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Angolan civil society activism since the 1990s: reformists, confrontationists and young revolutionaries of the ‘Arab spring generation’

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Aiming for regime transformation, post-transition Angolan civil society activism moved from reformism and confrontationism to ultra-confrontationism. Reformism and confrontationism evolved until the 2008 elections, influenced by development thinking (neoliberalism/institutionalism vs neo-Marxism/world-system thinking), in two opposing strategies: ‘constructive engagement’ vs political defiance. The dispute ended with ultra-confrontationism gaining impetus with the Arab spring, with a younger generation resorting to new methods (information and communications technology and demonstrations). Despite the lack of funding or international links, the newer methods caused more concern to the regime. Nevertheless, they suffer from the same shortfalls as their predecessors: they are confined to an urban/suburban social segment, and unable to attract the majority of the population.

Keywords: Angola; politics; civil society; development thinking; youth; regime transformation

[Activisme de la société civile angolaise depuis les années 1990 : réformistes, confrontationnistes et jeunes révolutionnaires de la génération printemps arabe.] Visant une transformation de régime, l’activisme de la société civile angolaise est passé d’un mode réformiste et axé sur la confrontation à un mode ultra-confrontationiste. Le réformisme et le confrontationisme ont évolué depuis les élections de 2008, sous l’influence du courant de pensée sur le développement (néolibéralisme/institutionnalisme versus néo marxisme/concept système-monde), vers deux stratégies qui s’opposent : « l’engagement constructif » versus la défiance politique. Le différent s’est terminé et surpassé par la montée de l’ultra confrontationisme, qui accompagne le printemps arabe, les générations plus jeunes ayant recours à de nouvelles méthodes (technologies de l’information et de la communication et manifestations). Malgré le manque de financement ou de liens internationaux, les nouvelles méthodes ont causé plus d’inquiétudes au régime. Cependant, elles ont souffert des mêmes insuffisances que leurs prédécesseurs : elles sont confinées à un segment social urbain/suburbain, et ne parviennent pas à attirer la majorité de la population.

Mots-clés : Angola ; politique ; société civile ; pensée sur le développement ; jeunesse ; transformation de régime

Since Angola’s transition to a multiparty system in the early 1990s, sections of Angolan civil society activists have shared the aim to transform the regime socio-politically and have been discussing the best strategy to achieve this, despite disagreement on the nature, scope, dimension, pace and depth of that intended transformation. Such activism

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engages to a degree with broader international discussions on development and socio-political change, having adopted different strategies and tactics over the years that can be operationally categorised as going from reformism and confrontationism to ultra-confrontationism, with more revolutionary elements coming from a younger generation partly inspired by the Arab spring movements.

So far – and this is another common trait – these different strategies have been unsuccessful, such failure lying with a shared inability to reach and gain the support of the majority of the population beyond the support confined to relatively small sub-segments of the urban/suburban population.

Two major waves for socio-political transformation can be identified within Angolan civil society after the multiparty transition. The first, which evolved through the 1990s up to the 2008 elections, was clearly influenced by the two dominant currents in international development thinking during this period – institutionalist thinking (rooted in neo-liberalism) and neo-world-system perspectives (rooted in neo-Marxism). The debate crystallised into two main opposing strategies adopted by civil society organisations (CSOs): the ‘reformist’ strategy – of ‘constructive engagement’ with the government; and the ‘confrontationist’ strategy – rejecting any concessions implied by ‘constructive engagement’, opting instead for political confrontation.

In Angola, both sides claim to be more effective in pressurising for regime transformation, in turn accusing each other of indirect/unintentional contribution to maintaining the same regime characteristics that they are seeking to transform – the authoritarianism, oppression, and opaqueness in the management of public resources. The dispute was dominated by the first generation of civil society activists, who were part of the dissatisfied intellectual and technical cadres of the previous single-party structure.

Although after the 2008 elections the confrontationist side was weakened, a new wave of ultra-confrontationism gradually became dominant. Slowly mounting from 2002 up to the 2008 elections, it gained increased impetus with the Arab spring of 2011. The new wave is composed of a younger generation, opting like the old confrontationists to confront the government, but using tougher methods and new modes of struggle, such as new information and communication technologies (ICTs), social networking websites, and street rallies and demonstrations. Despite having less funding, a lack of structure and less international awareness and support than their predecessors, the new wave caused more concern to the regime. Nevertheless, the main shortfalls of their predecessors remain – confinement to a relatively small sub-segment of the urban/suburban population. Such a segment, influenced by external ideas and movements, has been unable to link to the majority of the population and thereby spark a broad movement for intended regime transformation.

This paper has five sections. The first section discusses the influence of neoliberal institutionalism and neo-Marxist/world-system development thinking on strategies of CSOs in southern Africa since the 1990s. The second deals with the Angolan CSO divisions and disputes, largely reflecting those two perspectives. The third section assesses the impact of those strategies on the regime. The fourth analyses the reasons for the decline in the dispute between reformists and confrontationists over their impact. The fifth and final section focuses on the impact of the new wave of conflict with the regime that gained stronger impetus with the Arab spring.

Development thinking and the dominance of neoliberal perspectives on CSOs

Until the mid 1990s, the greatest engagement in democratisation, development and investment in social services and civil rights in southern Africa came from CSOs and churches.

They were the preferred channels for development assistance, being seen as more credible than state institutions immersed in serious corruption and diversion of development funds. The increased CSO involvement was accompanied by a process of reflection and 'theorisation' by different currents in international development thinking on CSOs.¹

The Neo-Marxist/world-system school of the late 1970s and 1980s engaged on issues of empowerment, participative development, and new balance of powers within international institutions. Based on popular resistance within the space for civil society, it saw possibilities for more effective, peaceful and sustainable 'revolution' by the impoverished majorities 'exploited' and 'oppressed' by authoritarian regimes and elites. In the medium to long term, these were to be a conscious civil society movement to reform political and economic power relations, with local initiatives linking to regional and international pressure for structural change (Friedman 1992; Rahman 1993; Nelson and Wright 1995; Stohr and Fraser 1981). The World Social Forum process that began in Brazil in 2001 would be an example of this globally aware process (Santos 2006).

During the first transition phase (early 1990s), civil society held the central role (closer to the neo-world-system perspective) in development assistance, but this short-lived phase ended with CSOs progressively conceding their role to the state, through a gradual acceptance of neoliberal currents of thought. This was embodied in so-called institutionalist thinking which promoted institutional support to beneficiary states through national budgets. To combat the phenomenon of 'failed states' with derelict institutions, linked to growing warlordism and criminalisation of the state and possible 'Somalisation' (Reno 1998; Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou 1999), institutionalist thinking called for heavy investment in the modern bureaucratic-administrative state.

This current of thought was dominant by the late 1990s throughout major international organisations and donor agencies (the European Union [EU], United Nations [UN], World Bank, International Monetary Fund [IMF], United States Agency for International Development [USAID], bilateral cooperation and development agencies, and innumerable international non-governmental organisations [NGOs]). It manifested itself in various state-building programmes dealing with national budgets, notably the World Bank Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).

Civil society was increasingly restricted to a micro-sectoral function of a supportive role to governments, contributing to government policies (from the implementation of social projects, to monitoring authorities and public services). Within this trend, the very notion of civil society gradually lost ground to the wider and more flexible concept of 'non-state actors' (NSAs) elaborated in several EU documents (e.g. Article 4 of the Cotonou Agreement [EU 2000, 2005]), which as well as traditional CSOs, churches, and trade unions, now included the private sector. This broad cooperative partnership strategy for development, involving the state, donors and NSAs, focused more on symptoms of poverty (e.g. the Millennium Development Goals [UN 2000]) than on its 'systemic' and structural causes (political-economic structures and power relations).

This strategic repositioning throughout the 2000s was evident in key aid strategy documents such as the Millennium Declaration (UN 2000), the Rome Declaration on Harmonisation (OECD 2003), the Marrakech Roundtable on Managing for Development Results (OECD 2004), the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (OECD 2005), the Accra Agenda for Action (OECD 2008) and the Cotonou Agreement (EU 2000 – revised in 2005 but with the same characteristics).

In this way, the state reclaimed its previous dominant place within donor strategies. The development assistance of the latter involved greater internal alignment and coordination among donors (such as Part II of the Paris Declaration on 'harmonisation' and 'alignment'

[OECD 2005]), supporting beneficiary state budgets and development programmes, with absolute respect for sovereignty as safeguarded in Article 2 of the Cotonou Agreement (EU 2000, 2005). Irrespective of the 'democratic sins' of various regimes, donor strategies generally aimed to work with the holders of state power, with the expectation of gradual and slow socio-political transformation/reform through institutionalist strategy.

A parallel argument emerged that it was not possible for the government to deal with hundreds of NSAs and that representational structures were needed. Beyond national projects, inter-government regional strategies to fight poverty such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) project of a Regional Poverty Observatory, to be implemented in 2014, emphasised the need for such representational structures to achieve a simplified, effective and manageable civil society participation in poverty eradication (Vidal 2011, 1–3).

The following section on Angola illustrates these discussions on the first wave of development strategies and their impact on CSOs committed to socio-political transformation.

Angolan CSOs, the government and donors: confrontationists vs reformists

Angolan CSOs emerged during the 1990s transition, benefiting from the arrival en masse of international organisations. As there was no private sector independent from the party and state structures (Messiant 2007), CSOs depended on external funding and to some extent on outside agendas and their dominant strategies. The newly created labour market attracted a significant portion of those underpaid middle- to high-level state administrators marginalised within the former single party (Vidal 2007a, 204, 218–220). Reflecting general trends in development strategies, CSOs increasingly replaced the state's role in social sectors and development (Pacheco 2009, 124–125). With this emerged civil political activism decrying state neglect of social sectors, the acute poverty of the majority of the population, and to overcome this, advocating respect for human rights and transparency in the management of public resources (Vidal 2007a, 218–224).

With the end of the long Angolan civil war in February–April 2002, international organisations tried to put pressure on the government to assume more social responsibilities, looking to a much awaited international donor conference with agreement between the government and the IMF. Initially planned for the second half of 2003, the conference was conditional upon the production of an Interim PRSP document that the Angolan government had previously been meant to present. The plan led by the Ministry of Planning, Strategy to Fight Poverty 2003–2006 (*Estratégia de Combate à Pobreza* [ECP]), was supposed to involve broad-based participative consultation with other stakeholders, namely CSOs (MINPLAN 2003). This was the first donor institutionalist initiative in Angola.

Such conditionality of government compliance with increased transparency in public accounts (especially oil), good governance and respect for human rights was a major problem for a repressive regime based on the private appropriation of public resources (mainly oil). The government resisted such pressures and 'luckily' found a new partner in China, willing to fund the country's reconstruction with oil-backed loans, free from any such conditionality. With the new partnership and the boom in oil prices, the government felt sufficiently comfortable by 2004 to give up on the donors' conference and its conditionality. None of the planned mechanisms due to be institutionalised with the ECP were actually achieved, particularly those on CSO supportive participation (Vidal, 2011, 67–70).

The programme should have been the basis for a Medium-Term Development Plan and for a Long-Term Strategy for Structural Development, the so-called Angola 2025. In

practice it was never implemented and the Medium-Term Development Plan to cover the 2009–2012 period ended up being exclusively designed by the government and the majority party in 2008 after its overwhelming 82% win in the 2008 legislative elections (Vidal 2011, 59–60). In 2012, once again, the 72% win of the MPLA in the legislative/presidential elections allowed the government to design the National Development Plan for 2013–2017, excluding other social actors and political parties.

Despite the failure of the first institutionalist thinking initiative (ECP and its structures for CSO supportive participation), in the mid 2000s, some intergovernmental organisations and international NGOs persisted in such strategy, promoting CSOs' 'constructive engagement' with the government, and structures for a regular constructive/supportive dialogue between the government and CSOs.

This position became evident in four major projects, symbolising the strategic divide within Angolan CSOs and leaders involved in debate on strategies for socio-political transformation even if the nature and scope of such transformation was unclear.

The first major project included the Civil Society Strengthening Programme (CSSP), led by Development Workshop (DW) and World Learning (WL), both international NGOs with a long history of cooperation with the government (for different reasons not explored here), with increasingly clear institutionalist strategies. Letters sent to several NGOs and other CSOs by DW on behalf of WL showed that the CSSP intended to map and register national NGOs in order to:

strengthen ... Angolan NGOs, so that they become legitimate and privileged government partners, in providing public utility services. (March 2, 2007, cited in Vidal 2009, 38)

The programme was welcomed by the major CSOs in Angola, although criticised by a few. They saw the intention as being to 'pre-certify' NGOs as 'legitimate and privileged government partners', thereby renewing the government's long-standing intention of control (e.g. the government programme for NGO registration in 2005 [Vidal 2009, 35–36]). Further criticism mainly led by prominent CSO leaders such as Luiz Araújo (SOS Habitat) and Fernando Macedo (Association Justice, Peace and Democracy [AJPD]) was that there was an implicit measure of coercion, with those who could not meet the evaluation criteria (subjective and political) being deemed illegitimate, and consequently discriminated against by donors and state. Such criticism was found sufficiently credible within CSO discussion forums to nullify the programme (criticism also expressed to the author in several personal conversations by those two leaders in Luanda, March 2007).

A second major institutionalist project was the Centre for the Development of Angolan Partnerships (CDPA) in early 2007, envisaging CSO capacity building and partnerships to support government social projects funded by oil companies operating in Angola (a kind of Corporate Social Responsibility). The initiative was originally launched by the EU Delegation, the government of Angola and USAID, and again involved DW and WL at the forefront along with some major national NGOs. Given the operational logic of the political-economic system, when some national NGOs (including the major ones, such as Action for Rural Development and Environment [ADRA-Angola]) highlighted the need to include programmes for civil and political rights, the oil companies raised concerns relating to the political constraints on companies in this sector (Figueiredo 2009, 149–150). From then on the programme became naturally selective and weakened.

A third major project was the EU's 2007–08 Programme of Support to Non-State Actors (known by the Portuguese acronym PAANE – *Programa de Apoio aos Actores Não*

Estatais), with the objective of promoting 'social and political dialogue' between NSAs and national and local authorities. Supervision and implementation of this programme is shared by the Ministry of Planning and the European Commission in Angola, but in practice the ultimate decision rests with the Angolan Ministry of Planning (so-called National Organiser, which authorises implementation of the ninth and tenth European Development Fund Programme in Angola). The subordination of PAANE to the government is clear from funding contracts to non-state actor projects, which determine that:

PAANE has the right to close or suspend financial contributions in advance, and interrupt payments, if: ...

- PAANE is required to suspend or terminate financial contributions by any regional or national governmental institution or any court of law; ...

- The financial contribution was granted by the European Commission and Angolan government, and if these request or demand that PAANE suspend or terminate financial contributions. (cited in Vidal 2009, 37–38)

As pointed out by the coordinator of the association Omunga, José Patrocínio (who joined Macedo and Araújo in the leadership of the anti-institutionalist side), this means serious conditionality. He saw this as being anti-democratic, inducing self-censorship and strengthening government mechanisms of control, repression and restriction of civil rights. Given the array of publicly known government civic and political restrictions on CSOs, it is impossible to strengthen NSAs, their autonomy, their critical and democratic capacity, if project approval, accompaniment and supervision are all conditional on government institutions, which can suspend financial support and end the project at any moment (personal interview, 12 February 2009).

The fourth major institutionalist project came from the EU Delegation in Angola and other major donors in 2007, appealing for a unified CSO structure for CSOs to speak with one voice to state institutions. This was to be formalised at a National Civil Society Conference in 2007 in Luanda under the suggestive theme 'Constructing unity in diversity'. The conference recommendations emphasised the importance of civil society national representation, while referring to the need to unite, to collaborate with the government and represent civil society through constructive engagement (CNSC 2008, 1–3).

Following the usual institutionalist strategy of donors in the region, the second conference in 2008 went further, approving a federal-type representational structure for CSOs from municipal to provincial and national levels (CNSC 2009, 86, 105–106). Critics saw the structure as a way of diluting and silencing the civil rights of CSOs (personal conversations with Luiz Araújo and Fernando Macedo, 28 November 2008; as well as public interventions from the audience at that conference where the author was rapporteur, 25–27 November 2008).

The division was accentuated at the third conference (November 2009) when a serious clash emerged between one of the leaders of the few opposing organisations still at the conference and the majority of CSOs. José Patrocínio, leader of Omunga, left after the organising committee vetoed one of Omunga's documentary films denouncing governmental abuses of human rights of forcibly evicted communities in peri-urban areas. From the third conference onwards progress was difficult not just because of criticism from CSOs opposed to the institutionalist engagement strategy, but on account of government unwillingness over the years to hear conference recommendations (personal conversations with Carlos Figueiredo of ADRA and also main supporter of the conference, March 2010).

By the fifth conference, which took place in Malange Province in November 2011, the project of the national conference was already looking finished, with an acute shortage of funds from donors who had become disappointed with the project, probably due to lack of government interest and no effective impact on public policies.

In general terms, the major splits among the leaders of CSOs committed to socio-political transformations were due to the increasing consciousness of the two opposing perspectives through the discussion between them (Macedo 2009), also reflecting divisions in terms of strategic development thinking on CSOs since the 1990s. The discussion evolved through numerous events, from the Forum of Angolan NGOs (FONGA) to dozens of thematic networks, hundreds of articles in cyberspace and journals, to national and international conferences and two published volumes on the contrasting perspectives by the main opposing authors.² As usual in social organisations and movements, contrasting positions and sides are not homogeneous and may include several 'in-betweens' (e.g. Sérgio Calundungo of ADRA; Calundungo 2009), but that does not diminish the explanatory value of such operative categories. The analysis of this dispute goes above and beyond the statutes of the organisations, which in Angola as in most of southern Africa do not reflect the organisations' real character, being more to do with their leaders, their personalities and standings, as with politics in general.³ The same applies even more to the succeeding wave of ultra-confrontationists, as will be discussed below.

One side can be called reformist (with strategies fitting general neoliberal institutionalist thinking as defined in the first section), standing for a 'constructive engagement' with the government leading to the latter's reform from within. This position accepts a flexible agenda towards donors, and a technical, pragmatic and not overly assertive posture towards the government on human rights (civil-political) abuses for the sake of that engagement. Acceptance of such institutionalist initiatives aims for a gradual and moderate regime transformation in the long term. Prominent leaders and organisations on this side include Fernando Pacheco, Carlos Figueiredo and Guilherme Santos (ADRA-Angola), Benjamim Castello (Jubilee 2000), Francisco Tunga Alberto (FONGA), Allan Cain (DW) and Fem Teodoro (WL).

The other side might be called confrontationist, with positions resembling the more general neo-world-system current referred to above in the first section. Besides civil and political rights its proponents are also involved with social service provision, such as housing, education and food security. While not rejecting dialogue with the government, they do not soften criticism of governmental human rights abuses simply to maintain such dialogue. In essence they disagree that the institutionalist strategy will transform the regime in the long term, arguing rather that it is a sophisticated form of cooption by the government to perpetuate the regime. Instead, in pursuit of regime transformation (which effectively resembles regime change), they opt to systematically confront the regime on human rights abuses, civil-political rights restrictions and mismanagement of public resources, demanding a similar response from the international community and donors. Leaders and organisations such as Luiz Araújo (SOS Habitat), Fernando Macedo (AJPD), José Patrocínio (Omunga), and Elias Isaac (Open-Society Foundation Angola), are the most prominent examples of this side.

The two contrary perspectives appear within international organisations' reports in somewhat judgemental terms, reflecting major donors' preferences, as a separation of 'overly radical' CSOs from the 'authentic and sensible' ones, with the 'most sensible' being the reformists (Amundsen & Abreu 2006, 18) – a Manichaean characterisation intending to value the constructive engagement perspective while denigrating or undervaluing those opposing it. This division has spread among international organisations operating in the field and funding national CSOs, between institutionalist thinking initiatives and

those who oppose them. It goes without saying that the institutionalists had the bulk of funds from major donor organisations (such as the EU and USAID). The confrontationists were mainly supported by Christian-inspired organisations of Northern Europe or former supporters of the 1960/70s liberation movements and anti-apartheid movements (e.g. Christian Aid, Inter-Church Organisation for Development Cooperation – ICCO, Oxfam Novib and the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa – NiZA).

The impact of confrontationists and reformists

Both perspectives, confrontationists and reformists, claim to be more effective on regime transformation, accusing each other of indirect/unintentional contribution to the maintenance of the regime, which both agree is authoritarian, oppressive and opaque (corrupt) in the management of public resources.

The confrontationists accuse the reformists of extending the life of a corrupt regime, helping to mask its true authoritarian and oppressive character with a democratic appearance – ‘recyclers of the regime’. The charge is that of being accomplices of regime survival – collaborationists, acting with donors’ incentives and funds to maintain institutionalist thinking, which also disguises economic interests of major Western countries in doing lucrative business with the regime while appeasing the social/democratic consciousness of Western public opinion (Macedo 2009; Vidal 2006; also from public interventions of Luiz Araújo and Fernando Macedo at the conference on ‘Southern Africa: Civil Society, Politics and Donor Strategies’, European Parliament, Brussels, 17 November 2009).

On the other hand, the reformists accuse the confrontationists of being too aggressive, pushing the government to a more hard-line stance and, in possibilities of dialogue and transformation, opting for an ‘all or nothing’ solution with little benefit to anyone, least of all the poor. In this estimation the moderate and reformist strategy has been able to achieve substantial results through programmes that besides service provision include human rights civil–political dimensions with more funds. Reformists claim the support of major international donors who can exert additional pressure on the government for transformation (Figueiredo 2009, 143–160; Calundungo 2009, 135–142; Castello 2009, 158–160).

While the reformist side has received more funding to implement projects, which include the promotion of civil and political rights, supposedly to achieve regime transformation from within through partnership and institutional dialogue, it has not been able to participate in any sort of policy decision-making structures; the government has never accepted institutionalised structures for dialogue or participation by CSOs.

The 2007 law (2/07) establishing the Councils for Social Listening and Coordination (CACS – *Conselhos de Auscultação e Concertação Social*) was initially seen as a sign of institutionalist success. These councils, convened by local authorities at the provincial, municipal and communal level, are meant to listen to CSOs and the private sector (in line with the concept of non-state actors) and help to solve local community problems. The reality was different. In practice, the CACS were set up and convened at the local authorities’ discretion; participation by a CSO depends on being specifically invited by the local authorities to discuss local agendas established by the state administration. In some cases the councils do function more democratically, but only as a result of individual goodwill on the part of the specific government official in charge and usually favouring the more government-friendly CSOs (Vidal 2011, 69–70).

A revitalisation of the CACS was planned within a new development programme announced by the Presidency of the Republic in January 2011, the Municipal Programmes

for Rural Development and Fight Against Poverty (*Programas Municipais Integrados de Desenvolvimento Rural e Combate à Pobreza*, PMIDRCP) but without changing the substance and praxis. Such revitalisation was also expected through a promised deconcentration of state administration and local elections, but that process has been adjourned, with no knowledge of when or even whether the first local elections will take place.

As for the confrontationists, their path is naturally harder. Apparently confirming the arguments of the reformists, the regime maintained a hard-line position in the face of open and direct confrontation before the 2008 elections. This was evidenced in a number of government responses. First, by threats of making illegal those national and international non-governmental organisations that have caused the greatest political discomfort to government, namely Open-Society Foundation Angola, *Mãos Livres*, AJPD and SOS Habitat (see article 'NGOs that incite disorder may be made illegal', published in *Jornal de Angola*, issue 10812: 3, Luanda, July 11, 2007). Second, the banning of Mpalabanda in Cabinda.⁴ Third, in constraints on media activity (including prison sentences for journalists,⁵ and maintaining restrictions on Radio Ecclesia's expansion outside Luanda). Last, by closure of the United Nations Human Rights Office Angola (UNHROA), directly contradicting government commitments to work more closely with this office, made when Angola ran for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council in 2007 (Vidal 2009, 41–42; BDHRL 2009).

Fade-out and disappointment in the argument between reformists and confrontationists in 2008

In 2008 the conflict between reformists and confrontationists died down and somehow faded out. Several interrelated factors contributed to this: the referred-to tougher government reaction along with its disregard for the institutionalist initiatives; the lack of international leverage and funding for new 'constructive engagement' initiatives in face of government contempt; and the 2008 electoral process and results.

Given that the social and political spheres in Angola are strongly personalised, as described above, the fading of the old CSO quarrel is also due to the weakened position of some of the most prominent confrontationist leaders, namely Luiz Araújo from SOS Habitat (who went into exile before the 2008 elections, after a death threat), the end of the mandate of Fernando Macedo as President of AJPD (replaced by a more institutionalist line of orientation) and the increasing quietness of José Patrocínio, who faced several personal problems.

Moreover, the old civil society contenders and their international partners were taken aback by the 2008 electoral campaign and the MPLA's overwhelming victory. The whole electoral process showed that the majority of Angolans were dominated by a different type of discussion and logic (Roque 2009). Without analysing the electoral process here, it is nevertheless important to understand that war traumas and related socio-historical disputes of the civil war and nationalist struggle – which were cleverly manipulated by the MPLA – were the politically dominant issue. These were the first elections after 1992 ones whose contested nature plunged the country into an extra 10 years of civil war. Additionally, within a dominant neo-patrimonial logic that gained strength through the electoral process, elections were a major opportunity for the sections of the population to grab a piece of the peace dividend, at a time of generous general redistribution by the MPLA, similarly to 1992 (Messiant 1995). It was frustrating for confrontationist CSOs to see how easy (quick and cheap) it was for the MPLA to co-opt poor populations country-wide despite them having suffered from government policies and with previous fierce criticism (personal conversations with Luiz Araújo, Lisbon, October 2008).

This 'cruel reality' had an impact on both sides of the civil society divide. Although disputes on reformism and confrontationism made sense to them and to their international partners, they made hardly any sense to the majority of Angolans. That part of civil society is mainly urban, educated, donor influenced, strongly externally linked, led by technical cadres mostly from the disaffected ranks of the previous single-party structure (Vidal 2007a, 204, 219–220). While able to quickly assimilate and discuss development thinking strategies, this stratum lacked symbiosis with the majority consciousness and day-to-day living, meaning limited capacity for significant transformation of the regime or society as a whole.

The dispute has remained more or less dormant since, including during the 2012 elections. A partial and sporadic exception was the 2010 approval of the new Constitution by the MPLA, which provoked reactions from intellectuals, civil society activists and opposition politicians alike, but their reactions were not organised and no longer had the strength of former disputes of the 'old' reformist–confrontationist civil society divide.

The new wave of civil contestation or the 'Arab spring generation'

Despite the dying down of the previous dispute, several of the arguments of the former confrontationists spread through a segment of a younger generation. The new wave had been slowly growing, with criticism of the president and the regime coming from singers of rap, hip hop and *kuduru* since the end of the war in 2002. This spread through social networking sites, gathering urban/suburban youngsters and gaining increased inspiration and motivation in 2010/2011 with the social and political movements that swept the North of Africa – the so-called Arab spring (with singers such as Dog Murras, Brigadeiro 10 pacotes, MCK and Luaty Beirão – Brigadeiro MataFrakuz).

Like the former confrontationists, the new wave does not believe in the possibility of reform of the regime, which is only democratic in appearance, concealing a sophisticated dictatorship supported by international economic interests and political alliances. They denounce the political manipulation of the public and private media, of the judicial and legislative systems, of the electoral process and results, and even the lack of effectiveness of the opposition political parties.⁶ Their appeal is to an unclear generalised resistance, sometimes resembling rebellion (Cruz 2011), some of them calling themselves a 'movement of young revolutionaries' but without specifying any revolutionary project.⁷

Without ideology, structure or international alignment with broader currents of development thought, their message comes down to 'Remove the president'. The youth movements drew the parallels between the cases of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya and José Eduardo dos Santos in Angola, with a slogan saying '32 is too many' (referring to the 32 years in power of the Angolan president, since September 1979) and publicly asking him during hip hop and rap shows and presentations to step down.⁸ While some political parties hope to attract a few of these new leaders and their rebelliousness to their ranks in case rebellion re-emerges, alliances are difficult and explicitly rejected by some.

The 'new wave' is mainly composed of youth between 15 and 35 years old, urban/suburban students with access to the new ICTs and relatively easier access to an educational system that has been rapidly restructuring and expanding in urban areas since the end of the war. In an apparent paradox, they are among the greatest beneficiaries of post-war economic growth and the increased social investment by the regime. They escaped compulsory military conscription, have an increasing life expectancy, and opportunities for socio-economic mobility unknown to the previous generation. They are growing up in one of the deepest and fastest periods of socio-economic transformation in Angolan history – a

period that still needs to be properly studied, but has undoubtedly changed the socio-economic framework and laid down the conditions for this new ultra-confrontationism and politically fragmented consciousness.

Against the backdrop of the Arab spring and the toppling of long-standing leaders such as Ben Ali, Gaddafi and Mubarak, Luanda became seriously concerned over the new wave, on the one hand denying authorisations for demonstrations and displaying disproportionate force in the streets every time a demonstration was scheduled, while on the other hand proposing pro-youth policies.

The President personally led a 'Programme of Hearings of Youth' (*Programa de Auscultação da Juventude*) in June/July 2013, involving the highest state representatives, directed at young students, members of churches, sportsmen/women, police and armed forces, entrepreneurs, musicians, artists and writers. The process, which clearly excluded members of the ultra-confrontationists, ended with a national youth forum in the capital on 13–14 September, composed of young people from the whole country and in the presence of provincial governors, municipal administrators, traditional authorities, provincial directors of ministries, MPs, ministers, the Vice-President of the Republic and the President himself.

In a statement loudly cheered by the audience, a young delegate to the forum from Uíge Province emphasised the need to avoid 'bad examples such as those of Tunisia and Egypt'.⁹ Stressing the important fact that two-thirds of the population was under 25 years old, the President gave assurances that the youth recommendations would become part of a National Programme for Youth, and that special attention would be given to 'employment and professional training . . . , housing, quality of education, college education, scholarships, access to potable water, electricity etc.' (*Jornal de Angola*, September 14, 2013).

Without external funding or international links, the new wave of ultra-confrontationists raised more concern and substantial response from the regime than all the previous initiatives of the 'old' activists.

In the meantime, Western donors and organisations, together with their counterparts of 'old' reformists and confrontationists, were taken by surprise at the new forms of activism, unsure of how to relate to youth upstaging them. On the one hand, some of the non-institutionalists somewhat romantically saw these youngsters as the next big thing but without any clear idea on how to approach them or what to expect from them, as became clear from the interventions at a UN Regional Information Centre conference on 'Poverty Eradication in Southern Africa' in Brussels on 17 November 2011. On the other hand, institutionalists such as the PAANE representative attempted meetings with few of the youth leaders, namely the group Central 7311 at the beginning of 2014. Coincidentally or not, the PAANE representative had her visa abruptly cancelled on 30 May 2014 and had to leave the country within a week. Ironically this meant that PAANE became a victim of the very rules it had agreed with the government on its programmes with civil society, namely its suspension or termination whenever the government wanted without further explanation.

Lessons from this are that on one hand, the institutionalist investment in constructive engagement failed to progressively transform the regime from within as argued by the old confrontationists (PAANE being a major institutionalist promoter). On the other, ultra-confrontationism provoked a tougher government response and more hard-line policies, as the reformists argued. Despite the new activists raising more concern and reaction from the government than their predecessors, the new wave, just like the former reformists and confrontationists, has been unable to attract the involvement of any significant number

of participants that could in any way effectively and substantially transform the regime. One of the most anticipated demonstrations, which took place on 19 September 2013, ended up with no more than a dozen demonstrators and the arrest of nine of them (Redvers 2013). We are essentially talking of a relatively small number of dispersed young individuals or small groups of individual activists very active in web-based social networks with echoes in the Angolan diaspora, usually disguised under code names, which creates the illusion that they are bigger in number than they actually are. Such a group is unable to organise a broader social movement on the ground that could resemble anything like the first Arab spring mass movements that toppled long-standing leaders and regimes (leaving aside any other comparisons with the nature, context and ulterior developments of such movements).¹⁰

Aside from the insufficiencies or strengths of specific tactics (such as rebelliousness, internal structuring, links to international currents of thought, institutionalism or confrontationism) the major and common shortfall remains the gap between the old and new civil society activists on the one hand and the majority of the population on the other. Any effective and sustainable regime transformation needs to overcome that gap. The 2012 elections exposed that major shortfall of the new confrontationists, just as the 2008 elections did to their predecessors, in two major aspects. First, it revealed that they were still a loose minority segment of the urban/suburban youth without any appealing encompassing message to the 'majority of the poor and marginalised', unable to undertake any more reliable project than overthrowing the president, without any specific idea on what happens on the day after (and by then the instability in post-Arab spring countries had been exhaustively explored by the state media). Second, and again, the elections revealed that in fact the 'poor, marginalised and disaffected' did not constitute a self-consciousness socio-political-economic category of any kind (class or other) ready to be led in a socio-political transformation movement. Several other divisions are in place, some of them old (such as those referred to above in relation to the 1992 and 2008 electoral processes) and some new, resulting from the post-war steep socio-economic transformation that, among other things, has been able to reduce poverty (although more slowly than desirable) and give rise to a growing middle class that is beginning to have something to lose in the event of an abrupt social convulsion such as the Arab spring, and that will definitely have a say in any process of regime transformation, pace and dimension. The 2017 electoral process may add interesting developments on this path.

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Notes

1. A theoretical discussion on the existence and role of CSOs will not be held here, as it has been discussed elsewhere (Vidal 2007a; Vidal and Chabal 2009, 3–15, 19–44); the same applies to the discussion on development institutionalist thinking and world-system perspectives (Vidal and Chabal 2009, 19–44).
2. See Vidal and Andrade 2008; Vidal and Chabal 2009; CNSC 2008, 2009.
3. For such a discussion see Vidal 2007a, 2007b.
4. Mpalabanda is a civil society association fighting for the respect of human rights in the oil-rich enclave province of Cabinda, and has a pro-autonomy stance.
5. This was the case with Graça Campos, chief editor of *Semanário Angolense* and Fernando Lelo, Cabindan correspondent of Voice of America, imprisoned in November 2007, accused of instigating rebellion and crimes against the state. Campos was condemned to 12 years in prison, but freed on 20 August 2009 due to lack of evidence.
6. Several of these ideas were expressed by some of these young confrontationists, namely the musician MCK and the journalist João Paulo N’Ganga, along with several young students and activists attending a public conference on *Freedom of Expression: A Challenge in Angola*, organised by the Media Institute for Southern Africa, Luanda, CEFOJOR, 22–23 October 2013. The same types of argument can also be found in the lyrics of several kuduru, hip hop and rap songs (e.g. “A Técnica, as Causas e as Consequências” [Technique, causes and consequences], MCK 2003, at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SODwjZDUJkw>; “O País do Pai Banana [The country of father banana]”, MCK 2011, at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28ZlzUf-jBg>; “Aqui Tass” [“Here we are”], Dog Murras 2011, at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07nioJpiwS8>; “Angola Lixada” [Messed-up Angola], Dog Murras 2007, at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_r67EquVPuo; “Estado da Nação” [State of the nation], Brigadeiro 10 Pacotes 2011, at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSQwgR8z_xY; “Intolerância Política” [Political intolerance], Brigadeiro 10 Pacotes 2012, at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYkf0ksac4o>. All videos accessed on January 9, 2014).
7. <https://pt-br.facebook.com/pages/Movimento-Jovens-Revolucao%3%A1rio-de-Angola/193817887316857>
8. Such as the intervention of singer Luaty Beirão in Luanda on 26 February 2011, appealing to a youth crowd to participate in a demonstration on 7 March 2011 that later became a reference to these movements, but rejecting alliances to political opposition parties (e.g. <http://centralangola7311.net/>). The Beirão intervention is available on YouTube, accessed on January 9, 2013. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_mhF7fDoekg.
9. Available on a YouTube video entitled “Jovens presentes no fórum nacional da Juventude reprovam manifestações em Angola” [Youth at the Youth National Forum denounce demonstrations in Angola], accessed on January 9, 2014 at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UeqablQpQA>.
10. Several public demonstrations of these groups of young people have been taking place, mainly in Luanda since the first trimester of 2011, involving between a dozen and a hundred people, depending on the occasion: 7 March, 3 September, 3 December 2011; 10 March (Luanda and Benguela), 14 July, 22 December, 22 December 2012; 30 March, 27 May, 19 September 2013; 23 November 2014. A chronology of demonstrations since 7 March 2011 has been attempted by Rafael Marques, but includes demonstrations from socio-professional organisations, trade unions, former military, etc. (Marques 2013).

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