SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PRACTICES OF THE NGOs IN ANGOLA. METHODOLOGY AND POWER RELATIONS. THE CASE OF THE NGOs ADRA AND GLOBAL VISION.

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In Angola, the presence and the performance of the NGOs characterized the processes of rural development in the past decades. The present article seeks to analyze the social and political practices of these NGOs, as well as some matters related to the diverse contexts of the country in the domain of socioeconomic intervention linked to the rural environment. Namely, what are the political e social practices of the NGOs in Angola? By which means do the power relations occur in the places of intervention? How are the matters regarding popular involvement perceived? Which has been the social science's contribution regarding the country's rural dynamics?

From the contribution of various authors and theoretical outlooks – namely, the proceduralist analysis, the Actor-oriented perspective, among others –, it looks for answers to the questions raised above and to other relevant matters linked to the NGOs' mediation, emphasizing the emergency period, the post-conflict phase and the national reconciliation period, until around 2010.

The context of the NGOs' emergence in Angola

In Africa, important social and political transformations that culminated in the opening of the multipartisanship characterized the decade of 1990. In Angola, the transition from a single party system to a multipartisan one happened in 1991 with the signature of the Bicesse

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Accords. This process has increased the set of political and social forces, hence enabling the emergence of the non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), now endorsed by the current law.

In the previously mentioned period, the average Angolans expected the country to go through a national reconstruction process, as in 1992 the armed conflict, which lasted since the national independence period, in 1975, was finally coming to an end.

In a broader perspective, the multipartisan elections of 1992 and the speeches regarding the necessity of efforts to overcome the wounds generated by the war have cheered up the government and the other actors who intended to defeat the deep infrastructural problems and social precariousness that used to ravage several strata of the Angolan society. The country's socioeconomic recovery used to be a major issue in the political and social landscape of the period.

However, in the end of 1992, soon after the first multipartisan election of the country, the return of the war frustrated the expectations towards national reconstruction. In addition, this situation speeded up the entrance of new actors in the socioeconomic and political life in Angola, among them, the NGOs – all committed to the exercise of social mediation. Mediation, in this sense, is seen as a set of social actions in which an agent, the mediator, articulates others, the mediated, to social universes that seem relatively inaccessible.

The movement that brought to Angola several international agencies, social organizations linked to churches and international NGOs was internally filled with the emergence of the first national NGOs, whose primaries steps of construction began even before the democratic opening. Turning denser the context of mediation, the first local NGOs were greedy by the establishment of partnership relations with the just-arrived foreign organizations, whose financial, institutional and technical support was a necessary condition to the proper deployment of social projects. Such projects would mitigate the effects of the long-going war that had just been finished with the deployment of the multipartisanship in Angola.

With the return and escalation of the war in 1992, the number of national and international NGOs in activity within the Angolan territory was quickly increasing. Most of these NGOs were seeking to center their actions of social intervention in projects of emergency humanitarian assistance.

The humanitarian assistance increased extremely fast, since the intensity of the war did not stop jeopardizing the economic and social landscape. In several regions of the country, the donations of food supplies, the medical-sanitarian support and the provisional establishment of

roominess constituted the base of survival for many rural and urban families affected by the return of the war.

Years later, in a more advanced situation of emergency intervention, several NGOs, churches, international humanitarian agencies and United Nations' specialized organizations, such as the World Food Program (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), started to adopt a work perspective that required some sort of contribution from the beneficiaries[2] of the programs and projects deployed by these various organizations.

Now in this advanced stage of the intervention, one of the main features regarding the speech of many NGOs was the idea that it was extremely necessary to establish organizational and operational parameters that would contemplate the involvement and the responsibility of the beneficiaries in what is related to the decisions regarding the already deployed initiatives.

The NGOs: post-election period and recent years

The increasing number of NGOs in the previously mentioned period extended its actions to the most diverse regions of the country. The lack of social work sponsored by government organs has made several churches, national and international NGOs and international agencies maintain their support to the population affected by the war. This help was not restricted to one field in specific, comprehending food supplies, education, health-care, basic sanitation, among others.

In several regions of the country, the escalation of the war did not stop affecting both the urban and rural population. Within such context, many people earned the status of internally displaced people due to war. In these regions, specifically the Angolan Central Plateau, the access to the rural zones was getting harder and harder. However, a few NGOs reached and supported a small piece of the rural population that had not moved to the cities. Such people relied, almost exclusively, on these supports to survive.

Due to the complexity of the moment, in terms of paths and political perspectives to the country, the Angolan government set a few priorities to the adequacy of the demands to the scenario of generalized war. Such scenario threatened the large Angolan urban areas, especially those located

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2 The "food for work" perspective emerges in Angola in such context that required the communitarian contribution to the intervention actions deployed by several agents connected to the socioeconomic issues of that time.

outside the coast region, less likely to domination and control by the guerilla group called National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

In this context, the government set priorities on how it would spend its budget. Defense and security ended up receiving top priority, leading the international cooperation represented by several national and international agencies (NGOS, agencies, churches) to a completely new level. Now, such institutions were not playing a secondary and complementary role concerning social support. Instead, they started to occupy a central role in the deployment of projects to support the population.

Within the dynamics of the social intervention in the rural environment – the field in which several of these NGOS and humanitarian agencies were introduced -, the control mechanisms adopted by the government had one as one of its major concerns the definition of priorities in terms of kinds of projects and potential geographical areas suitable to the humanitarian intervention. In addition, UNITA had a lot of interest in enjoying from such support, as well as in the possibility that this support would guarantee to the organization political dividends with the population located in the areas under its control and notably visible influence.

In the middle of the decade of 1990, when the war was in an escalating phase, the government adopted a relevant measure. It was the creation of mechanisms to coordinate the humanitarian help. At that time, instead of providing directly through the Angolan government, the international community preferred to canalize its help through organization of the United Nations' system, such as national and international NGOs.

In terms of speech (mainly filmy, but widely common), this procedure was justified by the reputation of such organization, which is a result of the previous and successful social interventions. Another common motive was the fear of the possibility that the government would use the help to political purposes.

As these organizations were achieving a solid position in the national scenario and capitalizing the acquired legitimacy, many of them started to raise a critical speech against what they considered a lack of efforts from the government regarding the population's situation, majorly of the displaced rural communities due to the war[3]. Several NGOs started to dedicate themselves to document and publish situations of extreme poverty. That indignation began to cross borders, forcing the international community to demand deeper involvement and bigger initiatives from the

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3 Accordingly to the data of the Progress Report MDG/NEPAD (Angola/Ministry Of Planning 2003), the number of displaced people from its living areas and economic activities due to war has achieved around four million people in Angola.

government towards the social sphere.[4]

The creation of agencies such as the Social Support Fund (FAS) by the Angolan government was seen, according to many socio-professionals in Angola, as a response to the critics concerning the low social performance of the government at that time. Initially, the FAS based its interventionist practices in methods and procedures similar to the more experimented NGOs in the social intervention field. Gradually, the Fund acquired autonomy assured by the funds provided by the Angolan government. In the end of the nineties, it was notable the contrast between the financial situation of the FAS and the financial situation of many NGOs, specially the national ones.

The dependence of many NGOs to foreign financial resources unsettled, for the first time, in the end of the decade of 1990, their capacity to socially intervene, when the donors – NGOs and international agencies engaged with development – started to adopt a questioning posture regarding the destiny of the profits from the Angolan oil companies, in a context characterized by the valorization of the crude oil[5] prices and by the severe humanitarian crisis.

The end of the war, in 2002, and the international energy scenario strengthened the Angolan government in face of the foreign pressure regarding the socio-economic background in Angola, considering the interest of several companies and countries in the Angolan energy resources, particularly the oil. The new and more favorable loans from China, without conditional impositions, such as good governance, transparency and human rights, usually demanded by the occidental countries, allowed the Angolan government, in a sovereign way, to trace its own plans and national development agendas (Vidal 2009).

When peace was reached, several foreign organizations that were acting in Angola (NGOs and cooperation agencies) started to adopt a softer speech regarding government attitudes in face of the social issues in Angola. Hence, it is assumed that such change, on the one hand, is associated to the shift of the political context and, on the other hand, to the economic interest of the more influent members of the international community in Angola, being it a country, an organization or a company.

In this new context, now marked by peace, the increase in the Angolan government capacity to exercise its political, economic, social and

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4 Vidal (2009) states that, in response to the pressure from the Angolan social organizations and from the international public opinion, the Angolan government adopted a selective posture of social services supply, based upon political conveniences.

5 Crude is the term used within the international commerce to refer to the gross oil, before refinement.

territorial sovereignty coincided with the international developmentalist thought that, now, unlike the decades of 1980-1990, started to consider the necessity of strengthening the institutions of the State, supporting projects and partnerships with the governmental structures e proceeding to the fund plumbing of such structures.

Within this new development perspective, many NGOs, social organizations linked to churches and national and international development agencies started to act as partners or as organizations hired by the government to intervene and deploy programs and projects of rehabilitation, reconstruction, and development turned to the average Angolans. Equally, the inclusion of sectors e government organs in programs and projects of the NGOs, or the establishment of the most varied institutional relations with organs and government sectors that, since the first moments of peace, started to advance and act in a sovereign way on the peoples and territories until then out of its control due to the war.

The Angolan NGO ADRA – history, social and political practices

The Action for Rural Development and Environment (known by its Portuguese acronym, ADRA) is an Angolan NGO created in 1990 and officially and legally established in 1993. Its appearance is deeply linked to the dynamics that conducted the process of multipartisan opening. One of the main reasons for the foundation of such institution was the perception among Angolan scholars that the effects of the war in the rural fields would take a long time to be overcome. In addition, these intellectuals also had questions regarding the real interventionist capacity of the government organs towards the socioeconomic life in the rural areas.

Based upon structures, organizational systems and flexible management, ADRA structured itself in various provincial offices under Antenas'[6] designation. In many of such provinces, it also created local offices in the regions where the interventions appeared to be more promising over time.

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6   The "Antenas" are autonomous organs that are in charge of ADRA'S provincial coordination. These organs have direct connection to the headquarters in Luanda (Angolan capital) and to field projects under its circumscription, in order to support the several other interventions happening nearby and that in which the organization does not own an office. ADRA's "Antenas" exist to manage and deploy policies, decisions and recommendations from the social and directing organs of the organization. About provincial expansion, ADRA owns Antenas in Huambo, Benguela, Huila and Malange, all of them connected to the headquarters in Luanda.

In its proclamation document, in 1991, ADRA initially defined as its main goals the shared and inclusive communities' action in its work processes, taking into account the necessities and objectives of such. Also, the document stressed the importance of paying attention to the ethnic plurality of the referred rural communities, to the implementation and support to the actions based upon knowledge about the local realities and practices and to the improvement of life quality. All these measures were intrinsically connected to the will of democratizing Angola.

The vision of society upon which ADRA is based was relying on a set of principles such as the return of the cultural values, the valorization of the communitarian actives and the respect to the natural resources, the share of knowledge, the respect to diversity and to social pluralism, the defense of the human rights and of the citizen, and, above all, the fight for democracy.

In a wider frame, the group[7] that created ADRA was a well-known one by the Angolan government. Its initiatives were not seen as possible oppositionist threats to the party in power at that time, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA).

Since its first steps, ADRA got deeply involved in the agricultural development, enjoying the potential of a set of qualified staff with considerable knowledge about rural sciences. Many of these people were originally public servers that were relocated to positions in the NGOs. Among other reasons, the higher wage[8] provided by these non-governmental institutions was a very central justification for this "migration" movement.

Despite the fact that ADRA's efforts in the decade of 1990 were turned to the assistance of the rural population – mainly those people displaced by the war and incapable of living in the urban areas -, there were people who did not recognize ADRA as a non-governmental organization, due to the fact that it was founded by several people who used to be a part of the Angolan government. Such situation suggested that the organization would not raise any critical position against the government.

In an emergency situation, the food aid to the population through donations constituted one of the main assistentialist policies of the entities that intervened alongside the needing population. However, neither ADRA, nor the other Angolan NGOs were capable of providing enough resources and knowledge to operate the humanitarian support operations, which were long lasting and intense, as the Angolan crisis demanded. According to Pain

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7 Several ADRA founders were high-ranked employees of the government or important people within the MPLA party.

8 In the nineties, Angola suffered from high levels of inflation. The NGOs enjoyed a notably higher purchasing capacity when compared to the public service.

(2007), in Angola, the lack of previous experiences put the recently created Angolan NGOs in the need of foreign assistance, be it for institutional and organizational matters or for issues related to the methodologies to be applied in the field actions that were being developed.

Despite the fact that ADRA and several other NGOs defined the rural environment as the geographical center to its actions, the evolution of the social e political landscape, the urban poverty and the rural flight ended up justifying the most diverse interventions in the urban peripheries and in the cities, seeking to mitigate the food, water and basic education shortages.

Within its history, ADRA has faced several kinds of obstacles. For instance, in the mid-nineties, the organization went through a crisis related to its fast grow, due to the trouble in assuring the maintenance of the staff in a few provinces[9]. The increase in ADRA's structure, in terms of human resources, threatened the plumbing of financial resources to interventions directly linked to the beneficiaries, due to the heavy weight that such projects represented to the budget.

The persistence of a chaotic war situation and the crisis associated to the excessive weight that the human resources represented to ADRA's budget imposed to the organization urgent readjustment. This readjustment generated the Institutional Development Program (PDI). Since the mid-nineties until the decade of 2000, the PDI[10] tried to make ADRA's structure more solid, more professional, more interactive and with a wider set of gathered knowledge.

Seen from the point of view of the social intervention practices, soon after its creation, ADRA started to receive technical e methodological support from international agents such as the British NGO "OCORD" and the Portuguese one "OIKOS". This support occurred through processes of permanent adequacy e adaptation to the different Angolan moments. Another factor that benefited ADRA was the acquired knowledge, alongside its partners[11], concerning the requirements of the daily practices.

During the war years, one of the main activities exercised by ADRA was the establishment of partnerships with religious institutions (mainly the Catholic e Protestant churches). Such partnerships provided some benefits

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9   In the nineties, in most of the provinces under pressure due to war, the public administration and the NGOs were practically the only official employers that were hiring young people that were looking for a job.

10 A part of ADRA's PDI had the support from the Dutch organization NOVIB that not only financially supported the initiative, but also dedicated itself to coach the staff.

11 In 1991, ADRA got involved into several field studies in African organizations from Senegal, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, in order to get in touch with new philosophies, experiences and action methods.

to ADRA, due to the candor assigned to religious denominations and due to the credibility that such institutions had with the socioeconomically needy communities. Notwithstanding, ADRA usually had disagreements with such partners in what concerned the mainly assistential character of these religious organizations.

During the emergency period, ADRA and the government organs went through a tension situation. ADRA disagreed with the government about the nature of the assistance that should be occurring. While ADRA believed that the assistance actions should be trying to increase the communitarian involvement in order to drive these communities to a future self-management situation. On the other hand, the government supported the idea of a punctual, circumstantial and ephemeral assistance. The NGO worked alongside the government to defeat problems such as drought, social assistance, food supply and unemployment.

Close to the 2000s, still under a warfare situation, ADRA started to put in practice a brand new process of socioeconomic intervention. This new project intended to disrupt the predominant assistential practices deployed by most of the NGOs, including ADRA itself. Still under an unfavorable socioeconomic situation marked by the war and by the high inflation, the micro-credit programs developed by ADRA intended to disrupt the assistential logic, stimulating the beneficiaries to be responsible. Such idea also intended to bring the feeling of self-realization under an emancipatory perspective to the assisted people.

While the years were going by, ADRA started to be proud of the credit initiatives that it implemented in the rural communities and of the support it received from international donors, aiming to compose funds to operate with these same communities. According to the organization, such funds would contribute to disrupt the welfarist perspective, working as lendings with a return forecast. This process contributed to the abandon of the "donation spirit" that used to be very common among rural development agents. According to Pain (2007), the credit started to be used as a central strategy to the projects of support to the communities deployed by ADRA since the final phase of the Angolan conflict.

Considering the shifting political and social context, in 2001, ADRA started to adopt a long-term strategic thought, based upon the several years of experience and upon its proposals of future actions[12]. Around 2004-2006, when Angola was restructuring its socioeconomic basis, ADRA actively collaborated with the government organs and with several other

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[12] ADRA's Strategic Plan to the period of 2005-2009 redefined the main action field of the organization. Now, it restarted to center its operations in the rural development area, abandoning a few practices in the urban areas.

development agents, mainly the commercial banks, in order to enlarge the credit initiatives. Through this and other partnerships, ADRA aimed to influence and support the creation of the Rural Extension Program sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER).

More recently, within the process of national reconstruction, ADRA not only was collaborating with government organs and with the other development agents, it also was maintaining current programs and projects connected to various sheds of the rural development, reaffirming its ideas and its commitment to the Angolan rural environment.

The international NGO World Vision/Angola – history, social and political practices

"World Vision" is an international NGO originally from the United States founded in 1950. This organization operates in more than 70 countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America. In Angola, World Vision is present since the 1989/90 period through a humanitarian initiative of the protestant church[13]. World Vision's social intervention in Angola is related to the humanitarian operation in the Jamba mining region, in the province of Huila, due to the harshness of the natural catastrophes that hit the south of Angola – more specifically the long lasting drought[14] that occurred in 1989/90.

By the time of its arrival in Angola, World Vision had as main practice the social assistance. However, when it started to be more in touch with the national reality, this NGO started to work with matters regarding the socioeconomic development of the population, emphasizing the mediation with peasants and other activities connected to the rural development.

In the mid-nineties, in the sphere of humanitarian intervention, the tasks of the social intervention consisted on the supply of thousands of tons of food, mainly destined to the needy people – rural population. In this period, for instance, besides the distributive tasks, World Vision began to develop coaching activities regarding the agricultural domain, alongside the rural families. Later, they expanded this project to associations and groups of peasants.

Many of the groups and associations were created with the

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13 Information regarding the appearance of the World Vision shows that this process in fact is connected specifically to the Baptist church, and not generically to the protestant church.

14 In Angola, the drought is cyclic phenomenon, but, in certain years, it can be really severe and tough, causing several damage to human lives e to the cattle, mainly in the provinces of Huila, Cunene e Namibe, where most of the national cattle is located.

support of the World Vision itself, aiming to ease the organization of the interventions in the communities. It is also necessary to consider that most of the principles and values of this organization had a religious disposition.

Among the most outstanding features of the World Vision in Angola, one stands out: the reduced, although solid, base of big donor; also, the small donations from the members of the protestant church all over the world. Due to its activities in the most diverse fields, World Vision had management and organizational features of their very own.

According to Commins (1997), since the beginning of the 1980s, World Vision has been established as network of international partnerships, whose managers are from more than 70 countries in the world. In Angola, World Vision plays an important role if many provinces[15], from the north to the south of the country. However, it maintains two permanent offices: the headquarters of the NGO, in Luanda, and another office in Huambo. Besides that, World Vision has kept local representatives in the counties where it operates.

Another outstanding feature of the NGO World Vision in Angola is the presence of expatriated people from several nationalities[16], which occupied direction and management positions in the organization. As the expatriated people occupied high-level positions within the NGO, the Angolan-national staff was committed to the technical and coordinating positions. On the level of territorial technicians, World Vision preferred to hire local technicians directly from the provinces where the intervention was happening. Despite such situation, the organization also provided high level of mobility within the institution – for instance, the coordinators of the projects.

The wage gap between the national and the international staff existed indeed. It is naturally justified by the hierarchical positions that each group occupied within the NGO. However, it is necessary to point out that World Vision had higher wages than any other NGO acting in Angolan soil. This situation increased the demand for jobs in the NGO due to the better

15 In spite of restricting its offices to only two provinces, during its years of socioeconomic intervention, the NGO World Vision has been developing projects alongside government organs and other rural development agents in the provinces of Malange, Kwanza Norte, Uíge, Kwanza Sul, Moxico, Luanda, Benguela, Bié, Huambo and Kuando Kubamgo.

16 Contrary to Commins' approach (1997), in Angola, this NGOs' leadership positions have been usually occupied by expatriated representatives, which usually are the managers of the offices and of the deployed projects. There are verbal references from national agents of the NGO stating that, when a new project emerges, an expatriated manager appears to work with it.

remuneration[17].

World Vision's presence in Angola is less committed to programs and approaches regarding advocacy and protection of the rights of the rural communities with whom it works. Instead, it focuses its work in mediation projects related to technical matters of the rural environment, such as goods and services supply and interventions in the diverse fields of the rural technology.

Apart from what Commins (1997) expressed about other countries, in Angola, World Vision's partnerships with the government seldom use public money from government funds to deploy programs and projects[18]. Mostly, World Vision's fundraising for its activities and for its partnerships occurs outside Angola. When it happens within the Angolan borders, the funds usually come from American oil companies[19] or from USAID[20] representatives in Angola.

A retrospective view over World Vision's presence in Angola allows us to see that, throughout the 1990s, during the emergency context, most of its assistance actions happened, in fact, through the combination of food supply – fostering rural production – and emergency goods supply to the needy population – potable water, medicines and building materials for temporary shelters.

By the end of the nineties, World Vision was one of the main organizations acting in the support to displaced and endangered (under severe lack of food) population during the war. Such fact is due to the outstanding logistical capacities shown by the organization in the final phase of the Angolan conflict. Around the year of 2000, due to its financial availability

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17 Beyond the relatively higher wage when compared to the other NGOs operating in Angola, World Vision was able to guarantee a set of legal rights to its employees. For instance, among the expatriates: the possibility of biannual vacation, the salary repatriation according to the employee's interest, the expenses due to staff trips, the individual and familiar insurance, the house rent for some of its employees and the abundant payment of the private schools for the sons of the foreign employees in Luanda; among the national employees, the house rent for employees coming from other provinces and the high salary were the main attractive factors.

18 An exceptional situation happened when World Vision got involved in the process of post-belligerent rehab in the province of Huambo, when they had to use government funds. It was the Program for Social Reintegration of former militaries. Many others NGOs got involved as well (2005-2006).

19 In spite of the ambiguity expressed by World Vision's agents regarding the fundraising, there is evidence that several international NGOs have been seeking to obtain, internally, funds form oil companies. Usually, when the NGO and the oil company are from the same country, the NGO gets an advantage when compared to the other NGOs. Therefore, national NGOs are usually running late due to reference terms, such as the language and bureaucracy.

20 USAID (United States Agency for International Development): one of the main American agencies concerning development aid in Angola.

to support post-war activities, World Vision in Angola has presented itself as an active organization alongside the Angolan government, supporting not only the food supply operations, but also the creation of initial transport and shelter rebuilt to the displaced people that were willing to abandon misery conditions in the urban peripheries and go back to their uncertain lives in their origin areas.

Around 2002-2005, while the country was going through a socioeconomic rehab period, among World Vision's programs, two approaches of the mediation towards rural development stood out. In the first place, within the rural environment, World Vision started to seek a more comprehensive involvement of the beneficiary population in the process of implementation of field actions through the interaction with the cooperative agencies and with the local existing – or emerging under its political-institutional influence – associations. In the second place, in the search for political-institutional influence, World Vision not only was trying to establish technical partnerships with the weakened government institutions, but it was also playing actions concerning the reinforcement of the logistic and operational capacities of the public organs through the donation of diverse equipment to function in local organs that deal with agriculture and rural development – as happened in Huambo.

Around the year of 2006, due to the changes in the Angolan socioeconomic landscape and to the financial retraction that several national and international NGOs, World Vision also started to adequate itself to the transition from the rehab phase to the new national reconstruction moment. Three things were extremely noticeable at that time: the decrease in the number of implemented projects and programs; the begging of several contract disruptions among the Angolan staff; and mainly the centralization in one single project of various components that used to be separated in individual programs and actions.

Methodologies and power relations

The impact of the socioeconomic changes due to the cease of the conflict in 2002 reverberated within the urban environment, the rural environment and within the social mediation agents themselves as well. The increase of the State presence in the rural areas, the decrease of the interventions by a few NGOs, the shifting focus of other NGOs, the cease of operations by several NGOs and national and international humanitarian entities, as well as the "death" of several national NGOs – incapable of surviving and adapting itself to the changes demanded by the new context –

exemplify this set of transformations.

In spite of such transformations, now, most of rural development mediators (government and non-government employees) consider that the use of participatory methodologies constitutes a constant feature in their actions in "field" activities. The allusion to intervention processes based upon participatory methodologies has been associated to the legitimation of the processes themselves and the ways to conduct the actions with the communities. However, as already noticed several times, during a field research in the province of Huambo, in the practical actions of many conflict mediators the difficulties of such agents in addressing participatory methodologies[21] became evident.

For instance, among ADRA's technicians in Huambo questioned about the participation, it has been observed that most of them uses plausible arguments about the matter; among the technicians, it was unanimous the opinion that ADRA acts under the so-called Communitarian Development Method (DC, in Portuguese).

According to World Vision in Huambo, the answers regarding the work methodologies used by such organization varied in three references: the "field schools" methodology; the Communitarian Development Method (DC); the "field days" method. In general, it is clear that the mediator's perception about the popular participation ideas exhibit relevant differences between the meanings and the agents' practices.

An equally important matter, linked to the way the rural development mediators relate to the receivers and other included agents in the actuation environment, are the power relations and the way in which they occur in the dynamics of social intervention. According to Neves (2007), in the processes of social mediation, the practices utilized acknowledge the interconnection of different world by knowledge and power manifestations, implying in social struggle and the emergency several conflicts of interest.

A deeper knowledge about the actions of the different external agents helps us to understand the processes that involve the existent power relations between the peasants and the mediators. It implies in understanding, on the one hand, the form in which the complementation among the various agents of development (both public and private) happens. On the other hand, the form in which the struggles and the interests on the table help to conform the realities of rural development and to know in what extent the participation and the social control, alluded by the mediators of the social

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21 The field activities that occurred in Caàla and that served as base to the present article demonstrated the difficulties that IDA and EDA technicians in explaining the diverse approaches and practical meaning of the participatory methodologies.

processes in the rural environment, are effective.

In order to explain the existent power relations between the mediators and mediated, we provide, here, three rural development initiatives deployed in the city of Caàla, from 2008 to 2012, namely the so-called project "Ways of Living", implemented by ADRA, the "PRORENDA" project, implemented by World Vision and by the Program for Campaign Rural Credit, implemented by the Angolan government. These three initiatives lead to the inseparability of the processes that were happening there, at the same moment.

In Caàla, in 2010, the solidification and the advances of the Federal organs towards the most recondite territories were happening in a very open way, situation which contributed to the expansion of the Federal rural development organs and of the action of the social mediators (as the NGOs).

The program "Rural Credit of Campaign" among the legally constituted peasant associations helped to turn to life their organizational interest, what increased their expectations towards the public support. Several Caála peasants who used to be marginalized by the public and even by the private NGO support saw in this State credit program an incentive to self-organization, as well as other already organized peasants in cooperative institutions, associations and solidarity groups.

In the city of Caála, despite the interest and expectations generated by the previously mentioned program, the peasant did not organize themselves well enough. The organization of marginalized peasants in cooperative institutions, associations and solidarity groups have been going through a process of decay, when compared to the expansion of federal organs over the so far inaccessible populations due to the war. In the field of the already legalized associations and cooperatives, the participation of the peasants in the decision-making process was noticeably lower than the will of the federal organs themselves.

In this relation in which the increase in the number of rural development mediators occurs faster than the increase in the peasant participation, we can see that the will of the second have not been necessarily incorporated or at least considered in the actions and decisions of the sectors that dominate the processes of rural development. The domination patterns are determined by social struggles spread by multiple areas in the society (Migdal et al. 1997). In the present days, some of the most sensitive social struggle in what relates to the interaction between the peasants and the external agents are related to their capacities in the delivering technical assistance, financial and organizational support coming from the external agents in face of the demands that overpass the specific competences of

each organ of entity turned to the rural intervention alongside the peasants.

The institutional mechanisms created to support the academic decisions to the municipal sphere, such as the Consultation Councils and the social feedback (CACS) are still unsatisfactory in guaranteeing the "regular, unrestrained and effective exercise of participation" relatively to the governmental policies and, also, in the forms of public intervention held by other agents of development. The effectiveness of the Campaign Credit and other programs and projects carried out by the NGOs has been shown that the exercise of mediation has created social distancing between the local actors and the mediation agents.

The mechanisms and the methodologies of participative nature constitute ways of political action. Rowlands (2002) stresses that development approaches are intrinsically related to power relations. The choice to engage or disengage in political actions is determined by the access from the actors to power resources (Bratton 1997). The success probability of the peasant participation in the initiatives held by diverse sectors linked to the rural development has been extremely dependent on the political background and on the actors' interests. Hardly, it configures an horizontal relation among the involved parts in such processes.

NGOs' struggle for the legitimacy of its processes and actions

The shapes and mechanisms of legitimation constitute one of the bases of the political action. The involvement of the peasants in the projects and the search for the involvement of these in the programs and projects, for instance, have been pointed by the mediators as an important factor that contributes to the success of the planned intervention. Thus, the choices have been many. According to Bratton (1997), the choice to engage or disengage in such activities is determined by the access of the actor to power resources.

In Caàla, the success probability of the peasant participation in the initiatives held by diverse sectors linked to the rural development has been extremely dependent on the political background and on the actors' interests. Hardly, it configures an horizontal relation among the involved parts in such processes.

Regarding several NGOs that operate in the province of Huambo, one of the main features that the mediators seek for is the flexible nature of their own actions. At least in the theoretical level, the NGOs point out a few points: the increasing conscience; the organization, the appropriation; the collective action of the groups and communities by their own propped up;

the satisfaction of the collective and individual interests through the legal rights and political engagement of the society as a whole.

In the rural Angolan context, many NGOs have stated their stimulus to the free expression of ideas and the search for the plurality of expressions related to the issues and realities experienced, particularly in the projects led by these by these organizations, together with the peasant's. The idea of having the legitimacy of their intervention assured by the plurality of expressions is currently present in the discursive field of many mediators. However, in the PRORENDA project, for instance, the majority of peasants have referred feeling free to express their ideas, only when accompanied by member of their own communities, be them leaders of the communities or other remaining peasants.

Regardless, the coordinators of the PRORENDA project have claimed that the discussions and decisions that occurred in this project are obtained legally, because they contemplate the participation and "unrestrained, equitable and free" opinion of leaders, technicians and peasants involved in this rural project. According to Chambers (1995), the poor' voices are not heard in public meetings, where it is usual that only the personalities (locals and outsiders) are heard. In order to legitimate their actions, most mediators tend to privilege the interactions with the local leaderships and maintain little dialogue with the rest of the communities.

In a few occasions, the peasants' interference and questioning drove the legitimation of the mediators' intervention, turning the fight for legitimation of actions into much more complicate processes. This was what happened when the project PRORENDA, sponsored by World Vision, turned available credit in cash.

Most of the credit programs and actions implemented by World Vision in Caàla tend to provide the loans in cash. However, after intense debates, the peasants forced World Vision to change its strategy, otherwise its intervention would fail due to rejection and abandon from the project's beneficiaries.

During the intervention, World Vision changed its opinion, prevailing the peasants' position, hence proceeding to the credit concession and subdividing it into credit in species and credit in cash. According to Long (2007), the local groups (in this case, the peasants) actively formulate and pursue their own development projects, which might get in conflict with the interests of the outsiders – the mediators. The peasants' interference, in this case, not only changed the way of World Vision's action, but also turned the process of legitimacy of the NGO's intervention into something much more complicate.

In this case, the process of dialogue between World Vision and the peasants on the new routes followed by credit issue mentioned above emerged as a central concern that has covered the satisfaction and the interests of the peasants. Although, in many policy contexts, a number of factors, including the competition among the mediators, put the demands of the peasants on a secondary level.

In the different scenarios of intervention, several mediators (public and private organizations) seem to present worries concerning the protection of their image to the public and, hence, they also have been trying to present themselves as actors whose work enjoys unquestionable legitimacy. They are organizations that work alongside poor people, but they are not members of the base organizations of the population.

The interests of the mediators seem to overcome the challenges of development and the domination over the "others" seem to be their main objective in the processes of legitimation. The analysis of more intervention programs and projects played by various mediators may contribute to the understanding of how such mediators have been building their legitimacy and which are the relations and implications of such construction in the power exercises and in the matter of development.

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to analyze social and political practices of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) operating in Angola. Through the contribution of different authors and using the proceduralist analysis as a theoretical perspective, it seeks to answer four questions about these practices, namely: what are the NGOs political and social practices in Angola? How do relations of power take place in areas of intervention? How are the issues related to the public participation perceived? And what has been the contribution of social sciences to the rural dynamics of the country? After, it is expected to conclude, to a greater or lesser extent, that the interests of mediators in the rural development processes often seem to outweigh the real challenges of development; and the domination of the "other" seems to be at the heart of many processes of legitimation.