

Participation, mutation and political transition: new democratic spaces in peri-urban Angola

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Introduction

This chapter examines participation spaces in peri-urban Luanda, Angola – a context very different from those that have originated most recent studies in this field and which presents a series of apparently highly adverse conditions for the development of citizen participation. Sometimes labelled a ‘fragile’ or ‘failed’ state, Angola could more correctly be described as a state that is failing its people. It has a tradition of centralised and authoritarian rule stretching back through decades of single-party government and civil war to the centuries of Portuguese domination and colonisation. This tradition has remained powerful despite the shift towards economic liberalisation and formal multi-party democracy since 1991. Sub-Saharan Africa’s second-largest oil producer, with a GDP per capita 29 percent above the continent’s average, Angola’s Human Development Index is nevertheless among the worst in the world, with the country rated 166th out of 177 nations (UNDP 2004).² With the end of the civil war in 2002, attention has begun to shift to the role of governance issues in perpetuating this situation, and in particular the link between limited participation and accountability and lack of social justice.

This chapter argues, however, that significant ‘invisible’ processes of democratisation may be underway – including the emergence of new leaders at the local level and

shifts in citizens' expectations of their interactions with government. It examines the role of NGO-sponsored participation processes in contributing to this trend in the capital, Luanda, through case studies drawn from the Luanda Urban Poverty Programme (LUPP). The analysis argues that while the 'invited spaces' created by these NGOs may begin as conventional participation-in-development models, in the particular social and political context of Luanda they mutate into other forms of participation. These forms reflect the interests, agency and strategies of local actors, their encounters with and adaptation to a changing context, and the release of repressed political energy which follows the opening up of new participation spaces in a setting long characterised by lack of responsiveness. The chapter concludes by examining the challenges for NGOs promoting new participation spaces in contexts like Luanda, and the potential wider application of the lessons learned. In particular, it argues that there is a need to pay greater attention to the accountability implications of new spaces if the emerging leadership that they foster is not simply to reproduce the authoritarian practices of the old, while recognising that even when it has autocratic or elitist elements, this leadership may still play an essential part in steps towards broader participation.

New democratic spaces in adverse contexts

Recent writing on citizenship and participation has increasingly come to focus on the arenas within which new social and political relations are constructed. Some of these 'new democratic spaces' (Cornwall 2004) have been described as sites of 'deliberative democracy' or even 'empowered participatory governance' (Fung and Wright 2003),

where the exercise of reasoned debate between political equals in public space leads to the emergence of consensus and binding decisions. In the development field, there has been a proliferation of participation spaces, often as a result of pressure from multilateral, bilateral or non-governmental development agencies for whom the setting up of user committees or stakeholder fora has become the default means of signalling commitment to participation, citizenship and accountability. At the same time, governance innovations developed in particular parts of the global 'South', such as Participatory Budgeting or citizen report cards, are being exported both elsewhere in the 'South' and to parts of the 'North'. Thus, institutions and practices originating from particular sets of conditions are increasingly appearing in radically different settings, many of which are unpromising or even highly adverse.

Most discussions of the new democratic spaces have focused on the conditions that enable their success, with authors variously emphasising strong associative networks, low levels of inequality, social traditions of conflict resolution through public debate, enabling legal frameworks and pro-poor political parties. While some studies have examined the implications of unfavourable contextual factors and the role of different enabling conditions in overcoming them,³ few have attempted an examination of the nature and potential of participatory spaces in settings where few or even none of these conditions are present. Potentially adverse settings include countries and regions with fragmented societies, high levels of inequality, restrictive legal frameworks, a highly authoritarian political culture and a history of armed conflict. All of these conditions apply to Angola.

In such settings, it is common to find the (often unspoken but nonetheless powerful) assumption that the micro-level changes that may lead to 'empowered participatory governance' are not even worth looking for, since local-level participation is largely meaningless without governance reforms focusing on macro-level political institutions. As a country emerging from one of the world's longest-running and most destructive civil wars, Angola is a prime target for what Llamazares calls the 'emerging consensus' of the 'growing international post-war peacebuilding community', according to whose prescriptions 'the political-constitutional deficit during the initial phase is addressed by transitional governing measures, in the medium term by the organising of a crucial second election, and finally the consolidation of good governance and civil society' (2005: 15). Thus, micro-level democratisation is relegated in the dominant peace-building discourse to the 'final' stage of democratic reconstruction, leading to neglect of the potentially vital contribution which it may make to ensuring the depth and durability of the transition to peace.

This discourse contrasts with the evidence that donor-sponsored proliferation of participation spaces is increasingly extending to post-conflict societies such as Angola. Although humanitarian relief, demobilisation support and infrastructure-rehabilitation assistance continue to dominate aid portfolios in Angola, donor interventions to promote the consolidation of good governance and civil society have mushroomed since the end of the war. This shift has occurred despite the fact that the transitional governing measures and elections prescribed by the dominant peace-building discourse are either absent or uncertain.⁴ The new spaces, which include

networks of groups mobilised for collective action and fora for citizen-state engagement, are thus emerging in a context where the democratic 'rules of the game' have yet to be clearly established. This lack of clarity is a common feature of countries in post-conflict and/or post-authoritarian transition, but it is one whose implications are often given insufficient consideration by both academics and donors.

Donor 'democracy-building' interventions in Angola have largely followed the logic described for Africa in general by Robinson and Friedman (2005), who draw attention to the shift in priorities since the 1990s from political conditionality based on elections towards investment in civil society as a catalyst of democratisation. The World Bank, for example, describes one of the aims of its funding for the *Fundo de Apoio Social* (FAS) social fund programme as being 'to support a governance system in which local governments and communities may gradually become mutually accountable' (World Bank 2004: 1) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) Angola strategy aims to promote 'a political system which allows all people to influence state policy and practice' by supporting 'spaces for dialogue' and 'state citizen engagement' (Jobes 2004: 2). Donors are thus promoting both citizen mobilisation and new democratic spaces in Angola in terms that are virtually identical to those used in far less adverse contexts.

In addition to institutional fluidity and lack of clarity on the democratic 'rules of the game', a further factor of transitional contexts such as Angola's is the identities of the institutions that are actually creating 'new democratic spaces'. While the shift in discourse in recent years towards a focus on participation in governance rather than

participation in projects (Gaventa and Valderrama 1999) has generated an assumption that today's participation spaces are created by governments rather than NGOs, it is important to remember that where government has been unable or unwilling to introduce the necessary reforms, NGOs continue to play a key role in the creation of participation spaces. While some NGOs have an explicit 'participatory governance' agenda, others may view these spaces above all as sites for the mobilisation of local resources for service provision. Even where this is the case, some of the spaces created can come to play a governance role – and thus have wider political significance – despite their origins outside conventional governance-reform processes.

The nature of this role, and its precise implications for processes of democratisation, will ultimately be shaped by the complex interplay between the interests and agendas of government, donors, NGOs and citizen groups both at the policy level and on the ground. The scope for agency is broadest where the balance of power does not overwhelmingly favour one group; at the national level in Angola, for example, while oil and diamond revenues ensure that the government is far less donor-dependent than those of many other poor African states, the need for donors' support in accessing international credit markets ensures that it is not completely insulated from the pressure they may seek to apply (DFID 2005a: 15). At the grassroots level, international NGOs' ability to mobilise financial and technical resources interacts with the political power of local government representatives and the capacity of citizens to exploit new opportunities to further their individual or collective political and livelihood strategies. This capacity for agency on the part of

some grassroots actors is further increased when the context – as in Angola – is one of unclear and shifting institutional roles and rules.

Angola: a changing social and political context

Recent and uncertain democracy

The history of the state in Angola has been marked by strong control over society, centralisation and authoritarian practices. After a long period of colonial rule by Portugal, which had itself been ruled by a dictatorship since 1926, Independence was proclaimed in 1975 by the *Movimento Popular pela Libertação de Angola* (MPLA), one of the three Angolan liberation movements. This political movement was influenced by Marxist-Leninist ideals and founded a strong one-party state, which was highly centralised and made no allowance for autonomy on the part of organized social groups and political organizations.

Although the periods just before and after Independence saw the emergence and significant activity of different civic and political organizations, the Angolan Government gradually imposed control over this social space (Pestana 2003). The need for a strong state was justified by the government and perceived by part of society as necessary to confront increasing threats, both external, related to the cold war at the time and the political geography of Southern Africa,⁵ and internal, linked mostly to conflicting political visions and ideologies of Angolan political elites (Hodges 2002).⁶ With the exception of brief periods of peace just after Independence and following peace agreements in the 1990s, Angola lived at war until 2002.

In 1991, with the end of the cold war, under the weight of a growing economic crisis and following the signature of the Bicesse Peace Agreement with *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA), the Angolan Government abandoned all references to Marxist-Leninist ideology and changed the country's constitution, allowing for the institution of a multiparty political system and a formally democratic state. These changes allowed multiparty elections to be held in 1992, but after UNITA refused to accept the outcome of these elections, civil war broke out again. The war ended in 2002 with the military defeat of UNITA. As no other political force emerged during the 1990s there is currently no real opposition to the MPLA.

While the current strong position of the MPLA would allow those in power to maintain the political status quo, it is undeniable that Angola is changing. Strategies are being developed for macroeconomic recovery and infrastructure reconstruction, a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) has been produced, and legislation has been passed to provide for national parliamentary and presidential elections in 2006. New policy frameworks are being discussed, albeit largely within a closed circle of policy makers. These include provision for the decentralisation of state administration, which could potentially play a crucial role in legitimating and institutionalising new democratic spaces at the local level. However, the current decentralisation process has for the moment only reached provincial level, where it has led to greater concentration of power in the hands of Provincial Governors, who thus have scope to behave as 'decentralised despots' (cf. Mamdani 1996). The final shape of provisions for decentralisation to the municipal and *comuna* (sub-municipal)

level remains unclear, but the government's formal recognition that such provisions are on its agenda has created political space for experimentation with local participation initiatives in a number of municipalities around the country.⁷

At the same time, the easing of political repression and media censorship – above all in the capital, Luanda – has increased the scope for civic associations' advocacy initiatives and the visibility of alternative perspectives on policy issues. Ordinary Angolans are making plans to (re)build their lives, and new actors are beginning to emerge, mobilising local and donor resources for service provision and occupying the emerging spaces outside the institutions of 'formal democracy' that provide some opportunities for citizen voice and the beginnings of democratic debate.

Luanda: between the modern capital and the musseques

The population of Luanda has grown hugely since Independence, as a result of migration linked to the return of Angolan refugees from the former Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo), the collapse of the rural economy, and the war. Most of these new residents settled in the peri-urban areas, increasing the population density of Luanda's *musseques*, the informal settlements surrounding the formal 'cement city' and occupied by the poorer inhabitants of the capital. No one really knows how many people live in the city, but current estimates suggest a total population of over 4 million, between two-thirds and three-quarters of whom may live in the *musseques*. This population growth has not been accompanied by expansion of the supply of public services, leaving most *musseque* residents largely dependent on self-provisioning. The pressures faced by poor households are

enormous, and given the decline in the formal private sector and the low salaries in the public sector, most households depend on the informal sector to survive.

The consequences of many years of neglect and little or no investment are evident even in the 'cement city': it has crumbling infrastructure, bad roads and piles of uncollected rubbish. After the end of the war, the authorities seem to have decided that this situation was no longer tolerable, but their approach to resolving Luanda's huge problems demonstrated the Angolan Government's continued reliance on centralised, command-and-control approaches. In 2004, the President dismissed the Provincial Government and nominated a group of three officials (known as the *troika*) to administer the capital. They were tasked with solving Luanda's multiplicity of problems within a six-month mandate. This decision was highly controversial: though this commitment to decisive intervention was welcomed by many, these three officials were known to have an authoritarian governing style. After its mandate was renewed by another six months, the *troika* was dissolved at the end of 2004 and Luanda's Provincial Government was re-established. The capital's problems remain as complex and deeply rooted as ever.

Despite this erratic approach to its governance, Luanda is changing. Major road works and construction of new residential areas are underway. However, there seems to be no clear urban policy. Recent violent evictions in *musseques* and the dismantling of street markets where informal traders operate seem to indicate that the vision underlying the current changes points to (re)building a modern city where the *musseque* is seen as marginal. The *musseques* are perceived by many Angolan policy makers and part of the elite as a temporary phenomenon whose huge growth

was due to the war and whose size will gradually decline with the return of war-displaced people to their areas of origin, the development of the country and the growth of the modern city. However, the *musseques* continue to grow in the post-war period largely due to in-city migration and natural growth (Development Workshop 2003).

Collective action and participation spaces in Luanda's *Musseques*

Existing participation spaces

Luanda's *musseques* are generally heterogeneous, as their population has grown as a result of massive war-associated migration which at different moments involved people from a wide variety of regions in the country, including both rural and urban areas. Such heterogeneity combines with very harsh living conditions to hinder the establishment of extensive social networks (Robson and Roque 2001). In this environment, churches provide one of the important spaces where people can meet, socialise, be integrated into social networks and participate in organized activities for the benefit of the church or particular social groups.

Small informal mutual aid groups also exist in the *musseques*. In most cases these groups are composed of friends or people who know each other very well. One of the most common types of group is known in Luanda as *kixikila*, where a system of reciprocal loaning and pooled savings brings together a few individuals. Many micro-finance systems set up by NGOs seek to draw upon social relationships constructed within these networks. At a slightly larger scale, some local organized groups have been promoted by national or international NGOs, frequently with a

view to helping to manage specific social services (water, schools, etc.). Very often, the vision put forward by NGOs for the creation of these groups also emphasises the strengthening of local institutions such as *kixikila*, and the promotion of local capacity for mutual aid.

After the new Constitution of 1991 entrenched a right to freedom of association, numerous independent associations or micro-NGOs were created, many of them based in the *musseques*. Functioning principally as 'non-profit social enterprises' driven by 'public service contracting' (Sogge and Thaw 2003: 11), most of these organizations are highly dependent on external donor funding and do not in general claim to represent particular social groups. In the *musseques*, they are often headed by relatively well-educated men, many of whom were previously employed in the formal sector and often play a leadership role in their communities. However, little is known about the internal organizational practices of these organizations and their relationships with the communities with whom they work.

Finally, the *Comissões de Moradores* (CM, literally 'residents committees') theoretically represent a participation space for *musseque* residents. Created by the government after Independence, CMs are supposed to represent the residents of a certain area in dealings with the local administration. In practice, CM members have often been appointed by local administrators with little or no consultation. In most cases, CM members perceive themselves, and are perceived by residents, as serving the interests of the administration. Their status and role in the neighbourhoods have nevertheless changed over time. They lost much of their controlling power with political liberalisation, and currently their role in the *musseques* is mostly related to

land use allocation and mediation of minor neighbourhood conflicts. However, their strong relationship with the administration continues, and in many cases they represent a resource on which the holders of political power can draw for mobilisation in the *musseques*, above all in the runup to elections.

LUPP's vision for mobilisation and participation spaces

The Luanda Urban Poverty Programme (LUPP), which began in 1999, has projects located in *musseques* spread over four different municipalities: Kilamba Kiaxi, Cazenga, Sambizanga and Cacuaco. LUPP is one of the few development programmes working in Angolan peri-urban areas, as most of the NGOs and development agencies have concentrated their operations in rural zones, in line with the donors' emphasis on relief and reconstruction work in those areas most directly affected by the war. While the programme initially prioritised poverty reduction through livelihoods support and development of infrastructure for service delivery, it has since 2003 changed its scope. Although LUPP continues working on livelihoods and service delivery, it increasingly seeks to draw upon its projects' accumulated experience to influence policy and practice for urban development and poverty reduction in Luanda. In 2005, a review of the programme emphasised its increasing focus on 'strategic goals of empowerment and good governance through participatory development' (DFID 2005b: 3).

In line with this change in emphasis, a significant share of LUPP's effort has been channelled into fostering social organization in the *musseques*, and facilitating engagement between local organized groups and state institutions. LUPP has thus

become a key player in encouraging the emergence of a variety of local groupings and 'new democratic spaces' in the *musseques*. While many of these groups are intended to develop the capacity to provide and manage services for *musseque* residents, they are also expected to represent local communities in dealing with state institutions, to defend their rights and to promote broader social change towards a more equitable, democratic and tolerant society. By encouraging greater participation of *musseque* residents in the policy realm, LUPP has thus introduced a more political dimension to the programme's action and given it a democracy-building agenda, expressed in LUPP documents as emphasising 'participatory governance' and the promotion of 'constructive engagement between government and civil society' (Baskin 2003: 3).

Participation in the musseques: two NGO-initiated experiences

Among the groups and spaces created and/or supported by LUPP are local associations, alliances of local NGOs, organized community groups for delivery of services such as water, childcare and micro-finance, local groups for urban micro-planning and municipal fora and councils for local development. Our analysis here focuses on two specific experiences: the process of federation of local Water Committees to create Associations of Water Committees (ACAs); and the process of social and political mobilisation in Kilamba Kiayi Municipality that led to the constitution of the Kilamba Kiayi Development Forum (KKDF). The KKDF represents one of the few experiences in Angola of a local municipal forum bringing together representatives of the administration, members of various local

organizations and individual residents. ACAs provide an example of a membership-based organization engaging with the state on specific issues, while also sharing many of the features of local civic organizations such as those that take part in the KKDF.

The Associations of Water Committees (ACAs)

Water distribution is one of the areas on which LUPP has been focusing since it started, as access to water has been a source of great difficulty for residents in many of Luanda's *musseques*. In order to improve water management LUPP has created Water Committees: neighbourhood-based organized groups with two members elected by local residents to manage water standposts. Their duties include organising water distribution and collecting payment for water from residents, keeping the area clean and carrying out maintenance of the standpost.

In response to the difficulties experienced by the Water Committees in dealing with state institutions, in particular the Provincial Water Company (EPAL) and the local administration, LUPP and the most active members of the Water Committees decided to federate the committees in order to increase their negotiating power. Two Associations of Water Committees (ACAs) were then created with support from LUPP. These ACAs have been legally registered and have formal democratic structures and rules, including an elected leadership, an Executive Body and provision for regular general assemblies.

However, ACAs have also been expected to take on functions that go beyond representation: they have been charged with monitoring and supervising the Water

Committees. As a result, ACAs' Executive Bodies are now overseeing the whole process involved in local water distribution: they direct the establishment of new standposts, organize and lead the constitution of new Water Committees, monitor the functioning of the standposts, collect payments from the Water Committees and distribute the money between the different actors involved (Water Committees, ACAs, Local Administration and EPAL). In their representational role, ACAs have become the interface between Water Committees and the authorities: they have now been recognised by both the Local Administration and EPAL as the single interlocutor for water-related matters in their neighbourhoods.

In addition, in line with LUPP's civil society-building vision for locally organized groups, ACAs have been encouraged by the programme to become local development actors, receiving training in project design, leadership and management. ACAs themselves are also seeking to widen their remit beyond water-related matters. They have begun to develop activities in other areas such as waste collection, health and civic education, and have developed project proposals to submit to other aid donors. ACAs have also joined NGO alliances facilitated by LUPP, and some of their members take part in discussions on urban development and policy at the local level. In reality, ACAs seem to be seeking to become what the members of their Executive Bodies perceive as 'a local NGO': a group of people with leadership capacity, with the desire to help bring about improvements in their neighbourhoods, and with the skills to adopt and use the discourse and methodological tools of the 'development industry' to access wider social contacts, training, funds and new livelihood opportunities.

Local organization in Kilamba Kiaxi: residents' associations, local NGOs and the Kilamba Kiaxi Development Forum (KKDF)

The beginnings of the KKDF

The embryo of the Kilamba Kiaxi Development Forum was a Water and Sanitation Forum created by LUPP that included programme staff, EPAL and other organizations involved in water distribution in the municipality. However the Kilamba Kiaxi Municipal Administration did not take part in that forum. Wishing to move beyond water and sanitation issues and acknowledging the importance of the Municipal Government in local development, LUPP created the KKDF in 2001. The forum was intended by the Programme to provide a place where different social and development actors could meet to discuss, co-ordinate and integrate local development issues and activities as well as help to build a culture of engagement between the community and the government. Although the local administration was formally part of KKDF and the forum was jointly launched by LUPP and the administration, its initial participation was hesitant.

According to LUPP's vision during the initial stages of the process, it was important to organize Kilamba Kiaxi's communities to contest the official vision for future urban development – one that excluded the *musseques* and their population. It was seen as necessary to organize local residents so that they could construct a common voice to deal with the authorities. This process centred on two major activities: the creation of area-based residents' organizations and the enhancement of local NGOs' role in the municipality. The attitude of the Kilamba Kiaxi Municipal Administration

reflected an Angolan tradition of state administration in which civil servants feel accountable above all to the higher levels of the state hierarchy and very little to those to whom they are supposed to provide services. There is also evidence that local administrators tend to avoid open dialogue with local residents for fear of being confronted with problems that they lack the technical capacity, the financial means or the political will to resolve. The country was also still at war in 2001 and the government did not trust independent political (or potentially political) initiatives.

Organising local residents: the creation of ODAs

The Area-Based Development Organizations (*Organizações para o Desenvolvimento das Áreas*, or ODAs) were created to articulate and represent what LUPP described as the 'genuine vision' of the residents of a particular geographical area. As a result, they were purposefully constituted as parallel structures to the *Comissões de Moradores*. The CMs were seen as being primarily at the service of the administration and the MPLA and, consequently, as unaccountable to local residents. The constitution of ODAs was facilitated using LUPP's own methodology and promoted at the initial stage the inclusion of different social groups within a specific geographical area (women, men, children, disabled people, etc.), who subsequently elected local leaders to form the ODAs. An ODA has an average of thirty members, two-thirds of whom are men. The members of the organization's elected leadership body are intended to serve as the representatives of a specific geographical constituency, with the ability to present and defend their constituents' vision and plan in fora such as the KKDF.

ODAs received training from LUPP that was especially oriented towards the organization of urban services. There are approximately 40 ODAs in Kilamba Kiaxi, twenty of which are considered to be active by LUPP. As intended by LUPP, the process for the creation of new ODAs was handed over to existing ODAs that had already been trained for this purpose: the expectation was that this process would generate a 'local urban movement'.

Reinforcing the role of local NGOs

As in other neighbourhoods in Luanda, several local NGOs already existed in Kilamba Kiaxi Municipality. Many of these organizations were formally constituted as membership-based organizations, but in reality were barely active. As noted earlier, these organizations tend to function as social service contractors and are strongly dependent on donor funding. In line with its objective of enhancing local organizations' role in the municipality, LUPP trained many of these NGOs in urban development issues and tools for development interventions (project design and management, gender analysis, etc.). These NGOs are often involved in the implementation of activities that have been prioritised by ODAs and funded by LUPP.

In addition, following the same logic as with the Water Committees and ACAs, LUPP facilitated the creation of a local NGO Alliance in order to strengthen their voice when dealing with official authorities and reinforce their capacity for intervention in the municipality. As absence of independent financial resources constitutes a major obstacle to the continued existence of such organizations, LUPP

funded a small computer services centre to be managed by the Alliance, which was intended to generate resources for its activities.

Local organizations and the KKDF today: building a stronger engagement with the state

After almost four years of existence, the process of local organization and mobilisation in Kilamba Kiayi has evolved. One of the major changes is the role currently played by the municipal administration. Although the municipal administration's engagement with the forum was initially hesitant, the initiative mobilised a massive level of participation from the local population and organizations. The process also attracted a few prominent Angolan politicians belonging to the government and MPLA, who informally approved the initiative and gave it some external legitimacy. It is important to note that the formal presence of decentralisation on the Angolan policy agenda since 2000 gave room for these politicians to be openly supportive of the forum. LUPP's attitude in relation to the municipal administration also changed, leading one of their managers to state that '[while LUPP had] focused considerable energies in building capacity through local NGOs and [ODAs] it soon became apparent that for an effective participatory process to take root strong local government intervention was required' (Baskin 2003: 7).

Finally, with the end of the war in February 2002, the conditions were created for a rapprochement between local organizations and LUPP, on the one hand, and the municipal administration on the other. A stronger participation of the local

administration in the process gave greater legitimacy to the KKDF and reinforced its purpose of providing a space for engagement between Kilamba Kiaxi residents, their representatives and the municipal authorities. At the time, this was an innovative experience in a political environment where local authorities are not generally used to dialoguing with local residents.

Currently, KKDF sessions are chaired by the Municipal Administrator. Discussions at the forum are based on issues brought in by local NGOs and residents' representatives, in particular ODAs. The forum is also developing its organizational structure and becoming institutionalised: it has established two technical committees composed of members of the administration and leaders of local organizations such as the NGO Alliance and churches. These committees are still learning to engage with and propose solutions to complex urban management problems. They are also faced with a lack of financial support to implement their decisions. LUPP continues to play a major part in organising the forum and fostering the process in general.

The KKDF is intended to provide the site for the production of a municipal development plan, but in the absence of financial resources to formulate it and implement recommendations, it continues to function principally as a discussion space rather than a decision-making body. A municipal fund, bringing together small grants from NGOs and other donors, has been created with a board including representatives of LUPP, the municipal administration and the ODAs. However these are still small-scale resources that do not include government funds held at the provincial level, and cannot fund the full implementation of a municipal development plan. Despite these limitations, the KKDF experience has become

widely-known, and it is credited with ensuring that Kilamba Kiaxi was selected to be one of the few municipalities to implement the Angolan municipal decentralisation pilot project currently being prepared by the government with UNDP and World Bank support.

Participation and change: the expected and the unexpected

From community development to democracy-building?

LUPP's founding objective was to ensure improved livelihoods and access to services for marginalised peri-urban communities in Luanda, and this has indeed been one of the major results of its activities. This has been achieved through a strategy involving the creation or reinforcement of local organizations. The emergence of ACAs, for example, has allowed LUPP to hand over the co-ordination of the different Water Committees and the supervision of their activities to a local collective actor, a process that has gone hand in hand with improved local water management. The activities of some ODAs have also generated improvements in service delivery: for example, the existence of an ODA in the local market has had a significant impact on the market's rubbish collection and sanitation. The co-ordination through the KKDF of ODAs, NGOs and other local actors such as churches has also helped raise resources in the municipality to build and manage some new local schools.

Beyond their immediate impacts on services, there is evidence that LUPP's activities are also contributing to the broader democracy-building or 'participatory governance' agenda that the programme has come to espouse. Here, though, its impact is often manifested in unexpected ways. One example is the increasingly

visible presence in LUPP-created spaces of members of the CMs – institutions initially regarded by parts of the programme (notably the ODA-based mobilisation project in Kilamba Kiaxi) with suspicion and even hostility. That these spaces have come to be perceived as settings where meaningful things happen is signalled by the migration of CM members not only to the Water Committees and ACAs, but also to the ODAs, which initially set out to exclude them. The presence of CM members does not necessarily mean that ODAs and Water Committees have imported the hierarchical relationship that CMs have in relation to the local administration. There are signs that the CMs themselves are beginning to change, with some leaders acquiring a reputation as good representatives of residents' views and demonstrating significant mobilisation power. A wider pattern seems to be emerging of leaders of the CMs trying to position themselves in a changing political environment.

More broadly, the new spaces promoted by LUPP have provided opportunities for citizens to deliberate on issues of common concern, some of which are the focus of ongoing policy debate. As Robinson and Friedman point out, 'even where they do not exert policy influence, the role of civil society in providing citizens with an independent sphere of association in which they can participate and deliberate priorities is an important democratic function in its own right' (2005: 29). It may be ACAs' leaders rather than their members who enjoy greater proximity to state institutions, but previously this open access to information and opportunity for influence was available to no citizens at all. KKDF meetings may fall short of the ideal of deliberative democracy – women are present but largely silent, discussions are dominated by the leaders of better-established organizations and there are no

mechanisms to ensure that the decisions taken are actually implemented – but the forum nevertheless provides a space where a larger number and much greater diversity of people can gain a voice in the definition of local priorities than was the case with any pre-existing institution.

Towards broader institutional change?

For the KKDF, however, if financial resources are not available for the design of a full Municipal Development Plan and the implementation of activities that result in clear improvements in Kilamba Kiaxi, there is a risk that the forum will lead to frustration, disenchantment and demobilisation. Much depends on the future of the decentralisation project for which Kilamba Kiaxi has been selected as a pilot site. However, the future of the decentralisation process remains unclear and there are no indications that it will move forward before the elections in 2006. A recent World Bank document notes that, despite some promising signs, ‘there are many challenges ahead to ensure that a sound institutional basis as well as an effective fiscal framework and legislation exist for decentralization and local development’ (World Bank 2004: 5). The extent to which Kilamba Kiaxi can serve as a model for other municipalities in Angola depends, in turn, on whether and how the pilot project will feed into the nation-wide decentralisation process.⁸

The contradictions and impasses created by the stalling of the national decentralisation process are evident in other ways in Kilamba Kiaxi. In particular, the lack of clarity over the emerging rules of the game has provided scope for more explicit divergence between the visions of LUPP and the municipal administration

over the KKDF's future institutional role. While LUPP expects the forum to provide a space for construction of 'a shared vision and consensus with regard to future growth' (Baskins 2003: 9) and a potential site for construction of a participatory Municipal Development Plan, at a forum meeting held in June 2005 the municipal administrator identified the KKDF as the place to discuss 'micro issues' and 'community problems', whereas 'macro issues of the municipality' were to be discussed in the Municipal Council. As defined in the Angolan legislation, Municipal Councils are classic 'invited spaces': they are meetings of the Municipal Government which may be attended by specific individuals and organizations at the invitation of the Administrator 'when he judges this to be necessary' (República de Angola 1999). Without the legitimacy of a decentralisation policy framework which endorses the forum model, there is thus the risk that the KKDF will be seen as a space to discuss what may be perceived as 'minor issues' – such as waste collection or neighbourhood security – while 'important projects' requiring significant investment are discussed in the Municipal Council.

Changing state-citizen relations?

In Kilamba Kiayi, although political support from the local administrator does currently exist, the lack of financial resources and a legal framework to give legitimacy to the process and establish new rules and procedures has resulted in an absence of incentives for civil servants in the local administration to change their attitudes and behaviour. LUPP staff describe a wide gap between the expectations of local organizations and residents who (partly as a result of training and support from the programme) demand more participatory and responsive governance, and the

response from local administration officials. The quality of service delivery in the administration remains little improved, and officials largely continue to maintain the same unaccountable and sometimes dismissive treatment of local residents.

Pressure for change may, however, be emerging from below. In addition to their role in improving service delivery, the variety of organizations created or encouraged by LUPP have also provided a wide range of social spaces where people can meet and discuss matters relating to their neighbourhood, in a context where such spaces were previously almost non-existent. This seems, in turn, to be contributing to a (still tentative but nonetheless significant) growth of autonomous action by citizens seeking to claim their rights, with members of LUPP-supported groups approaching local authorities to complain of abusive behaviour by officials or question decisions that harm their livelihoods, such as market closures.

New leaders and new forms of leadership?

These new local organizational structures have also allowed for the mushrooming of a range of new leaders in the *musseques*: a set of people who have initiative, who wish to take on responsibilities and to be active in the public sphere. Most of the leaders of the NGO Alliances, ACAs and ODAs are men, belong to the relatively privileged *musseque* middle-class, are reasonably well-educated and have some command of 'policy speak'. Many were already perceived as leaders in their communities. What these new organizational structures have provided is a public sphere where they can express themselves and extend their influence beyond their own immediate localities.

While the strengthening of leadership can be an extremely valuable asset in building local organizations, the impact on broader processes of democratisation depends on the quality of this leadership. Authoritarian leadership styles are not likely to ensure that organizations express the views of their constituents. Many of the organizations promoted by LUPP are membership-based organizations with the potential to express the voice of a significant number of people and thereby to play an important role in the democratisation of political life. A key element in fulfilling this role involves developing internal democratic practices (Robinson and Friedman 2005), including robust accountability mechanisms – especially in a country such as Angola, with its long history of leadership models portraying people in power as bearers of rights without obligations.

Internal accountability mechanisms are not always strong in LUPP-supported groups. The different functions assumed by the ACAs, for example, seem to be generating contradictions in their relationship with their constituencies. ACAs are formally accountable to a General Assembly of the Water Committees they represent, whose members are in turn accountable to the local residents of specific areas and are subject to re-election every year. However, ACAs are also expected to supervise the Water Committees, inverting their accountability relations. In practice, Committees and their membership base have little power to hold ACAs accountable, as is evidenced by one ACA's expressed intention to retain Water Committee representatives who had been voted out by their own neighbourhood assemblies. This decision appears to have been motivated by the desire to become a consolidated organization, with a stable membership.

New directions for local organizations?

The incident described above reflects an apparent mutation in ACAs' missions, from 'representative associations' to 'local NGOs' whose primary function is service delivery in a wide range of sectors. This requires ACAs to become independent from their membership base, breaking the chain of accountability initially established to support their representative function and placing in question the legitimacy of their supervisory function. The scope for such 'mutations' derives both from the new and experimental nature of the structures promoted by LUPP and from the wider lack of clarity on organizational models and political/institutional rules of the game that characterises Angola's confused and hesitant democratic transition. While this may lead local organizations away from the institutional roles originally envisaged for them, it demonstrates the importance of the agency exercised by such grassroots groups as they pursue evolving agendas and respond to the opportunities and constraints presented by the context in which they are operating.

Mutation into a 'non-profit social enterprise' type of organization is a path that may be chosen by many membership-based organizations – including structures such as ODAs – in a social context like Angola's where livelihood opportunities for people living in the *musseques* are scarce and working on service delivery combines contributing to the community and gaining political capital with the possibility of generating an income. While this type of organization can undoubtedly make a positive contribution to their communities, their political role in building democracy in Angola will depend on the extent to which their activities are grounded on strong

internal democratic practices – and the scope for establishing alternative mechanisms to fulfil the representative roles which they may be leaving behind.

Lessons and implications

The literature on empowered participatory governance assumes that while contexts may be favourable or unfavourable, they are largely static. The rules of the political game have already crystallised, and changes arise from the emergence of new actors (Left political parties, social movements) rather than any fluidity or indefiniteness in the system itself. In countries immersed in the messy transitions that characterise most post-authoritarian and/or post-conflict settings, this assumption does not apply. This makes it all the more important to avoid generalisations and seek to understand the specific social and political dynamics of transitional contexts and their implications for emerging 'new democratic spaces'. As a recent review of post-conflict governance interventions notes, 'understanding, and intervening in, the dynamics of states where all is not well, where the social and institutional fabric has been shredded and violence has erupted, call for a careful combination of the general (and generalisable) and the situation-specific' (Brinkerhoff 2005: 12).

Angola is currently engaged in just such a complex transition, characterised by the coexistence of authoritarian political practice and a command-and-control bureaucracy with a formally democratic institutional framework, and of a heavily centralised political culture with the emergence of a host of new local political actors and spaces. The evidence from Luanda suggests that contexts where the political and institutional rules are unclear, inappropriate, or both encourage new actors and

spaces to mutate as they develop. This may occasionally have negative consequences – such as the hijacking of plural spaces by narrow interests or the reproduction of authoritarian leadership styles – but it also permits adaptation that enables these structures to respond to the demands and opportunities of their particular contexts in ways which may be more effective than pre-programmed models. The shifting roles that accompany such processes of adaptation may be confusing and sometimes contradictory, but they are also part of a vitally necessary process of democratic experimentation. The outcomes of this process will be crucially determined by the agency of a multiplicity of actors – often operating at cross-purposes – at both the policy and grassroots levels. The dominant post-conflict peacebuilding discourse assumes a neatly sequential model of top-down transformation, in which micro-level democratisation is relegated to the final stage. The evidence from Luanda suggests that while consolidating an enabling macro framework (whether for decentralisation or for elections) is essential, in practice democratisation does not wait for this framework to be in place. Instead, whatever emerging spaces exist will provide an outlet for long-repressed political energy. With this in mind, we argue for recognition of the reality that establishing rules that are both locally appropriate and politically legitimate will necessarily require a long and messy period of negotiation between old and emerging actors in both old and emerging spaces. Establishing links between local experimentation in ‘new democratic spaces’ and macro-level processes of political change is a fundamental element in ensuring that such messy transitions are ultimately meaningful and successful.

NGOs, as sponsors of new spaces and providers of resources that new actors can use to build a social and political base, potentially play a key role in this process. Given the relative significance of their inputs in a very resource-scarce context, NGO projects such as those discussed in this chapter are *de facto* governance interventions whether or not they play explicit attention to the nature of relationships with the state and the political process. NGOs' approach to mobilisation and institutional design therefore needs to move beyond conventional concerns, and begin to focus on the wider political effects of interventions as much as on their immediate poverty-reduction impact. Our suggestion is that a key starting-point for this process is an emphasis on the role of accountability in new structures. Whether in holding the state and other powerful actors (including NGOs themselves) to account, or in developing more transparent and accountable leadership practices within the institutions themselves, this will help to bridge the gap between ad hoc, project-based interventions and wider processes of social and political democratisation.

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¹ This chapter is based on the authors' work in Angola and elsewhere over a number of years, but draws specifically on a series of consultancy studies carried out between September 2003 and December 2004 for the Luanda Urban Poverty Programme (LUPP), a joint initiative of Save the Children UK (SCUK), CARE and Development Workshop (DW) in partnership with One World Action (OWA), funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). We are very grateful to everyone from the communities and the project teams who contributed their reflections, and to LUPP and DFID for their permission to use the material on which part of this chapter draws. In particular we would like to thank Kate Ashton, Allan Cain, Ken Caplan, Susan Grant, Katja Jobes, Martin Johnston, Daniel Miji, Fernando Pacheco and our Citizenship DRC 'Spaces for Change' group colleagues for thoughtful comments on earlier drafts of this chapter.

² Angola is currently the second largest oil producer in Africa (after Nigeria), with a production of 900,000 barrels per day (expected to reach 2.2 million barrels by 2008); in 2000 the country accounted for fifteen percent of the world's diamond production (Hodges 2004). However, the country's estimated life expectancy at birth is seven percent below the average for Sub-Saharan African countries and its estimated adult illiteracy rate is 50.6 percent higher (República de Angola 2003).

³ This is the case, for example, with the literature on unfavourable contextual factors and enabling conditions in Brazil, discussed in Coelho et al. 2002.

⁴ Attempts to form a national unity government were abandoned after the failure of peace accords during the 1990s, while local, parliamentary and presidential elections have been repeatedly postponed and are now due to take place in 2006 (see below).

⁵ Angola was at war with apartheid South Africa until 1990.

⁶ These were mainly divided along the three principal liberation movements: MPLA, UNITA and FNLA (*Frente Nacional para a Libertação de Angola*).

⁷ The authors would like to thank Fernando Pacheco for his insights into the decentralisation process in Angola.

⁸ LUPP has recognised the importance of this issue, and is currently seeking to implement an influencing strategy which links its micro-level interventions with broader policy debates.