actors acknowledge these difficulties and try to deal with them despite limited resources and a bundle of hurdles.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the different challenges that confront civil society to play a role in the process of democratisation in Swaziland. The civil society is an active actor in reaching this democratisation goal, and the objective of this paper has been to examine what are the main challenges facing them and thereby how can democracy advocates succeed. The method of triangulation in data collection, in theory, and in method of analysis has been applied to get

the most nuanced research possible. The survey of 100 informal workers, mainly rural poverty stricken women, is an indication of their situation and their relation with social movement activities and democratisation.

I attended and recorded a meeting with two main actors in the democratisation process to reflect the other side of civil society and to get direct information on views, ideas, and the work. The data has been analysed with a variety of theoretical frameworks that with different approaches investigated challenges for the democratisation process. The challenges can be partly explained as due to the power of tradition and political modernisation.

Four main issues were discovered. The first investigated the well-functioning civil society groups, or social movements. It was pointed out that social movements need a common campaign with the Swazi organisations as they have set a joint goal of multiparty system. They need a repertoire of actions, and they need worthiness, unity, numbers of people that support them, and commitment—all elements that the organisations are aware of, but remain challenges due to current and historical circumstances.

The second main issue is the relatively high degree of legitimacy the King has. It was examined why this is the case through the sociological theory of Max Weber on the sources of power and legitimacy. There are three types of legitimacy: a rational one that is strong due to the King's supremacy; a traditional form that is strong in this case due to conservatism and nationalism; and a charismatic form that reflects the superhuman icon the King has become.

The third part dealt with social identity and self-categorisation, and it illustrated the immense importance of individual's identity and sense of belonging. The development of democracy is more than the structure of the government but also a cognitive acknowledgement of participation and individual thinking and collective collaboration. This means that the civil society actors stand in front of a challenge of reformulating what Swaziness is.

The fourth part of the article took these ideas on identity from a personal to a national level: firstly, it discussed issues of democratic identities in a traditional society; and secondly, it examined the meaning of invented traditions, narratives, and discursive battles.

In conclusion, the challenges on the democratisation process and how they can be overcome by civil society are manifold. The dilemma of the discussion involves issues in the power of tradition versus political modernisation. To realise democracy, institutions have to change and the power structure needs to be redefined. Here, a fundamental issue has to do with questions of national identity and democratic mind-sets. The concepts of democracy, identity, and nationalism are cognitive and social constructions. Neither of them are tangible issues, nor the way for democratic progressives to succeed is to balance between tradition and Swazi uniqueness and pride, on the one hand, and political modernisation and democracy, on the other. A possible revolutionary change in Swaziland that throws away all unity would scatter the Swazis and rebound on the process for democracy. The research showed a desire among the surveyed Swazis and the activists for openness, organisation, communication, freedom, and democracy. There is still a long way to go for the development of a sincere democracy in Swaziland, and it will be interesting to follow future developments and the transition that is ongoing among the people.

Two big issues of debate are relevant to investigate in further research of the transition of Swaziland. Firstly, this research has not dealt with the type of democracy Swaziland needs and it is of big importance that it is not assumed that any copy of a democratic form of governance will fit Swaziland. And secondly, the political activists who visited Copenhagen feel that it is urgent for the international community to take action. However, they wish for international involvement is constrained by the risk of an eventual western top-down political modernisation, which will foster new conflicts.

It is therefore a challenge for the social movements to encourage a political change, as the international society is not in a position to interfere in national issues. The debate is worth

taking, as the situation in Swaziland is indefensible, but a bottom-up solution is to a large extent preferable. Further investigation on this issue is necessary.

Notes

1. The main social science authors on Swaziland are Hilda Kuper and Alan R. Booth. Joshua Bheki Mzizi also researches on specific topics in the Swazi context.
2. These are basic rights according to the UN Human Rights agreement.
3. Some of the associations were members of CIEAS, while others are not. CIEAS functions as a coalition of several groups and it has few individuals as members.
4. Names are not identified here for purposes of security.

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