Navigating Civic Space Research Project

Navigating Civic Spaces in Mozambique Baseline Report

September 2020

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A. Summary

For an understanding of civic spaces in the context of the pandemic Covid-19's outbreak in Mozambique one should consider an analysis of different stages of the process of state-building and its multifaceted crises in the country, from independence to present, with a particular focus at the socioeconomic and political challenges, including social/political participation. Some examples of these crises are seen through the inefficiency and inefficacy of public policies undertaken by the ruling party (Frelimo) since achieving the independence in 1975, the control taken over the state institutions and society in general, which has been, to some extent, an obstacle to the right of alternative thinking and ability of citizens to express, openly and freely, their thoughts, interests and daily demands. At some extent this control is reinforced both by the weak role of state institutions aside from the political, economic and social elites in the policymaking process.

Historically, the party-state has firmly censored the freedom of expression and participation to citizens and groups. Civic action was shaped under the authoritarian tradition, which was inherited from the colonial period. In fact, the state-building process has been marked by the dominance of Frelimo over the social and political dynamics. Although the achievement of independence has triggered a promising environment for the institutionalization of the "people's democracy", since the beginning, the ruling party blocked or controlled any form of civic action. Becoming a dominant political organization in relation to the private and public institutions, Frelimo has made the so-called mass democratic organizations (ODM) an important instrument for the promotion of the Marxist-Leninist policy. The ODM was composed by the associations of women, youth, children, teachers, journalists as well as workers' unions. The fundamental rights established by the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique, in 1990, allowed the boom and diversification of the civil society space, disengaged from the single-party. However, while pursuing their objectives and interests in relation to the different powers, namely state, social, political and economic elites, civil society activism has been largely questioned by public opinion in the new era. Often dependent on the agenda of the government and international community, the activism of civil society has been considered to be little legitimate and described as a weak; due to the fact that it is seen as not having their own agenda and if they have one, their organization does not have enough resources and power to materialize their goals and interests, if considering the strong dependence to donors financing as well to the challenges whenever they threaten the stand of the ruling party.

In the following points, a reflection is made on the role of civil society organizations (CSO) under the context of the recent history of Mozambique, arguing that civic spaces before the arrival of Covid-19 should be observed in the framework of the retrospective analysis of the socioeconomics and political dynamics, including social/political participation, in which the frustrations, struggles, tensions and conflicts of civic actors are the result of authoritarianism, marginalization and social exclusion in the country.

B. The Governance Context

Brief context of the economy sector. Since the transition from the socialist to the market economy in 1986/7, the introduction of the democratic constitution in 1990 and the end of the civil war in 1992, due to internal and external pressures (J. Pereira, 2009), Mozambique experienced a series of socioeconomics and political reforms. However, the ruling party has been unable to implement it effectively, efficiently and inclusively, considering the poor standard of living and inequalities in the country (Newitt, 2002; Francisco, 2003; Mosca, 2005; Hanlon & Smart, 2008; Hanlon, 2010; J. Pereira 2009; Brito, 2012). However, by controlling the economy and state apparatus, the Frelimo's party elites gained more privileges/opportunities compared to the majority of the population. This practice is considered a hallmark of the party-state since independence (Brito, 2019a), which has been exacerbated during the market economy. Privatization and other public policies have been used as a means of maintaining a strong party-state presence in the economy and to accumulate private wealth on the part of Frelimo's members (Pitcher, 2002; Hanlon & Smart, 2008). In other words, Frelimo elites have increasingly controlled the "business world", making the old political alliance of the socialist period being replaced by the business alliance (especially allied with large foreign capital). Pitcher (2002, p. 6) considered this practice as a "transformative preservation" to refer to the continuous influence of the socialist period in the emerging national market economy, allowing Frelimo leaders to maintain control of the state, both political and economic (see also Weimer, Macuane & Buur, 2012; Brito, 2019a). Evidently, the result of this "strategy" of the party-state becomes visible through the accentuation of inequalities in the country, labelled as the following: a minority of the population linked to the power is enriching more and more while a majority of the population is moving to the opposite direction, making the Mozambican society stratified into class society (Hanlon & Smart, 2008). It is important to mention that phenomena of conflicts or violence are prone in contexts of fragile state such as Mozambique, where the economy has not been able to produce enough food, create sufficient job opportunities and allow fair access to resources and equitable distribution of income/wealth (see e.g., Hanlon, 2010).[1] According to this author, the poor feel threatened and fear for their lives because they implicitly perceive that are subject in a certain way to the "structural violence" (Hanlon, 2010, p.98). However, the poor hope for a better future, demanding the state to play a role in society in order to allow active, fair, and inclusive participation of all social, political and economic actors in the state-building.

A brief description of the political field. By coming to power in 1975, Frelimo formed a centralized state and became a single party, following the Marxist-Leninist orientation, in a decision emanating from its third congress in 1977. At the same year, the country plunged into a bloody civil war, involving Frelimo and Renamo, the main opposition force. After 16 years of war, both ex-belligerents signed a peace agreement in Rome on October 4, 1992, which, according to Brito (2014, 2019b), was not a good deal in terms of institutionalizing the democratic regime. Two years before the end of the war, in 1990, the government would adopt a new multi-party democratic constitution in which individual and collective freedoms became a preserved right. As a result, Renamo transformed itself

[1] Note that Mozambique's economy is not focused on production and productivity (Mosca, 2005). It focuses on productive activities, services and infrastructure with an extractive nature and for export, produces what is not consumed (locally) and consumes what it does not produce, and is unable to generate and provide essential goods and services at low cost (Castel-Branco, 2010, 2017; Castel-Branco & Ossemane, 2010; Weimer et al., 2012. However, since the early 1990s, the economy experienced rapid economic growth of around seven percent per year, having been identified as a model of economic growth to be followed in Africa. This growth continued until 2015, when illegal debts were discovered, incurred by the state during the government of President Armando Guebuza (2005-2015), in the amount of two billion US dollars (Castel-Branco & Massarongo, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d, 2016e; Banco Mundial, 2016). Because of the public scandal of this illegal debt, the country lost its credibility in terms of financial governance with the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) as well as with most of their development partners, which suspended financial support to the state budget (at the time was around approximately 40-50 percent), putting the challenge to the government on the need to mobilize domestic and external resources to finance its development policies (Ibraimo, 2019; Chichava & Alves, 2018; Sambo, 2019).

from an armed movement into a political party, creating conditions for the holding of multiparty elections in the country, besides the set of socioeconomics and political reforms in an environment of political stability. Since 1994 to date, six multiparty presidential and legislative electoral processes have been carried out in the country and the Frelimo party has always beaten its biggest political opponent, Renamo, allowing reaffirming and increasing their power in state control. Throughout the electoral history of the last 30 years in Mozambique, several political parties have been emerging and disappearing, with Frelimo and Renamo asserting themselves as the two biggest political forces (Brito, 2009, 2019b; Nuvunga & Salih, 2013). A third political force that has imposed itself in the Mozambican political field is the Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM), whose power in political competition tends to concentrate at the level of municipalities (Chichava, 2010; Nuvunga, 2012; Brito, 2019b), although it has achieved minimal representation in the National Parliament, since 2009, when it started competing for power in the general elections. Indeed, in the Mozambican political system, since the first democratic elections in 1994, opposition parties, especially Renamo, have accused Frelimo of winning the elections using fraud, mainly because they believe that the electoral management bodies with the help of the police force proceed as instruments pro-Frelimo (Brito, 2008; 2019b; Nuvunga, 2012; C. Pereira, 2019). Because of this, all electoral processes in the country were preceded or followed by moments of political crisis, manifested by tension and violence (Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, 2009; Brito, 2019b). In turn, citizens' trust and interest in democracy through elections are declining in the country. For example, according to the national electoral cartography, in the first two general elections, the vote rates were high (above 80% in 1994; and 70% in 1999) while in subsequent electoral processes, it reduced considerably; the rate of abstention was around 50 percent (Brito, J. Pereira, Rosário & Manuel, 2005; Brito, 2007, 2016). Differently, in the case of municipal elections, initiated in 1998, participation has increased (Brito, 2013). The author observe that the starting point was extremely low (15%) and progress has been continuous (in the 2003, 43%; in 2008, 49%; in 2013, 57% [and in 2018, 60%]). However, data from the National Elections Commission shows that, in some municipalities, abstention has a tendency to increase, standing, on average, above 70 percent, as is the case in the municipality of Nampula (Forquilha, 2018). This high level of abstention in this municipality may be a sign of the failure of the police-making process in the country, which tend to exclude citizens and CSOs. Note that, since the early 1990s, political reforms have not only served to create understandings among the main political parties (Frelimo and Renamo) for the holding of cyclical elections, but also to negotiate the introduction of normative instruments for political and administrative decentralization in the country (Weimer, 2012; Forquilha, 2016; Weimer & Carrilho, 2017).[2] Thus, as Weimer and Carrilho (2017, pp. 107-108) refer, decentralization has been established by the ruling party as "a carefully controlled option", a strategy with the aim of maintaining political and economic hegemony of the Frelimo party, including to recovering its legitimacy, which has been questioned by public opinion, because of its "democratic centralism". Thus, instead of being used to deconcentrate or transfer power from the central to the local level as well as expand citizen participation in government processes, decentralization has strengthened the central government's control over the state apparatus at different levels (even considering that couldn't afford to effectively control the land, the people and the resources in the country). Besides, decentralization is originating tensions and conflicts at all levels of governance (provinces, municipalities and districts). For example, in cases where the opposition parties won municipal elections, the Frelimo government introduced normative instruments to limit their autonomy and preserve the power of the ruling party, legislating that the district administrator is the "representative of the state" in the municipality (see Weimer & Carrillo, 2017 pp. 109-110).

[2] According to Forquilha (2016, p.73), "the first attempt to municipalize the country, in the context of the 1990 Constitution, took place in 1994, with the approval of Law 3/94, relating to municipal districts, by the former "one-party Parliament". However, after the first general elections, held in 1994, in which, contrary to expectations, the results showed significant support from a segment of the electorate to Renamo, particularly in rural areas, the issue of municipalization reforms returned to the discussion, resulting in the constitutional amendment of 1996, that introduced the issue of local power and, subsequently, the repeal of Law 3/94 and the approval of Law 2/97, which established the legal framework for the creation of local authorities. It was in this context that the first municipal elections were held in the 33 local authorities, in 1998" (see also Weimer & Carrilho, 2017).

Another example was observed recently, in the context of the 2019 general elections, which elected provincial governors for the first time in the country, with the creation of the figures of "secretaries of state" as representatives of the state in the province, being able to supervise the decisions of elected governors and local authorities.

Conflict and violence: some examples. Two decades after the end of the civil war, radical political instability is remerging in the country. The armed conflict between the ruling party and Renamo is not ended and a new phenomenon of insurgency is growing in the country.

- This phenomenon of armed violence has been attributed to Islamic radicals, "jihadists", so-called "Al-Shabaab", who since October 2017 has been causing terror in the northern region of Mozambique, specifically in the province of Cabo Delgado (Habibe, Forquilha & J. Pereira, 2019). Given the complexity of this phenomenon in the country, these researchers and other observers recognize the need not only to understand the historical, social, political, economic and religious factors that may be associated with its origin, but also the political, social implications and economic changes about the country's future.[3]
- In turn, since October 2013, 21 years after the end of civil war, the Mozambique central region (particularly in Manica and Sofala provinces) is re-experiencing an armed conflict between Renamo and the ruling party. From this conflict, two new peace agreements were signed by the two parties, in September 2014 and August 2019. However, a Renamo military branch, called "Junta Militar da Renamo", commanded by a military leader called Mariano Nhongo, is rejecting the peace agreement signed by the new party president, Ossufo Momade.[4] Thus, the attacks continue as, on the one hand, the Renamo dissident branch is contesting the leadership of their party, forcing Ossufo Momade to step down as president; on the other hand, is putting pressure to the President of Mozambique, Filipe Nyusi, to conduct further negotiations with them. For scholars, these conflicts with Renamo are basically the result of a series of factors such as political intolerance, political, economic and social exclusion of military and political elites, the struggle for control and maintenance of power, the partisanship of political institutions and the budgetary difficulties of political institutions, particularly from the Ministry of Defense of Mozambique, in addition to the low level of trust between the elites of the two main conflicting parties (J. Pereira, 2016, p. 68). It should be noted that local CSOs have been campaigning for the implementation of the peace dossier,[5]

[3] For example, the Institute of Social and Economic Studies (IESE) brought together a group of national and foreign researchers as part of a research program called "State, Violence and Challenges for Development in Northern Mozambique", in a conference with the theme "Insurgencies Islamists in Africa: history, dynamics and comparative elements", aiming to debate the phenomenon of the Mozambique's insurgency in comparison to the experiences of African countries, namely Tanzania, Kenya, Mali. The conference also served to bring together government representatives and cooperation partners, together with researchers, to find ways to develop strategic research partnerships in order to better understand, prevent and combat the new trends of extreme violence in the region.

[4] Ossufo Momade was elected Renamo president in January 2019, after the death of Afonso Dhlakama, in May 2018. Dhlakama was at the top of the party for about four decades, since 1979, when Renamo's first "commander", André Matsangaíssa, was killed in combat during the civil war.

[5] For example, on Thursday, 31st of October 2013, civil society/civic actors across the country organized a major popular march for the need to end the military political conflict, the so-called "March for Peace". The march of citizens also served to demonstrate against a series of social problems, such as crimes and corruption, which have become more and more recurrent in the country (See Chaimite, 2017). An evidence of this October march can be seen in this video on YouTube (in the account of "Illuminati Studio", whose owner edited the video), showing some scenes and actions of citizens in the city of Maputo, the Mozambican capital. In the video, it is possible to watch citizens carrying couplets and wearing t-shirts with messages like "Mozambique cries"; "Mute Government"; "Enough"; "Peace/We want peace"; "We demand protection"; "Down with the intolerance/Kidnappings/Murders/Assaults/Violations"; "Resignation of the Police Command of the Republic of Mozambique-PRM". After marching, the participants gathered at the "Independence Square", in front of the City Council, in the hearth of Maputo. It is important to mention that the video is edited with a background song, called "Suicide Bomber", of a Mozambican popular musician ("Azagaia"). Azagaia is very popular in the country

> which since the end of the civil war has been in a state of constant hibernation. The political debate on this dossier seems to be too confined to negotiations between both parties, the ruling party and Renamo. However, according to the CSOs interested in this matter, the consolidation of an agreement and the progress of processes that are at stake, such as the "Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration" of Renamo members in state institutions, as well as the necessary reforms, it will hardly guarantee the effective stability of the country if that debate does not incorporate the contributions of the other sectors of Mozambican society, namely other political parties, academia, civil society, private sector, development partners, media, among others.

Thus, according to Brito (2015), the challenge facing the country is to build peace and political inclusion, stressing the need for at least three types of transformation in Mozambican society: (i) a deep reform of the Frelimo party, their separation from the state and the promotion of the public interest as a criterion for political action and the real incorporation of the main opposition political parties in the management of the state; (ii) an economic inclusion, changing the relationship of political elites with the business world, prioritizing the general interest in relation to private and private interests, elaborating public policies that favor the change of the current model of economic growth to give more attention to the sectors that create more jobs; and (iii) social inclusion, which begins by eliminating the deep territorial and social inequalities through the formulation of more effective income redistribution policies.

C. The Civil Society context

The Frelimo party has always sought to eliminate or control freedom of expression and forms of social or political participation in the country. This practice inherited from the colonial period was most intensely observed during the one-party period when the party-state played a vanguard role over social or political groups such as "Grupos Dinamizadores" (Frelimo's grassroots organizations for social and political control), party cells and committees, the People's Assemblies, Production Councils (which later became workers' unions) and the ODM (Brito, 2019a; Ibiza, 2009; Francisco, 2010). Reinforced by these organisations, the ruling party benefited of hierarchical instrument to mobilize and integrate the population of urban and rural areas around nationalist project under construction of building the party-state (Brito, 2019a, pp., 84-87; Ibiza, 2009, p.53). Considering that, after the independence in 1975, the Frelimo party obtained at some extent popular support, it was possible to disseminate, among the population, the idea that it was necessary for people "to join these organizations according to their social and professional category. Being outside of these organisations should be considered as an expression of lack of social integration, indiscipline, disorganization and liberalism, values that had to be eradicated" (Ibiza, 2009, p. 54). It should be noted that membership to these social instruments did not permit the Frelimo party to broaden and consolidate their social base. As Francisco (2010, p. 67) indicates, they played a weak role due to the fact that were "profoundly alienated from the diversity of interests of the groups they claimed to represent". Thus, the "diversity of interests" was perceived by the Frelimo party as "a menace to the creation of a single and homogeneous nation, without tribes or ethnic groups, only with Mozambicans" (Ibiza, 2009, p. 54). After all, since their emergence to the present, the so-called ODM are characterized by not being, as Sogge (1997, p.45) would say, "a space in public life where one uses, develops and fights for the powers, including the power of words and other symbols". Just to mention an example, in the case of union struggles, during the one-party period, where public demonstrations were permitted in specific situations such as the ephemerid of the International Workers' Day, the parades were only performed to "exalt the virtues of socialism, revolution and international solidarity with oppressed peoples", as Macamo says (2015, p. 145).

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because of its activism using rap as a channel to criticize the government and protect human rights. For example, his song "People in Power", released after the "food/fuel riots" of 2008 in Mozambique, was considered a "symbol of rebellion" (Pöysä & Rantala, 2018; see also Brito, Chaimite & Shankland, 2017; Macedo, Lichuge & Laisse, 2019). In addition, in the video that portrays the "March for Peace", it is possible to listen to the chorus of another song from the same album of "People in Power", which was used by the participants to make social criticism, as follow: "Thieves, get out; Corrupters, get out; Murderers, get out. Scream at me for these people to leave".

Moreover, as a consequence of the failure of political and economic choices during the first 10 years of the building the Marxist-Leninist state (1975-1985), the Frelimo government tried to establish strategic partnerships with the international community as a way to alleviate the effects of their multifaceted crises. One of the results of these partnerships was opening up the civic space for the development of civil sector initiatives, of some independent way, which was an imposition of the WB and the IMF in the context of economic reform in the country. Thus, the ruling party accepted that some organisations could have free initiatives (but with charitable purposes), such as the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM), funded in 1948, the Caritas of Mozambique, funded in1977, and the Red Cross of Mozambique, funded in 1981. These organizations played an important role in the 1980s, when the economic crisis, civil war, and natural disasters had intensified in the country (Sogge, 1997; see also Negrão, 2003). In addition, initiatives by sectorial organizations also began to emerge during this transitional era. That was the case of the National Union of Peasants (UNAC), which was created by peasants as a result of the difficulties that Frelimo had to deal with its movement in rural areas (Sogge, 1997; Negrão, 2003; see also Mosca, 2005). Founded during the adjustment programs in 1987, UNAC was established as a peasant movement, from the family sector, whose mission was to fight for their active participation in the development process, aiming at food sovereignty.

However, it was necessary to wait for the introduction of Democratic Constitution, in 1990, as well as Law 8/91, Law of Associations, in 1991, so that citizens could make use of the instruments of law and fundamental freedoms to constitute as CSOs depending on the nature of their civic actions. For example, from there on, union strikes started to occur with some frequency in Mozambique. In the beginning, most of them were marked by violent protest demonstrations, as a result of the paradox of "market price hike versus low wages earned by workers" (Hanlon, 1991).[6] However, the trade union movement does not seem to have the strength to put pressure on and negotiate with the state or with employers to defend the interests of their class over time. It is true that the greatest manifest movement of the working class continues to be observed during the celebrations of the 1st of May, where workers no longer glorify the "achievements" of the party-state, but present their dissatisfaction regarding the situation of precarious wages and work conditions in the country (see Macamo, 2015). Hypothetically, as their criticism are somehow ignored by the policy makers after such a demonstration, a feeling of indignation is increasing in the country, where some groups of the population are making grievances, in some cases using violence, as observed in 2008 and 2010, when popular of some Mozambican cities rebelled, mainly against the rise of food/fuel prices (Brito, Chaimite, Pereira, Posse, Sambo & Shankland, 2015; Brito et al., 2017).

Since 1990s in Mozambique, CSOs have grown in number, type, and categories, particularly with a focus on research and advocacy, defence of public interests issues, service delivery, knowledge or faith, besides the International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) who have nationalized themselves and joined other community-based organizations, movements, platforms, forums, and thematic networks (Tøpsen-Jensen et al., 2016). Two Censuses of Mozambique's National Institute of Statistics (INE) on "Non-Profit Institutions" demonstrate the extent of civil society in the country, whose growth is related to the policies of government and development partners,[7]granting access to assistance (e.g., technical and human resources as well as funds) (Tøpsen-Jensen et al., 2016, p. 44; see also Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, 2009). Note that the first Census of 2004 indicated a total of 4,853 associations in the country (see Tøpsen-Jensen et al., 2016), and a decade later, in the second Census of 2014/2015, this number more than doubled (11,178) (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2017). In addition, most of these associations are registered in the province of Inhambane (2922 of the total), followed by a group of four provinces with more than a thousand of them registered (Maputo-City, Manica, Sofala and Zambézia with 1380, 1324, 1263, 1047 of the total,

[6] Note that large part of the population was in a vulnerable situation by the first years of the economic transition in Mozambique (from 1987), which were confronted by the rapid increase of the cost of living in a context of high dependence on emergency aid, due to the civil war, natural disasters, privatization of state companies and the dismissals of the working class (See Gobe, 1994; Alden, 2001).

[7] In the case, referring to the Official Development Assistance by the international community.

respectively). The last group of six provinces has less than one thousands of associations registered (Nampula, Niassa, Gaza, Tete, Cabo Delgado and Maputo-Province with 745, 687, 642, 412, 375 and 275 of the total, respectively). It is important to refer that a great number of associations in the country were born in an unspecified phase of their trajectory (36% of the total). During the first period of the one-party regime, from 1975 to 1984, there were 10% of the total of associations in the country, while in the context of the transition period, from 1985 to 1994, 6% of the total. The boom period goes from the first years of the democratization process until nowadays (1995-2004, 15% of the total; 2005-2016, 26% of the total).

Despite this promising scenario of social organizations in the country, the status quo remains an obstacle to their real participation. Their participation has been tolerated if it does not pose a threat to the ruling party and/or if it is strongly supported by the international community, consequently depending on its agenda of interests (Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, 2009; Brito et al, 2015; Tøpsen-Jensen et al., 2016). For example, according Tøpsen-Jensen and colleagues (2016; see also Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, 2009; see also Brito, 2019a, 2019b), civil society intervention in policy matters has been confronted by barriers in access to information, intimidation and reprisals, mainly at the level of local governments, and co-optation of the leaderships of CSO, elucidating that the marks of Portuguese colonial authoritarianism and the social control practiced by Frelimo after independence remain present in institutions and political practices. Focusing on observing the social dynamics of the period between 2010 and 2015, the same authors also observed that the space for political debate was characterized by an atmosphere of hostility in which political tolerance and the debate of ideas have weakened. For example, "an informal group (known by the acronym G40, where 'G' connotes 'Guebuza', because of their support to the President Armando Guebuza at the end of his mandate)", created in 2013 and made up of some young academics, "were characterized by a way of thinking that rejects out of hand and alternative policy opinions, amplified by social and public media" (Tøpsen-Jensen et al., 2016, p. 36). This turmoil intensified during President Filipe Nyusi's control, which has been widely reported by the press as the country's growing waves of criminality, such as kidnappings and murders of critical voices to the Frelimo regime (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020; CIVICUS, 2019). Besides, Holmberg, Macuane and Salimo (2014, pp. 24-26), based on the analysis of the results of the implementation of a development program in Mozambique, the AGIR Programme,[8] consider that the closure of the civic space by the ruling party was the effect of the lack of acceptance of the transformation of previously co-opted organizations into organizations that began to monitor and demand accountability, particularly in relation to international aid programmes.[9]

Finally, in reference to what has been mentioned by our interlocutors in the present research project "Navigating Civic Spaces", the trend of the civic space before (and even during) the Covid-19 has been shrinking. Over the last 10 years, the country has been experiencing a decline in its total score in the Democracy Index. In 2018, for example, Mozambique moved from being classified as a "hybrid regime" to an "authoritarian regime" (The Economist Intelligence Unity, 2018). It is important to mention that the Democracy Index is based on five categories, all of them relevant to civic space,

[8] The AGIR Program, for the period in reference (2010-2014), became an initiative financed by the governments of Sweden, Denmark and Netherlands, whose objective was to promote "an active and strong citizenship, a vibrant civil society that participates and influences the democratic processes, contributing to more responsible governance, deepening democracy, gender equality and human rights in Mozambique" (Holmberg et al., 2014, p. 10).

[9] It should be noted that, in the context of development aid, it was important for the government of Mozambique to introduce transparent mechanisms to promote good governance, integrity in public life, including combating corruption, so as not to lose the support provided by development partners for the country (Holmberg et al., pp. 18-21). Thus, independent monitoring of the resources is one of these mechanisms of transparency to demand accountability to the government. An example of mobilization around the accountability of the use of resources by the government is related to cases of great corruption, in which CSOs and the media have pressured the institutions of justice to judge those involved, especially economic and political elites linked to the ruling party. The most striking example is the illegal debts mentioned above.

namely electoral process and pluralism; the functioning of government; political participation; political culture; and civil liberties. Interlocutors were unanimous to raise their concerns about the closing of civic space in the country, marked by abuses and violence against human rights defenders, activists, CSO; strong control over political space; serious limitations to press freedom. During a panel discussion, it was stressed that these constraints are stronger in the armed conflict zones, namely in Cabo Delgado, Manica and Sofala provinces. For example, in Cabo Delgado, CSOs cannot implement their activities freely, be it humanitarian assistance to the armed conflict victims or demonstrations. Two remarks should be considered regarding this observation:

D. Regulation of Civil Society and Civic Space

The political reforms introduced with the Constitution of the Republic in 1990 have made it possible to create a new legal-institutional framework, resulting in the growth of CSO in Mozambique. After the abandonment of the one-party regime, Mozambique proclaimed in 1990 Constitution (revised in 2004), individual and collective freedoms such as those of expression, association, and trade union. In 1991, Law 8/91 on freedom of association was passed in the Parliament, which is the only legal basis that allows all forms of non-state organizations (except foundations) to be formalized. It should be noted that this legislation does not distinguish between NGO, community-based organizations, worker's/trade unions, religious congregations or associations developing economic projects; however, only calls them associations (Homerin, 2005; see also Sogge, 1997; Negrão, 2003 Tøpsen-Jensen et al., 2016; Kleibl, 2017). As mentioned by A. Francisco (2015), CSOs' activists recognize that the law on associations is disconnected from the reality faced by most Mozambicans, such as the difficulties that citizens have to follow the complex and slow process of registration, particularly related to the requirement of a series of documents (e.g., criminal records and identity documents of the members), which normally, due to limitation technical resources, cannot be issued at the local administration but at the central level, in the capital Maputo (see also Tøpsen-Jensen et al., 2016; Kleibel, 2017). Besides, A. Francisco (2015) indicates that, due to ignorance of rights, some citizens are easily deceived by local power structures in the sense that, for example, they are required to periodically renew their organization's registration at local government (contrary to legislation that recognizes registration only once). They also are unable to challenge to the discretionary role of the local power, which sometimes hinders their processes. In addition, there is also the lack of financial resources (the overall cost to register an association is about USD440) in a context of high levels of poverty (approximately, 82% of Mozambicans have less than two US dollars a day to live while 60% of them have less than one US dollar a day, according to data from the Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index, 2018). Thus, the authors defend the revision of the law in order to articulate more clearly the relationship between the state and their sector and, ultimately, simplify the process of registering associations at all administrative levels (A. Francisco 2015; Tøpsen-Jensen et al., 2016; Kleibel, 2017).

Thus, the legal-constitutional framework for freedom of expression and association, as well as the government's official commitment to democracy and good governance, is quite favorable in the country. However, as Kleibl (2017) states, this is not enough to guarantee the voice of the citizen, considering the repressive response by state authorities in situations where citizens and groups demand justice, such as, for example, when contesting election results (CIVICUS, 2019).

It is important to refer that in 2014 the National Parliament approved the Law on the Right to Information, an initiative of civil society, after nine years of debate by parliamentarians and strong pressure from CSOs for its approval. According to Tøpsen-Jensen et al. (2016), this Law places strong expectations on the improvement of the environment and of the relations between CSO and government institutions, particularly in relation to the aspect of confidentiality of information by public institutions.

E. Other threats to civic space

The interference and control that the ruling party exercises in Mozambican society are not only maintained within CSO, but also in the various spaces for dialogue established or conquered for

citizen participation, such as formal (invited) or informal (claimed) (Tøpsen-Jensen et al. 2016). While formal spaces are defined by law, rule, or regulation of the state, informal spaces emerge, are structured and function at the initiative of civil society itself. According to the authors, the main formal spaces include, for example, Development Observatories, Institution of Participation and Community Consultations at the district level, interaction with the Assembly of the Republic, and political representation bodies. Informal spaces are basically the platforms and networks of civil society, besides those created by the government initiatives for inclusive participation of citizens in governance at local level, as the case of "Open Governance" and "Open and Inclusive Presidency" (see Gonçalves, 2013). Other spaces are also the media, academia, and cultural actors, which establish alliances between the various actors and civil society.

As can be seen since the period of the single-party regime, when popular participation was reduced to simple consultation (Brito, 2019a), according to Forquilha and Orre (2012, p. 344), Frelimo continues to be a fundamental vector of participation in the public arena, including at the local level. The representativeness of different groups in the local community (young people, women, associations, churches, among others), for example, in the "local councils", is associated with the link with the ruling party. Thus, due to organizational constraints (mainly human and financial resources) or even Frelimo's centralism towards the state, it is difficult for citizens to participate, appreciate, discuss and express their opinions in the policymaking process at the local level (Weimer & Carrilho, 2017, p. 372; see also Forquilha & Orre, 2012). Other formal spaces, such as the Development Observatories, created in the Province of Nampula in 2004 and replicated to other regions in the country, are also problematic. Initially, CSOs were invited by the Provincial Government to observe and coordinate the process of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Strategic Plan for the Province, government interventions, civil society and the private sector, which allowed to establishment a forum for consultation, monitoring and evaluation of the activities carried out by the different actors at provincial level: However, these "good practices" have significantly reduced along the time, due to the action of the central state and the tense and conflictual relationship between political party elites, which sometimes contribute to limit or even cancel the practices that promote (good) local governance of CSOs (Macuane et al., 2012; see also Weimer & Carrilho, 2017). Similarly, the informal mechanisms of participation and accountability, especially the "Open Governance", characterized by the visits made by the President of the Republic (Open and Inclusive Presidency), First Lady, Governors of the Provinces, ministers, representatives of the party-state at various levels, which would be alternative forms of dialogue and citizen participation in the governance process, functioning as a tool for citizens to transmit their life experience in the context where they live and monitor the implementation of governance policies, are not effective. In most of the circumstances, the citizens fear that their contributions (basically complaints and concerns) will be misunderstood by state leaders, resulting in exclusion and repression in the environments where they live (see e.g, Leininger, Heyl, Maihack & Reichenbach, 2012; Gonçalves, 2013).

In fact, the ruling party has been a major obstacle to the development of alternative ways of thinking and to the ability of citizens to organize themselves and freely express their opinions, interests, and daily demands, either individually or collectively. It should be noted that the practice of social control was intensified when Armando Guebuza became President of Mozambique between 2005 and 2015. His rule saw the control of the party machine and its members over the state apparatus increase at all levels and over the territory and the population, transforming and reducing democratic and pluralist institutions to an essentially formal role, without an effective power to influence the governance process (Brito, 2014, p.30; see also J. Pereira & Nhanale, 2014). In fact, as Weimer et al., (2012, p.39) state, in the very understanding of the party and the ruling party elite, "the party is who shapes, it is the real maker of Mozambique's contemporary history and is, in a sense, the 'owner of the country'" (Weimer & Carrilho, 2012, p.38; Nuvunga & Salih, 2013).

F. Roles and strategies of civil society actors and civic action (1-2 pages)

Even considering the closing of the Mozambican civic space, social organizations and citizens, in general, have always sought to maintain an active role in the public space, basically showing their dissatisfaction with public policies. Here are some examples:

- *The silent strikes during the single-party regime:* by the "movimento operário-camponês" (workers and peasant movement) expressed through boycotts/sabotage and lack of cooperation in ideological work are at some extent a way of representations of popular dissatisfaction (Mosca, 2005). Note that the ideological work consisted in combating any kind of rejection to the Marxist-Leninist model of governance, introduced by the Frelimo party, during its Third Congress in 1977, in which the state was defined as "of/for workers and peasants" and the party as the "people' vanguard". For example, the economy followed a centralized model of state planning and sought to institutionalize and expand popular power in the process of socio-economic development, through the socialization of rural areas, the creation of communal villages, collectivization of food production, industrialization, and the formation of the labour force. Although the agrarian sector was a priority for the economic development, the ruling party provided little support and resources that would be necessary to really develop this productive sector on which around 85 percent of the population depended, provoking frustration among the labour force, especially in rural areas. It is important to indicate that during the armed struggle for colonial liberation, peasants were a strategic ally of Frelimo in rural areas, namely by providing food and shelter to their militants (See Mosca 2005; Brito, 2019a).
- *The "riot threshold":* with the introduction of the market deregulation in 1987, the Mozambican state ceased to be the main provider of services and goods. As a consequence, the prices of products and goods rose, affecting the poor, namely the low-income population and unemployed people (Gobe, 1994; Alden, 2001). This generated an explosive/violent popular protest reaction in the country, in which some groups dispersed throughout the country began to demand state intervention in balancing market prices (Hanlon, 1991).
- *The workers'/union strikes:* which started to occur with some frequency in the country, since the 1990s. However, this movement does not seem to have conquered the necessary strength to exert pressure and negotiate with the state or the employers for their class protection. Although in the early 1990s the workers' strikes were marked by violent protests (Hanlon, 1991), over time (to the present day) they have become less violent, taking the form of peaceful marches or even "silent" strikes. As mentioned above, the peaceful marches of the most common workers' unions have been held during the celebrations of 1st of May, when they no longer serve only to glorify the "achievements" of the party-state, but basically to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the precarious wages and employment itself (Macamo, 2015). Two examples of union strikes can be mentioned. First, the strike led by the medical class, conducted by the Medical Association of Mozambique in 2013, claiming among others, the revision of the salary and the status of the medical class. Most of these claims were not met by the Government of Mozambique/Ministry of Health (António, 2013). The second, which became a routine, is manifested by former Mozambican workers who were working in the former German Democratic Republic (RDA) between 1979 and 1990 as a bargaining chip to serve the heavy foreign debt contracted with that country during the socialist government of Frelimo (Oppenheimer, 2004; Hernández, 2008). Since their return to the country, the "Magermans" as they are known, have repeatedly presented their demands to the Mozambican authorities, individually or through their own organizations and by various means, including weekly street demonstrations (on Wednesday), demanding the reinstatement of their rights as workers, such as the payment of a significant part of their wages and the adjustment of the appropriate interest rates to date as well as medical assistance for workers who were victims of accidents at work.
- *The popular revolts against the cost of living of 1993, 2008, 2010 and 2012:* these occurred in a context where the volatility of prices of the main products and basic services tended to accentuate in an economic reality in which the income of families can do little to ensure their subsistence, leading to groups of individuals to contest in a spontaneous way, not structurally organized, and with strong violence (Brito et al., 2015; Chaimite, 2017). As Macamo (2017, p. 200; 2015) states, they can be described hypothetically as an "embryonic social movements", in which the people are demanding for the existence of groups that can position themselves in the struggle to defend their interests and their demands.

- *The marches since 2013:* led by the middle classes and upper classes, the marches began to reveal the "frustration" of society against for example kidnappings, murders and the growing instability in the country (Chaimite, 2017).
- *Civil society networking*: basically implemented in open partnerships between public and private entities, whose actions are implemented through advocacy campaigns, public declarations and statements, press releases, in which the private sector media have been among the main allies to get the messages to policymakers. The main areas of interest for CSO are, according to Tøpsen-Jensen et al. (2016), governance, human and civil rights, gender rights, rural development and environment, and quality education. However, these networks present some main correlated challenges, according to JOINT (2015): the first is that it is difficult to deal with 'competition' or divergence in doing the same work in the sense that members find difficulties in uniting the interests at stake, when they divide responsibilities. The second is related to its sustainability, as networks hardly receive financial contributions from their members and do not support organizations with financial resources. The third challenge concerns the non-consensus among organizations because of the differences in terms of their framework/daily work routine; it is difficult to combine the daily work routine of each organization in order to make the network flexible. The fourth challenge relates to investment in human resources, financial resources, technological resources, and time. Finally, the fifth challenge has to do with governance and internal management, which includes the functioning of the governing bodies and the executive, the separation of powers, transparency, and the raising of resources.
- *Social media:* this is a rising civic space in the country. Little is known yet about their dynamics and configurations, but there is a tendency of civic actors to use these spaces (especially Facebook), even considering the limitations of Internet access in the country (Tsandzana, 2018). Data from the International Telecommunication Union of 2017, about Mozambique, show, for example, that there are 54.1 percent of the population with mobile phone subscriptions and 34 percent with broadband subscriptions; The data also show that 6.5 percent of the population has computers in their homes, 16.2 percent have access to the internet and 17.5 percent use the internet (see, Lagarto, 2018). These figures show at some extent that the country is moving towards an information society, having made the government to pay attention on the regulation of the digital sector, with the approval, in 2017, of the law of electronic transactions (Law 3/2017 of 09th of January). It is important to refer that some digital literacy projects were developed in the country, such as the "Community Multimedia Centers", launched between 2002 and 20o4, with the support of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), focusing on computer training, internet access, recording of contents community radios, among others, for local communities. These centers are managed by local associations under the coordination of the Center for Research and Transfer of Technologies for Community Development, a public institution under the supervision of the Ministry of Science and Technology. Another initiative has to do with the "Millennium Cities" project, created in the context of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations, undertaken by the government of Mozambique, which allowed the creation of initiatives to combat poverty, particularly in rural areas, giving access to members of local communities, among other capabilities, the access to technologies. Thus, according to Lagarto (2018), besides the issues of the coverage of technologies (and the use of internet) in order to increase the effectiveness of technological development and transform the society in to a society of information, the challenge is to overcome the challenges of schooling rates and the growth and economic development. Data from the United Nations Human Development Index show that the primary completion rate in the country is about 46.4 percent and 46.1 percent of the population is living below the poverty line; the country is considered one of the poorest countries in the universe, ranking 180 out of 189 countries (United Nations Development Programme, 2019).

- Media: have allowed a greater extension for civic action, although it depends to some extent on their nature, whether public or private media (Pereira, 2012; Chichava & Pohlmann, 2012; Nhanale, 2019). The media sector in the country plays in important role in the process of forming public opinion and connecting political institutions and citizens. Since 1990, with the inclusion of freedom of expression and freedom of the press in the constitution, subsequently with the approval of Law nº 18/91 of 10 August (Law of Press), the media scenario can be considered to have improved significantly. As a consequence, the period that extends from 1991 is characterized by the emergence of private publications and, consequently, the plurality of opinions and interests. With the composition of the first democratic government, after the multiparty elections of 1994, the Ministry of Information, a body that previously controlled the media sector, is extinguished and the Information Office (*GABINFO*) is created, which would be responsible for licensing and registering the media in the country without, however, influencing the editorial lines of each media. Note that in Mozambique there is a lack of systematized data on the evolution and characteristics of the media sector by this official body. Despite of that, other public and private institution are gathering information under surveys with cross-cutting topics. For example, according to the post-election survey in Mozambique in relation to the 2004 elections, carried out by the Electoral Institute for Southern Africa, the majority of the population (approximately 80%) never has access to newspapers and television. Radio is the most comprehensive means of communication. The radio is listened by about 69 percent of citizens (Brito et al., 2005)). Access to radio, television and the press is more effective for public media when compared to private media. Since then, the situation has not changed much when compared to recent data recent data (See Nhanale, 2019; Lagaroto, 2018). Newspapers circulate more in urban areas while radios have a more comprehensive geographic coverage, particularly the public radio station. In rural areas (or small cities) there is a communication gap, but community media (local TV and Radio stations) are operating in most of them. Note that community TV and Radio is promoted and controlled by the Social Communication Institute, a government agency; some of them are under responsibility of the local associations as well as the Catholic Church (See Nhanale, 2019). Although they have a limited role, in terms of coverage, the media (both public and private media) are a battleground, in particular by the politicians. The attempt to control the media agenda is accentuated in electoral periods (Pereira, 2012) or when they play the role of "watchdog", criticizing and demanding transparency in governance, for example, when they seek to denounce cases of corruption (Nhanale, 2019). Thus, in relation to their mediation role, as for civil society, in the last years the media tend to suffer a limitation and control of their space of action and freedoms, due to the uprising of a climate of fear and violence against journalists and citizens (MISA, 2018), although public opinion has being denouncing using the means mentioned above.

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