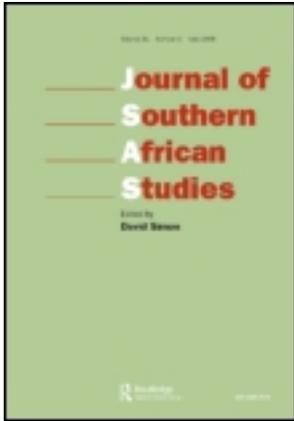


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### Politics of Memory, Decentralisation and Recentralisation in Mozambique

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# *Politics of Memory, Decentralisation and Recentralisation in Mozambique\**

VICTOR IGREJA

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*This article explores the contradictory processes that arise from projects of democratic decentralisation in the contexts of those post-civil war, emergent pluralistic democracies and ruling elites that typically strive to officially maintain essentialist forms of national unity, identity and commemorations. These contradictions significantly shape projects of democratisation and decentralisation in post-conflict countries, even though they have not been thoroughly accounted for in the expert literature. In Mozambique, these contradictions were analysed through the unrelenting attempts by the main Mozambican opposition party, Renamo, to inscribe officially in the country's landscape their own version of the post-independence civil war (1976–1992). Taking advantage of the Law 2/97, known as the Juridical Framework for the Implantation of Local Autarchies, Renamo built a square with a sculpture to honour André Matsangaíssa, Renamo's first commander killed in combat during the war. The inauguration of Matsangaíssa Square was the focal point of serious elite factional contestation and debates in the media and in the streets about the appropriate memories to give a new sense to national unity, identity and decentralisation. The Frelimo government both appealed to the Administrative Court and recentralised some aspects of the decentralisation law. Although the elites' representations of the meaning of decentralisation and recentralisation shape the public's views, the positions of the ordinary people signal that the dynamics of decentralisation and national identity are far more complex than the elite partisan discourses which are also at times incoherent. The overall analyses demonstrate how conflicts over memories of violence paradoxically hamper and constitute political pluralism, democratisation and decentralisation in post-civil war Mozambique.*

## **Introduction**

Five years after the end of the Mozambican civil war, the mother and relatives of André Matsangaíssa, a Frelimo dissident and first president and commander of the rebel movement Renamo, held a traditional ceremony in Gorongosa, a district of the Sofala province in central Mozambique, to commemorate the death of Matsangaíssa. He was killed in Gorongosa on 17 October 1979 while fighting an insurgent war against the Frelimo government. On 17 October 1997, a delegation from Renamo in Gorongosa also performed an official ceremony to honour the factional contested figure. The Renamo members wanted to hold the ceremony in the exact place of Matsangaíssa's death and build a tomb in his honour although the Mozambican authorities never recognised the Renamo war (1976–1992) as legitimate. The former secretary of Frelimo in Sofala considered the ceremony partisan; he asserted that 'the men of

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Renamo do not know their history'.<sup>1</sup> Hence the Renamo members were wrong about the place where Matsangaíssa had been mortally wounded in combat. The local administrator of Gorongosa, who lamented that he did not 'know why they [Renamo] are so unrelenting',<sup>2</sup> ended up accepting one of Renamo's two demands in the name of reconciliation, as he told me.<sup>3</sup> The administrator conceded that Renamo could undertake the official ceremony, but he refused Renamo's request to build a tomb in honour of Matsangaíssa. The tomb was never erected.

Following the Gorongosa failure, the most notorious move towards recognition was given as a result of the decentralisation process initiated with the national parliament's approval in December 1996 of the Law of 2/97, which created the legal framework for implantation of decentralised municipalities.<sup>4</sup> This article analyses the impact of the Renamo's legal decision in July 2007, following the Law 2/97, to inscribe in the landscape the name of Matsangaíssa, this time to be commemorated by the inhabitants of Beira, the second most important city in the country. Frelimo reacted unfavourably and presented a legal appeal to the Administrative Court and climbed hastily to the rostrum of the national parliament so as to reverse legally some aspects of the decentralisation path into recentralisation. The reactions of the political elites and the diversified responses of journalists and Beira residents examined here reveals both the limits and possibilities created by nation-building projects that attempt to appease essentialist traditions of historical representation with democratisation and decentralisation processes.

It will be argued here that, although Frelimo legally succeeded in reversing the decentralisation (into recentralisation), they were only partially successful as Frelimo's legal initiatives also exposed the divisions among the Frelimo elites. These divisions are reminiscent of Achille Mbembe's idea of 'chaotic plurality', which leaves 'enormous spaces open to improvisation'.<sup>5</sup> In this regard, some of the Frelimo echelons have subtly recognised the limits of the selective memories of the liberation struggle in the current context of pluralistic democracy, and the fact that in practice other political groups have contributed to national unity and identity. Informally decentralised modes of symbolic recognition of various factional figures of Mozambique's recent political history have flourished. This has happened in spite of Frelimo's legal monopoly over the official agenda on national unity, identity and commemorations.

While unofficial commemorations have favoured Renamo, the cadres of this party have not linked their struggles for acknowledgment with public notions of national identity. This type of public commemoration flourishing in the streets means that neither the opposition forces nor the Frelimo ruling elites are capable of following coherent paths. This incongruence leaves the state and some of the national symbols of representation in permanent tension, while ordinary citizens, although somewhat influenced by the political disputes, have found vocabularies, languages and strategic repertoires to interpret the clashes between the various political factions. The result of these languages and repertoires is the maintenance of a conflictual but non-violent urban space of political disagreement and contestation in Beira. The durability of these peaceful urban spaces also derives from a sense of collective identity that people, in the case of the Beira residents, often express through the interjection '*nós os Beirenses*' ('we the people from Beira').

1 C. Muchangage, ex-Gorongosa administrator and ex-First Secretary of the Frelimo party in Sofala province. In *Diário de Moçambique*, 20 October 1997.

2 A. Chinai, ex-Gorongosa administrator. In *Diário de Moçambique*, 20 October 1997.

3 Interview with A. Chinai, ex-Gorongosa administrator. Gorongosa, 28 July 1998.

4 *Boletim da República* no. 7, I Série, II Suplemento, 18 February 1997.

5 A. Mbembe, 'The Banality of Power and the Aesthetics of Vulgarity in the Postcolony', in A. Sharma and A. Gupta (eds), *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader* (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 385.

The data used in this article was collected through various methods: in-depth interviews in Gorongosa district and the cities of Beira and Maputo (the capital) with the political leaders of Frelimo, Renamo and the Beira Democracy Group; in-depth interviews with key officials and informal talks in the corridors of the national parliament in Maputo. Surveys were also conducted over time with adult citizens on the streets of Beira city to explore their perceptions about the political conflict over Matsangaíssa Square: August 2007, January 2011 and August 2011.<sup>6</sup> Other sources consist of official documents, newspapers and blogs regarding the recent political history of Mozambique and political speeches located in archives in Beira and Maputo.

## Memories of Violence, Political Pluralism, Decentralisation and Recentralisation

Societies experiencing transitions from colonialism to national liberation struggles and independence, or from dictatorships and civil wars to peace and democratisation, are confronted with the need to deal with the legacies of preceding regimes. They also have to create new and inclusive forms of political participation.<sup>7</sup> These transformations have been studied in the fields of the politics of memory, transitional justice and historical dialogue and accountability, on the one hand, and nation-building, democratisation and decentralisation on the other. The main gap in the literature, however, is the lack of studies that analyse the intersections of these two streams of political transformations and the role that both political elites and ordinary individuals play. A comprehensive analysis is necessary to determine the myriad of ways in which conflicting representations of the past and processes of democratisation and decentralisation can paradoxically co-exist in tension and be mutually influenced in post-conflict and emergent pluralistic democracies.

Various studies demonstrate that political transitions at state level are marred by partisan and uncompromising attitudes, because political elites are aware of the significance of memory for acquiring and maintaining political power and legitimacy.<sup>8</sup> In this regard, the politics of memory involves contested decisions as to what and who are to be publicly remembered or forgotten,<sup>9</sup> and the form that social and political institutions should take in the future.<sup>10</sup> In the aftermath of colonial and authoritarian regimes in Africa (and beyond) there has been a proliferation of projects to remove the vestiges of previous regimes from meaningful public places. These vestiges are either destroyed or kept in museums, and the public spaces are filled in with new monuments that embody the political representations of the new regime.<sup>11</sup>

In post-independence Africa, these types of projects have been controversial as the memories of the national liberation struggles were often essentialised. What was regarded as politically problematic was excluded from official regimes of memory and commemoration.<sup>12</sup> This exclusion gave rise to serious contestations from groups that felt

6 These were conducted with the participation of two (male and female) research assistants.

7 V. Igreja, 'Mozambique', in L. Stan and N. Nedelsky (eds), *Encyclopedia of Transitional Justice*, Vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 305–311.

8 A. Alonso, 'The Effects of Truth: Re-Presentations of the Past and the Imagining of Community', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1, 1 (1988), pp. 33–57.

9 R. Werbner, 'Beyond Oblivion: Confronting Memory Crisis' in R. Werbner (ed.), *Memory and the Postcolony* (London, Zed Books, 1998), pp. 1–17.

10 J. Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003).

11 S. Levinson, *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies* (Durham, Duke University Press, 1998).

12 W. Adebani, 'Death, National Memory and the Social Construction of Heroism', *Journal of African History*, 49, 3 (2008), pp. 419–44.

excluded from official recognition and commemoration.<sup>13</sup> There are no easy routes to address the legacies of past violent and unjust regimes. In the post-apartheid transition in South Africa, the political elites avoided 'a radical iconoclasm' in order to contribute to the process of 'nation building in the spirit of inclusiveness'. However, the process ended up embroiled in conflicts about official and legitimate representations and commemorations of the past.<sup>14</sup>

In contexts of major political change, 'social memory is a central site of political contest'<sup>15</sup> to the extent that politicians use 'memories as weapons' for partisan gains.<sup>16</sup> Yet there is still a need to investigate: the relations between political contests over memory, democratisation and decentralisation through devolution; and how these relations enlarge and restrict the sense of national unity and identity among political elites and ordinary citizens.

The available literature on democratisation and decentralisation recognises that decentralisation through devolution is a complex process because of the diversity of interests of the political actors that struggle to retain or access control of the state at different levels.<sup>17</sup> Decentralisation consists of 'measures that initiate a transfer of responsibility (authority), resources (human and financial), accountability, and rules (institutions) from central government to local entities';<sup>18</sup> and devolution is the process in which 'there is transfer by the law and other formal actions, of responsibility, resources, and accountability.'<sup>19</sup> The transnational nature of circulating discourses and experiments on democracy creates a familiar set of factors that emerge from newly democratic countries that adopted decentralisation policies.<sup>20</sup> In general, the need to decentralise is justified on standardised arguments. Typical of these is the argument that the transference of state authority from central organs to local constituencies increases efficiency and popular participation and sense of ownership on matters of local governance.<sup>21</sup> In contrast, the political justifications for adopting recentralisation, the process of removing previously handed out state authority to local organs, and bringing it back to central state organs, are based on less standardised arguments.<sup>22</sup> Thus a context-specific approach is necessary in order to grasp the dynamics of decentralisation and recentralisation in post-conflict countries engaged in democratic state-building and facing fierce debates over the place for a wide range of memories of political violence.

13 J. Alexander, J. McGregor and T. Ranger, *Violence and Memory: One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland* (Oxford, James Currey, 2000); R. Kössler, 'Facing a Fragmented Past: Memory, Culture and Politics in Namibia', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 33, 2 (2007), pp. 361–82; N. Kriger, 'The Politics of Creating National Heroes: The Search for Political Legitimacy and National Identity', in N. Bhebe and T. Ranger (eds) *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* (London, James Currey, 1995), pp. 139–162.

14 S. Marschall, 'Commemorating "Struggle Heroes": Constructing a Genealogy for the New South Africa', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12, 2 (2006), p. 177; B. Hansen, 'Public Spaces for National Commemoration: The Case of Emlotheni Memorial, Port Elizabeth', *Anthropology and Humanism*, 28, 1 (2003), pp. 43–60.

15 Alonso, 'The Effects of Truth', p. 51.

16 V. Igreja, 'Memories as Weapons: The Politics of Peace and Silence in Post-Civil War Mozambique' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 34, 3 (2008), pp. 539–56.

17 S. Cheema and D. Rondinelli (eds) *Decentralising Governance: Emerging Concepts and Practices* (Washington, DC, Brookings Institute, 2007).

18 D. Olowu and J. Wunsch, *Local Governance in Africa: The Challenges of Democratic Decentralisation* (London, Lynne Rienner, 2004), pp. 4–5.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

20 J. Paley, 'Toward an Anthropology of Democracy', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31 (2002), pp. 469–96.

21 J. Barkan and M. Chege, 'Decentralising the State: District Focus and the Politics of Reallocation in Kenya', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 27, 3 (1989), pp. 431–453; Merilee Grindle, *Going Local: Decentralisation, Democratisation, and the Promise of Good Governance* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2007); J. Samoff, 'Decentralisation: The Politics of Interventionism', *Development and Change* 21 (1990), pp. 513–130.

22 K. Eaton, 'Political Obstacles to Decentralisation: Evidence from Argentina and the Philippines', *Development and Change* 32 (2001), pp. 101–127; T. Manyak and I. Katono, 'Decentralisation and Conflict in Uganda: Governance Adrift', *African Studies Quarterly*, 11, 4 (2010), pp. 1–24.

In post-conflict contexts and emergent pluralistic democracies, serious conflicts arise from political attempts to blend diverse streams of memories of violence with modernisation projects through the creation of new decentralised institutions.<sup>23</sup> These conflicts can turn decentralisation and recentralisation into either a potentially conflict-solving mechanism, or a source that deepens and perpetuates conflicts, to the extent of precluding real debates about possible alternatives among political elites.<sup>24</sup> The few available studies that have focused on decentralisation<sup>25</sup> and recentralisation<sup>26</sup> in post-conflict countries have not comprehensively explored these issues and links. Thus in this article I examine how both political elites and ordinary citizens have related to the politics of memory, national unity and identity, in the context of decentralisation and recentralisation in Mozambique.

## Postcolonial State Building and Political Violence in Mozambique

Frelimo's armed struggle for independence ended with the Lusaka Accords on 7 September 1974 between Frelimo representatives and the leaders of Portugal's Movement of the Armed Forces. These forces had just defeated the dictatorship regime in Portugal in April 1974. The peace negotiations in Lusaka secured the transfer of power to Frelimo, which led to independence on 25 June, 1975.

According to the Frelimo political programme, the postcolonial project called for the decolonisation of the state and its institutions as well as the construction of structures adequate for popular democratic power.<sup>27</sup> During Frelimo's 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress in February 1977, the postcolonial statebuilding project was boosted when the liberation movement was officially transformed into a socialist party with Marxist-Leninist orientation. Socialism was central to this project and it was attributed a mythical force, as the former president Joaquim Chissano asserted to his audience: 'it seems that to talk about socialism is nice, since we started talking about socialism this room got fresher'.<sup>28</sup> The guiding principle of socialism was democratic centralism, which meant that the executive, legislative and judiciary powers were vested in Frelimo.<sup>29</sup> As in various postcolonial states,<sup>30</sup> Frelimo adopted a modernist agenda and state nationalism – 'nationalism erected in opposition to existing ethnicities'.<sup>31</sup> This political

23 R. Fanthorpe, 'On the Limits of Liberal Peace: Chiefs and Democratic Decentralisation in Post-War Sierra Leone', *African Affairs*, 105, 418 (2005), pp. 27–49.

24 C. Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (Verso, London, 2000).

25 H. West and S. Kloock-Jenson, 'Betwixt and Between: "Traditional Authority" and Democratic Decentralisation in Post-War Mozambique', *African Affairs* 98 (1999), pp. 455–484; J. Alexander, 'The Local State in Post-War Mozambique: Political Practice and Ideas About Authority', *Africa* 67, 1 (1997), pp. 1–26; Fanthorpe, 'On the Limits of Liberal Peace'; G. Cistac and E. Chisiane (eds), *10 Anos de Descentralização em Moçambique: Os Caminhos Sinuosos de um Processo Emergente* (Maputo, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, 2008); H. Kyed and L. Buur, 'New Sites of Citizenship: Recognition of Traditional Authority and Group-Based Citizenship in Mozambique', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 32, 3 (2006), pp. 563–81; A. Machohe, 'Limits to Decentralisation in Mozambique: Leadership, Politics and Local Government Capacities for Service Delivery', PhD thesis (The Netherlands, Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2011).

26 E. Chisiane, *O Retorno à Concentração e Centralização do Poder Administrativo em Moçambique* (Maputo, CIEDIMA, SARL, 2011).

27 S. Machel, 'Message to the People of Mozambique – September 20 1974' (Portugal, Afrontamento, Libertação dos Povos e das Colónias – 6), p. 11.

28 J. Chissano, speech at the celebration of the heroes and Frelimo's party day. Mozambican Railway, 3 February 1987.

29 J. Cabrita, *Mozambique: The Tortuous Road to Democracy* (New York, Palgrave, 2000), p. 85.

30 C. Young, 'The End of the Post-Colonial State in Africa? Reflections on Changing African Political Dynamics', *African Affairs*, 103 (2004), pp. 23–49.

31 M. Cahen, 'Nationalism and Ethnicities: Lessons from Mozambique' in E. Braathen, M. Boas and G. Saether (eds), *Ethnicity Kills? The Politics of War, Peace and Ethnicity in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Houndmills, England, MacMillan Press, 2000), p. 165.

project was problematic and ended up creating a double alienation. That is, due to its modernist agendas and fixation on selective memories of the independence war, the state alienated large segments of its population, thereby alienating itself. This double alienation undermined the state's effort to attain the 'material and moral transformation of its entire national population'.<sup>32</sup> The principle of people's participation through non-discriminatory and inclusive forms differed greatly from reality. The state authority was centralised as 'the superior levels', which were dominated by particular ethno-regional elites, 'transmitted the necessary orientations and showed the essential tasks and controlled their execution'. In turn, 'the inferior levels informed about the process of implementation, transmitted the problems on time and proposed solutions'.<sup>33</sup>

The principle of democratic centralism also shaped the politics of memory, commemoration and national identity, which centred on Frelimo as the unifier and sole guide of the Mozambican people since the national liberation struggle. Early in postcolonial Mozambique, as in postcolonial Zimbabwe, Kenya and, more recently, post-apartheid South Africa, the process of dealing with the legacies of the past was seriously contested.<sup>34</sup> Frelimo suppressed the multiplicity of memories of the national liberation struggle. One of the most notorious cases of suppression of memories involved the case of Uria Simango, who was one of Frelimo's founders, and his wife, Celina Simango, both of whom were killed by the Mozambican authorities some time after independence.<sup>35</sup>

While engaged in suppressing the memories of dissidents, the government gave the country political memories and symbols that highlighted Frelimo as the sole party of liberation. Thus the date of Frelimo's creation as a liberation movement (25 June 1962) coincided with the date of independence (25 June 1975), although there have been recent blogs, accompanied by historical documents that have claimed that Frelimo was actually founded on 2 February.<sup>36</sup> Frelimo's leaders made sure that its foundation as a political party (3 February 1977) coincided with National Heroes' Day (3 February), established to commemorate Eduardo Mondlane, who was Frelimo's first president during the anti-colonial war and was assassinated on 3 February 1969. In addition, Ngungunhane was declared a national hero in 1985. He was a southern pre-colonial king who subjugated the populations in central Mozambique but also resisted the Portuguese occupation, before being defeated and deported to Portugal.<sup>37</sup> The elevation of Ngungunhane, in disregard of historical figures from the centre and north of Mozambique, further reinforced people's perceptions that Frelimo only recognised historical figures from southern Mozambique, in particular from the Gaza region. This is so because Frelimo's first president Mondlane, as well as the country's first and second president, Samora Machel and Joaquim Chissano, respectively, were all from Gaza province.

Frelimo's higher echelons had already noticed in 1975 that the unrest among certain segments of the population was fuelled by their feelings of exclusion in favour of some of the southern elites. Prior to the celebration of Mozambique's independence, the then prime minister of the transitional government had to give account to his northern audience by arguing that:

32 T. Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (California, Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 191.

33 J. Chissano, 3 February 1987. Arquivos da Rádio Moçambique. Maputo, Mozambique.

34 Alexander *et al.*, 'Violence and Memory'; Kriger, 'The Politics of Creating National Heroes'; Marschall, 'Commemorating'; Hansen, 'Public spaces'.

35 B. Ncomo, *Uria Simango: Um Homem, uma Causa* (Edições Novafrica, Maputo, 2003).

36 F. Gil, in the blog: <http://macua.blogs.com>

37 G. Liesegang, *Ngungunyane: A figura de Ngungunyane Ngumayo, Rei de Gaza (1884–1895) e o Desaparecimento do seu Estado* (Maputo, Arquivo do Património Cultural, 1996).

We in the government of transition, we did not forget for a single minute the situation which prevails in Cabo Delgado; we do not forget a single day the obligations that the people of Mozambique has to the province of Cabo Delgado as well as to the provinces of Tete, Niassa, Zambezia and Manica and Sofala that were involved in the armed struggle. It is true that we had been much more worried about the provinces of the south in order to try to give the same morale, the same determination, equality of spirit and thought to the Mozambican people.<sup>38</sup>

Frelimo was obliged to recognise the non-southerners symbolically and materially for their role played in the anti-colonial resistance and armed struggle. Instead of elevating the non-southerners, Chissano reasserted southern dominance of the struggle narrative:

We just want to ask you one thing, you must never accept the enemy's propaganda, which has already initiated, but it did not initiate here in Cabo Delgado, it initiated in the south; the enemy propaganda argues that the *camaradas* of the provinces that fought were forgotten.<sup>39</sup>

These initial political machinations were significant as the interlocking of historical figures and dates centralised Frelimo in ways that equated 'centralisation' with 'ownership' by a group of southern politicians and equated decentralisation with its loss. Yet, in spite of Frelimo's initial monopoly of the official history writing and commemoration, an analysis of the improvised speeches of some of their key figures demonstrates that they were still not always coherent in their narratives. As Machel once told his audience:

Listen well, we did not say this in public yet, we did not wish that the war ended in 1974, we were waiting for '76, '78, we already had other objectives; we had already reached superiority in relation to the colonial army. We no longer wanted that, it was a pity, it was a pity, and the Portuguese could have also completed some of the houses that they were building.<sup>40</sup>

He was aware that his revelations were paradoxical, as he was suggesting the possibility of living for a little longer under the colonial duress in order to have the Portuguese finish some of the buildings that they were constructing. Significantly, Machel warned the journalists that this information was not for public consumption.

Frelimo's post-independence project of state building, which was inspired by the experiences of the liberation zones during the armed struggle for independence and the authoritarian socialist model of development, achieved little and intensified the sense of alienation.<sup>41</sup> In 1986 some time before his death, Machel attempted to address the sense of alienation that the people from the centre and north of the country felt following independence. He nominated Francisco Masquil, a native of Sofala province and of Ndaue ethnicity as the governor of Sofala. This nomination was regarded as 'a confirmation of Machel's strategic intelligence in order to justify the dream of national unity'.<sup>42</sup> However, this strategy was inconsequential as, for instance, it took more than three decades (2009) after independence for Frelimo and the central state officials to open their 'reserves of memory' to officially recognise and commemorate a northern hero from the anti-colonial struggle, the late Paulo Samuel Kankhomba.<sup>43</sup>

Following independence from Portugal, the Frelimo government and rebel movement, Renamo, engaged in a protracted war that lasted 16 years (1976–1992).<sup>44</sup> The origins of the postcolonial war remain a matter of fierce dispute and disagreement between Frelimo and Renamo cadres, as well as in academic circles. Frelimo's official view, which is also

38 J. Chissano, then prime minister of the transitional government. Mueda, Cabo Delgado, April 1975. *Arquivo da Rádio Moçambique*. Maputo, Mozambique.

39 *Ibid.*

40 S. Machel, improvised comment made during the *Reunião dos Comprometidos*, Maputo, June 1982.

41 Y. Adam, *Escapar aos Dentes do Crocodilo e Cair na Boca do Leopardo* (Maputo, Promédia, 2006).

42 'As confissões de Francisco Masquil', in *Diário de Moçambique*, 17 October 1995.

43 P. Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2006).

44 J.P. Coelho, 'Da Violência Colonial Ordenada à Ordem Pós-Colonial Violenta: Sobre um Legado das Guerras Coloniais nas ex-Colónias Portuguesas', *Lusotopie* (2003), pp. 175–93.

consistent with numerous academic publications, is that the continuing violence derived from the former white minority regimes of Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa, designed to impede the post-independence socialist development of Mozambique.<sup>45</sup> Thus Frelimo labelled the war a ‘war of destabilisation’ wherein some Mozambicans grouped in Renamo were used as puppets of foreign interests. The Renamo movement was not regarded as a legitimate armed national group, but was treated as an externally created and driven group of ‘armed bandits.’

In turn, Renamo have argued that the main causes of the postcolonial civil war were Frelimo’s Marxist-Leninist policies. Afonso Dlhakama, Renamo’s leader, asserted that ‘never Frelimo tried to strike me in Rhodesia because I was always here’.<sup>46</sup> Recently it has been revealed that ‘André Matsangaíssa raised the national flag on 25 June 1975’.<sup>47</sup> Yet, one of Frelimo’s founders, Marcelino dos Santos, adamantly denied these allegations, repeatedly telling me that ‘it’s a lie, it’s a lie. Matsangaíssa never belonged to Frelimo’ and that the leading team of the independence celebrations ‘were carefully filtrated and were pure people’.<sup>48</sup> Dlhakama’s assertions and these new and controversial, revelations are made in order to suggest that Renamo was composed of Frelimo dissidents and was therefore less externally based and supported than Frelimo indicated. Although this argument is by far the less represented position in academic literature, Renamo cadres affirm that they dissented because Frelimo’s Marxism was ‘a political and ideological brutality which created communal villages ... re-education camps, the making of people’s collective fields and shops, cooperatives of consumption, nationalisation of buildings and huge enterprises, the introduction of the law of *chambocos* and execution of innocent citizens’.<sup>49</sup> Soon after independence, the government publicly committed itself to wage a political struggle against religious influence and local traditions as these were regarded as obscurantist practices.<sup>50</sup> Traditional leaders (named ‘*regulos*’ by the Portuguese colonial state) and traditional healers were treated as ‘enemies of the people’ and obstacles to the modernist agenda. Large numbers of Mozambicans who had worked for colonial institutions were named ‘the compromised’ and were violently persecuted.<sup>51</sup> Although there has been a growing literature suggesting the need to consider a multiplicity of factors behind Mozambican violence following independence, the familiar official disagreements between Frelimo and Renamo continue in times of peace and democratisation.<sup>52</sup>

45 J. Hanlon, *Mozambique: The Revolution Under Fire* (London, Zed Books, 1990); A. Vines, *Renamo: Terrorism in Mozambique* (London, James Curry, 1991).

46 A. Dlhakama. Televised interview, ‘No Singular’. Mozambican Television Archives, 1997.

47 In *Zambeze*, 28 February 2008.

48 Personal interview with Marcelino dos Santos. 16 December 2011, Maputo.

49 Intervention by I. Saica, president of Renamo’s Women League, during the public commemorations in Gorongosa district of the eighteenth anniversary of the death of André Matsangaíssa. in *Diário de Moçambique*, 20 October 1997; C. Geffray, *La Cause des Armes au Mozambique* (Paris, Editions Karthala, 1990); D. Hoile, *Mozambique, Resistance, and Freedom: A Case for Reassessment* (Mozambique Institute, London, 1994).

50 In ‘Notícias da Beira’, 27 November 1979; V. Igreja and B. Dias-Lambranca, ‘Christian Religious Transformation and Gender Relations in Postwar Mozambique’, *Journal of Religion in Africa* 39, 3 (2009), pp. 262–294.

51 Cabrita, ‘Mozambique’; M. Cahen, ‘Success in Mozambique?’ in S. Chesterman, M. Ignatieff and R. Thakur (eds), *Making States Work: State Failure and the Crisis of Governance* (Tokyo, United Nations University Press, 2005), pp. 213–233; V. Igreja, ‘Frelimo’s Political Ruling Through Violence and Memory in Postcolonial Mozambique’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36, 4 (2010), pp. 781–799.

52 S. Lubkemann, *Culture in Chaos: An Anthropology of the Social Condition in War* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2008); H. Abrahamsson and A. Nilsson, *Mozambique: The Troubled Transition* (Zed Books, London, 1995); Adam, ‘*Escapar aos Dentes do Crocodilo*’; M. Hall and T. Young, *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique since Independence* (Hurst and Company, London, 1997); M. Anne Pitcher, *Transforming Mozambique: The Politics of Privatisation, 1975–2000* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002); see a comprehensive review of these debates, A. Dinerman, *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Revisionism in Postcolonial Africa* (Oxford, Routledge, 2006).

## The Politics of Peace and Transition, Democratisation and Decentralisation

The transformation processes that led to the peace negotiations and subsequent political democratisation in Mozambique already began during the civil war through the adoption of a new constitution in 1990. This constitution officially recognised various individual and collective freedoms and political, legal, cultural and religious pluralism in an attempt to resolve the problem of the double alienation and expand the state's authority to the entire territory. Following two years (1990–92) of mediated and direct political and military negotiations, the Mozambican General Peace Agreement (AGP) was signed on 4 October 1992 in Rome (Italy). Renamo was officially recognised as a political party and since 1994 it has participated in various electoral processes. Yet while multi-party democracy and the rule of law were introduced, Frelimo retained control of the state institutions and Renamo kept a parallel army in Maringué district, the ex-military headquarters of the wartime rebel movement. These facts, combined with the absence of a 'truth commission' (as in post-apartheid South Africa), have created an openly contentious transition, as Renamo both outside and inside the national parliament, and numerous intellectuals through the media, have presented competing versions about the memories of the national liberation struggle and the civil war.<sup>53</sup> Frelimo conceded Renamo's right to participate politically, but rejected Renamo's attempts to change the current version of the country's official history. This position has sustained fierce political conflicts which have influenced the processes of democratisation and decentralisation in the country.<sup>54</sup>

The 1990 constitution mentioned decentralisation as a guiding principle in restricting the public administration sector. However it was not prescriptive about how the devolution of state powers would be institutionally configured. Both the constitution and the Law 3/94 of 13 September 1994 that had created the initial legal framework of decentralisation lacked specification of the definition of local agencies of the state and local authorities, and how the citizens were to officially participate in the political processes of their cities and villages. Some of these limitations determined the revocation of the Law 3/94.<sup>55</sup>

The national parliament made an ad hoc revision of the constitution in October 1996 in order to address these limitations at the constitutional level and replace the Law 3/94. The revision explicitly introduced the principle of local power as encompassing the existence of local municipalities. These institutions were created by universal suffrage and the system of proportional representation in order to elect an assembly and an executive agency with deliberative powers. Administrative, financial and patrimonial autonomy were also granted to the local municipalities.<sup>56</sup>

These revisions were agreed by deputies of the three parties with parliamentary representation (Frelimo, Renamo and the Democratic Union). Yet Armando Guebuza, the ex-leader of the Frelimo party executive, recognised the importance of introducing local power into the constitution, but also warned that 'the dangers of this phase must not be underestimated. The national unity created by the Mozambican Liberation Front facilitated the liberation struggle and creation of the nation and the Mozambican state.' He concluded by

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53 'Missing Truth in Mozambican's History', in 'Canalmoz', 4 February 2010; L. Nhachote, 'Eduardo Mondlane did not Die in Betty King's House', in *Canal de Moçambique*, 7 February 2006; F. Malhuza, 'Contributions for Mozambican History', in *Canal de Moçambique*, 14 March 2006.

54 Igreja, 'Memories as Weapons'.

55 Chisiane, 'O Retorno à Concentração'.

56 Archives of the Assembly of the Republic (AAR). Maputo, 29 October 1996.

affirming that 'we think that the introduction of the autarchies should not mean the fragilisation of the Mozambican state'.<sup>57</sup>

Although Frelimo unrelentingly defends its position as the sole nation-builder and history-maker, the current context of democratic pluralism makes it more difficult to sustain this position politically without becoming incoherent. This was visible when the ad hoc revision of the 1990 constitution was finalised and approved with acclaim. The ex-president of the ad hoc commission, who is also a high-echelon figure of Frelimo, enthusiastically proclaimed 'we have just finished writing history'.<sup>58</sup> The 'we' implied that in the everyday practice of political pluralism, Frelimo's essentialist approach to national unity and identity was, through improvisations, actually being reconfigured even if the party echelons paradoxically refused such a possibility.

### **Law No. 2/97, Politics of Memory and an Anthropology of National Identity**

The approval of the constitutional revision laid out the foundations for the specific laws to regulate the decentralisation process through Law no. 2/97, known as the Juridical Framework for the Implantation of Local Autarchies. The whole debate around the creation of Law no. 2/97 revealed some of the hesitations over the efficacy of devolving power to local authorities.<sup>59</sup> A majority of Frelimo MPs insisted that 'the municipalisation cannot and must not represent a negation of the state' which suggests that for them decentralisation represented a loss of ownership.<sup>60</sup> The objectives of the draft proposal were to 'reinforce the national unity and the unitary power of the state; deepen and consolidate democracy; reconstruct and foster the economic, social and cultural development; and improve the life conditions of the citizens'.<sup>61</sup>

While the issue of national unity and identity was central to Frelimo, this presented a loose understanding of its meaning. Frelimo stated that national unity was based on two presuppositions, 'the community is based on common objectives and each member of the community feels and assumes that s/he has a share of responsibility and identical power to the other members of the same community. The common objectives are defined in each historical moment by the people through their political representatives . . .'.<sup>62</sup> For the Renamo MPs, the problem was that hitherto, the definition of common objectives had been a prerogative of Frelimo alone, and none of the Frelimo cadres indicated which people would define the common objectives in the new context of pluralistic democracy and how. One Renamo MP reacting to the minister's speech first criticised Frelimo's approach to national identity and in a lengthy speech concluded that 'it is good to remember that Mozambique does not belong only to the founders from the south of the Save River; Mozambique extends to the Rovuma River [in the north]. It is necessary to remember the figures of the traditional power of the rest of the country such as Makombe, Dombe, Maticuir, Chobodembo, Mataka, Cavinka, Matico, Bavala and Ciere, Cuate . . . All these figures represent the resistance of the Mozambican people in each of these regions in the same way as Ngungunhane, Maguiguane and others here in the south . . . The traditional authorities of the rest of the country also resisted, up there [north and centre] there are also heroes of the resistance . . .'.<sup>63</sup>

57 A. Guebuza, ex-leader of the Frelimo party bench. AAR, Maputo, 29 October 1996.

58 H. Gamito. Archives of the Assembly of the Republic (AAR). Maputo, 29 October 1996.

59 West and Kloock-Jenson, 'Betwixt and between'.

60 A.R. Sithole, Frelimo MP. Debates on the Law 2/97. AAR, Maputo, December 1997.

61 A. Gamito, ex-Minister of Estatal Administration.

62 *Ibid.*

63 A. Zacarias. AAR, December 1997.

The former President of the Assembly, Eduardo Mulembwe, another member of Frelimo's higher echelon, was enthusiastic at the end of this speech, and gave the impression that he was listening for the first time to a different but meaningful version of Mozambican history, culture and sense of national identity. He said to the Renamo MP, 'thank you Deputy A. Zacarias for this lesson in anthropology'.<sup>64</sup> The President of the Assembly also revealed that the parliamentary chairpersons decided not to interrupt the Deputy Zacarias, 'due to the diversity of issues that he raised' although he had already exhausted his party's allotted time. Another MP requested that the President make copies of the speech of 'our brother [Renamo MP]' in order to distribute it to interested deputies because 'the issue that he presented was of huge diversity and maybe of huge importance'.<sup>65</sup> These enthusiastic reactions suggested that some of the Frelimo MPs recognised the need to diversify memories in order to craft the official history; and that the issues of national unity and identity require adjustments to the new context of pluralism and decentralisation.

In spite of the acclaimed anthropological lesson given by the 'Renamo brother', the Frelimo MPs showed no additional interest in examining critically more about Mozambique's pluralistic history and cultural diversity. Instead, the Frelimo ruling elite invested considerable political and financial capital in enacting laws that affirmed 'the authority and status of particular elites'.<sup>66</sup> The results culminated in the installation of Machel's statues in all Mozambican provincial capitals. Some of the other laws refer to Law 3/2008 that created the research centre for the history of the national liberation struggle; and Law 13/2009 to protect, preserve and valorise the patrimony of the national liberation struggle. In spite of Frelimo's financial investments and numerous legal initiatives, the party has not always attained an absolute control of the legislative process to make laws that coherently match with their own political positions. The crafting of Article 45 is a case in point.

## **The Sleeping Article of Law 2/97**

The appreciation of Law 2/97 was a long and complex process as the Assembly's President guided the reading, analysis and revision of each of the almost 120 articles in the plenary session. From the wider debate on the draft proposal, I will focus on the debates surrounding the elaboration of Article 45 regarding the 'Competencies of the Municipalities', because this article crystallised the tension between memory and decentralisation which erupted ten years later in 2007.<sup>67</sup>

In the draft proposal, Article 45, line 2 stated that: 'It is the competence of the Municipal Assembly, namely: ... to establish the name of roads, squares, localities and places in the territory of the local autarchy; t) to propose to the competent entity the alteration of names of roads, squares, localities and places of the territory of the local autarchy'.

The Assembly's president asked the deputies whether there were remarks about the content of Article 45. One deputy proposed an alteration of the line 't'. He suggested that 'instead of "to propose", it could be sufficient "to communicate" to the competent authority the alteration of the name of the roads ...'.<sup>68</sup> According to the regulations of the national assembly, for an alteration of a draft proposal to be considered, the alteration must be seconded by another deputy. After this, if there is no agreement among the deputies about the

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64 E. Mulembwe, president of the national assembly during 1994–2010. AAR, December 1997.

65 Deputy Inusso. AAR, December 1997.

66 Adebaniwi, 'Death, National Memory', p. 430.

67 This was a slight modification of Article 23 of the initial Decentralisation Law 3/94 referred to above.

68 Deputy Adalberto. AAR, December 1997.

proposed alterations, the president submits the altered proposal for a vote. In this case, another deputy immediately corroborated the suggested shift from ‘propose’ to ‘communicate’ by arguing that it was the proper competence of the municipality to give names to the local infrastructures and then ‘communicate’ to the competent authority.<sup>69</sup> A third and final deputy who intervened also agreed with the proposed change.<sup>70</sup>

The President acknowledged these requests for amendments, but he never submitted this proposal to a vote. It is not clear why he did not revisit these proposals as he had done with all the other amendment proposals. Perhaps this was because, as a former Renamo war general told me, ‘the deputies were sleeping’,<sup>71</sup> as the three deputies who presented the proposed amendment could have reminded the President and the plenary session about it, which did not happen. It may also be that because the differences between the lines ‘s’ and ‘t’ were subtle, the importance of this subtlety to promote meaningful local political actions remained below Frelimo’s radar. This suggests the impossibility that any political party could politically control everything, even when the party had ‘political experience’.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, the initial formulation of this article in the draft proposal passed when the law was approved. Frelimo voted in favour, while Renamo voted against as they wanted at the last minute, to change Article 112, which was related to the principle of gradual elections and they did not agree with it. Yet the real test of this law and the decentralisation process was still to come as the law had to pass muster in the real world through elections.

In the initial municipal elections in 1998, which Renamo boycotted, Frelimo won all the selected municipalities. In the second municipal elections held in 2003, Renamo won in five municipalities that included Beira, which triggered a new spin in the intersections of the politics of memory, national unity and decentralisation.

## The Municipality of Beira and the Real World of Decentralisation

Beira is the second most important city in Mozambique and is located in the central province of Sofala. Over the years, it garnered the reputation of being ‘the most complicated province of the country’<sup>73</sup> due to its insubordinate tendencies towards the central government. In June 2007, Renamo, which was in control of Beira Municipality, presented a proposal to the Municipal Assembly. The proposal attributed the name of André Matsangaíssa to a square located in a neighbourhood named Munhava. Renamo considers Matsangaíssa as the founder of their movement and hails him for his courage and for initiating the postcolonial armed rebellion against the Frelimo authoritarian regime. This culminated in the introduction of multiparty democracy in the 1990s. The proposal to attribute a name to a square was in accordance with Article 45, line ‘s’ of Law 2/97, and therefore the initiative was legal. The problem was not the initiative itself, but the figure that Renamo chose to honour by attributing his name to a square. As a journalist wrote some time later, ‘it is known that André Matsangaíssa is a hero to many and an eternal “armed bandit” to others’.<sup>74</sup>

During the debates in the Beira Municipal Assembly, the Frelimo members never actually mentioned the name of Matsangaíssa. This omission was not accidental; it was part of the local Frelimo cadres’ silent recognition that Matsangaíssa is a popular figure not only in Beira, but also in the centre of Mozambique, and this fact requires a carefully articulated

69 Deputy Ricardo. AAR, December 1997.

70 Deputy Manteigas. AAR, December 1997.

71 Interview with H. Morais, former Renamo General. Maputo, 18 August 2011.

72 Pitcher, ‘*Transforming Mozambique*’, p. 126.

73 In *Diário de Moçambique*, 17 October 1995.

74 In *Zambeze*, Editorial, 2 February 2008.

political strategy to talk about him in public. Yet during interviews for this study, some of the Frelimo cadres<sup>75</sup> told me that ‘Renamo’s history lacks credibility because it is not in the internet’.<sup>76</sup> Others said, ‘I do not see the difference between Matsangaíssa and Anibalzinho’.<sup>77</sup> Still other Frelimo cadres told me off the record that ‘Matsangaíssa was a necessary evil’ because their condition of being Beirenses had marginalised them within Frelimo, particularly in the early years of the postcolonial period.

During the debates in the municipal assembly, the Frelimo members just stated that the intention of the Municipal Council was legitimate, but that the act was illegitimate because ‘the roundabout has a name, which is historical, Munhava Roundabout’.<sup>78</sup> To defend their argument of ‘illegality’, Frelimo made recourse to Law 2/97, line ‘t’. In reality, the roundabout officially did have a number, which was 2314; the name ‘Munhava’ was part of popular usage, but according to the state lexicon and its bureaucratic procedures, a popular nomenclature is not administratively valid. As some of the journalists that also followed this case wrote, ‘Davis Simango [President of the Beira Municipality] acted within the law’ and the failure of Frelimo’s argumentation was that ‘a number is not a name’.<sup>79</sup>

In response to Frelimo’s positions in the Municipal Assembly, the chief of the Renamo-Electoral Union in the same Assembly said that ‘Frelimo will never accept the name of André Matsangaíssa for a public square, because in their understanding, the national heroes are emphatically only from Frelimo. For this reason, they are making use of all stratagems for impeding the locals to nominate their own heroes’.<sup>80</sup> At the end of the debates, when Frelimo realised that they could not sway the members of the Renamo-Electoral Union to withdraw their proposal, one of the Frelimo members made a threat, ‘bad results can come such as the example of the Bridge Zing’Ombe where people now defecate’.<sup>81</sup> In spite of the threat, the resolution, named Deliberation 51/2007, was passed favourably and the roundabout received the name of Square André Matsangaíssa. Frelimo appealed to the Administrative Court demanding that the decision of the Renamo-Electoral Union be considered unconstitutional. This appeal to the court is partially consistent with Chantal Mouffe’s assertion that in various contemporary societies there is ‘a marked tendency to privilege the juridical field and to expect the law to provide the solutions to all types of conflict’.<sup>82</sup> Yet to this date, the Administrative Court has not issued a formal judgment, and as a journalist wrote at the time, ‘if justice is not blind in this case, there is little that the Administrative Tribunal can do to change the scenario’.<sup>83</sup>

While the roundabout was being thoroughly prepared to receive Matsangaíssa’s statue, its proponents argued that they ‘feared vandalism from the [Frelimo] side’ and that for this reason ‘in the first phase [they] placed a small sculpture which symbolises a family that becomes united to go to war’.<sup>84</sup> The sculpture, which was described as ‘a dignifying art work made of soapstone’ is composed of a five-member family (father, mother and three

75 L. Bulha, ex-provincial secretary of the Frelimo party in Sofala province. Beira, 22 January 2009.

76 J. Nguenha, chief of Frelimo’s bench in Beira Municipality. Beira, 4 February 2011.

77 A. dos Santos Junior, also known as ‘Anibalzinho’, was imprisoned and given a 30-year jail sentence by a Mozambican court in 2006 for involvement in the murder of the Mozambican journalist Carlos Cardoso in 2000.

78 M. Saise, Frelimo party member, in the Beira Municipal Assembly. XVII Ordinary Session, Beira 4–6 June 2007.

79 In *O País*, 20 July 2007.

80 Chief of the Renamo-Electoral Union bench in the Beira Municipality. XVII Ordinary Session, Beira, 4–6 June 2007.

81 A. Botão, Frelimo party member, in the Beira Municipal Assembly. XVII Ordinary Session, Beira, 4–6 June 2007.

82 Mouffe, ‘The Democratic Paradox’, p. 115.

83 J. Langa, ‘Two Weights, Two Measures’, in *O País*, 20 July 2007.

84 Interview with A. Manhoca. City Councilman for Planning, Construction and Infrastructure. Beira, 22 January 2009.

children).<sup>85</sup> It is complemented with a white marble plaque which has the following inscription:

Square André Matade Matsangaíssa. For the determination in which you led the struggle in favour of understanding and harmony in this land left by our ancestors here gets registered the honour, founder of the movement of struggle for democracy that we conquered and continuously make perfect. Inaugurated October 17 2008 by the President of Beira Municipal Council Eng. Davis Mbepo Simango

In spite of the absence of the image of Matsangaíssa, the sculpture was not generally rejected by the city dwellers. Unlike the examples of contested monuments in post-apartheid South Africa that had to be iron-fenced but nevertheless were vandalised, Matsangaíssa Square was neither fenced in nor vandalised.<sup>86</sup> Yet when the Renamo-Electoral Union experienced a serious internal crisis, which culminated with an internal split and expulsion of Davis Simango from Renamo in 2008, the political elites of Renamo contradicted themselves by voicing their rejection, not of Matsangaíssa Square but of the Matsangaíssa statue. Renamo high officials, from the party president to local Beira cadres, boycotted the inauguration of the monument and argued that the 'sculpture had nothing to do with Renamo'.<sup>87</sup> Some people in Beira believed that Frelimo and Renamo, for different reasons, spread rumours to instigate popular sentiments against Matsangaíssa Square. They gossiped that the statue had been part of Davis Simango's secret project to honour his father (Urias Simango) and mother (Celina Simango) and that the three children were Davis Simango himself and his two other brothers. In spite of these rumours, the Beira dwellers did not vandalise or get involved in the fracas over the sculpture; instead they found ways of peacefully dealing with Matsangaíssa Square and interpreting the serious conflicts between Frelimo and Renamo political elites both at local and national level.

## People's Perceptions about Matsangaíssa Square

In 2008, the third municipal elections were held and Renamo lost its majority to Frelimo in the Beira Municipal Assembly. Through the results of these elections, various other political parties and groups of citizens gained seats in the Municipal Assembly, which made them believe and voice that Beira is 'the real world of democracy'. Their position is that 'Beira is the sole city in Mozambique in terms of democracy because there are five political groups represented in the Municipal Assembly: Frelimo, Renamo, GDB, PIMO, and PDD'.<sup>88</sup> In spite of the animation and sense of pride created by the diversity of political representation in the local municipality, the greater expectation after the 2008 elections revolved around the stance that Frelimo would take against Matsangaíssa Square.

In May 2009, Frelimo voted in favour of a resolution which 'approved the request of the Frelimo bench to restore the historical name of the Munhava Roundabout until the deliberation of the Administrative Tribunal'.<sup>89</sup> This deliberation was as an expression of feelings of revenge, since the deliberation had no legal effects. As a corollary to these local and national disputes, the Beira residents were interviewed about their perceptions of the square over time.

85 A. Timóteo, 'Renamo Turns Against the Statue at André Matsangaíssa Square,' *Canal de Moçambique*, 25 May 2009.

86 Hansen, 'Public Spaces for National Commemoration'.

87 *Ibid.*

88 Interview with B. Raposo, Head of the Group for Democracy of Beira (GDB). Beira, 4 February 2011.

89 Beira Municipality. Municipal Assembly. Deliberation 07/AMB/09. Beira 28 May 2009.

**Table 1.** People's perceptions about Matsangaíssa Square 2007–11.

Perceptions	Aug 2007: N = 49		Jan 2011: N = 39		Aug 2011: N = 73	
	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)
Positive about Matsangaíssa Square	24	49	17	44	25	34
Negative about Matsangaíssa Square	22	45	9	23	8	11
Complex issue	-	-	9	23	14	19
Don't know	3	6	2	5	11	15
Indifferent	-	-	1	2.5	8	11
Aesthetic	5	10	8	20.5	5	6.8

Table 1 shows the results of three opinion surveys: the first in August 2007, after the official attribution of the name of André Matsangaíssa to the square and complete construction; the second in January 2011, some time after Frelimo presented a lawsuit against Renamo in an attempt to ban the Matsangaíssa monument; and the third in August 2011, during the celebrations of the 104<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Beira City. These results are too limited to draw definitive conclusions, but they still provide an indication of the people's perception of the dispute over the naming Matsangaíssa Square.

The results indicate that on the three occasions, a certain percentage of respondents in this sample were in favour of the Matsangaíssa Square: 49% in August 2007; and 44% and 34% in January and August 2011, respectively. The other interviewees were divided between being against the Square, others regarded it as a complex issue, or said they did not know, or were indifferent; while others were against, but still appreciated the aesthetic aspects. In general, the interviewees often gave very articulated justifications for their viewpoints.

### The Pros and Cons of the Naming of Matsangaíssa Square

Those in favour were usually unanimous in affirming that 'I know that Matsangaíssa died because he had a destiny to fulfil. His name cannot be forgotten because he is a hero. He deserves recognition because he fought for democracy'.<sup>90</sup> A woman said that 'I think it is a form of development because we should not attribute the title of hero only to the people of one party. I think that André Matsangaíssa has the right to be commemorated'.<sup>91</sup> Another respondent affirmed that 'for me the attribution was good because it is a change that we can see. Now we are living in peace and it is important to see changes. Matsangaíssa is a hero of another party, which is the adversary of Frelimo. So the fact that one square was given the name of André Matsangaíssa is a sign that indeed we are in peace'.<sup>92</sup> These opinions suggested the necessity to broaden the scope of processes and people who should be commemorated as part of creating and recreating the Mozambican sense of unity and identity. The presence of Matsangaíssa in the public sphere was for some Beira residents a tangible demonstration that peace was effective and that change had become concrete. Together, these and other opinions in favour of Matsangaíssa Square counteract Frelimo's narrow view of national unity and identity. They also subverted Renamo's later attempt to discredit the statue of Matsangaíssa in Beira.

90 Interview with a young male interlocutor. Beira 11 August 2007.

91 Interview with an adult female interlocutor. Beira 11 August 2007.

92 Interview with a male interlocutor. Beira 11 August 2007.

For the respondents against the Matsangaíssa Square, their justifications were partly consistent with Frelimo's official position. One female respondent said that 'my father, my son, and my brother they all died because of Matsangaíssa, I don't want the name of Matsangaíssa.' She also added that 'I did not like it because now I am alone. I don't have a father; I don't have a brother because of Matsangaíssa. It might be better to give the name of another person; in my opinion, Matsangaíssa, no.'<sup>93</sup> Another Beira dweller said that 'I don't know about the conditions for someone to be considered a hero; for me, he [Matsangaíssa] is not a hero, that's it; as a Beirense I like the square because it is beautiful, but Matsangaíssa does not deserve it, that's it'.<sup>94</sup> Another interviewee asserted that 'I am not in favour. Well, since it is about political parties, I am much more in favour of my own party. We the Beirenses agree that the square is beautiful and since it has nice flowers, perhaps it could have been better to give the name of someone from Frelimo instead of Matsangaíssa... Matsangaíssa is a hero for the Renamo Party. He is not a hero for the members of Frelimo. We only consider the heroes of Frelimo because they fought to liberate our country'.<sup>95</sup>

These views, and those of others opposing the name of Matsangaíssa Square, indicated that although there was no agreement among Beira residents, people did not express the view that the Matsangaíssa Square had made them lose the 'sense of community' or that it contributed to the 'fragilisation of the Mozambican state'.<sup>96</sup> Beira residents showed that a sense of community and unity could exist and was flourishing in spite of the serious disagreements about Matsangaíssa Square. As long as the Mozambican political system accepted the expression of and debates about differences, common and factional objectives were part of the everyday life of Beira residents. Anti-Matsangaíssa residents voiced their objections to the square's renaming, but still indicated that they appreciated its aesthetic aspects. This demonstrated how the local community flourished in an open and democratic debate. They expressed this appreciation in terms of 'we Beirenses.' One resident said 'look, Matsangaíssa Square is protected even by the children. If you go to the Square and you try to grab a flower, the child will ask you "Where are you taking this flower?" The child will think that you are vandalising the square; that square is protected by any Beirense, it's different from other squares and gardens in Beira. At any time the Beirenses are vigilant of that square'.<sup>97</sup> Whether all Beirenses were vigilant about the square is difficult to confirm, but it is a fact that the square was never vandalised although it has no standing guards. It seems that this sense of being a Beirense was also mediating the conflict about Matsangaíssa in ways that peacefully preserved the social and political life in the city.

## Matsangaíssa Square as a Complex Issue

In 2008, Frelimo won the control of Beira Municipality. Immediately they argued that the name of Matsangaíssa should be removed and replaced by the old name of Munhava. Over time these disputes also affected people's perceptions of the conflict. Table 1 shows that in January 2011 there was a reduction in the percentage of people with polarised views (in favour or against), and an emergence or increase in other types of sensibilities, particularly the perception that this conflict is more 'complex' than it appears. There were also more people in January and August of 2011 who stated 'don't know'; others grew 'indifferent' and others again tended to be against, but still appreciated the aesthetic aspects.

93 Interview with a female interlocutor. Beira 11 August 2007.

94 Interview with a male interlocutor. Beira, 11 August 2007.

95 Interview with a female interlocutor. Beira, 11 August 2007.

96 A. Guebuza, ex-leader of the Frelimo party bench. AAR, Maputo, 29 October 1996.

97 Interview with a male interlocutor. Beira, 12 January 2011.

In relation to the respondents who recognised the conflict over the square as complex, one of them said, ‘This thing about heroes is very complicated. For example, I got to know Matsangaíssa as the chief of the armed bandits. When I was growing up during colonial times I heard about *turras*, I heard of bandits, but later on I understood that they were not *turras* nor bandits, they were individuals fighting to liberate Mozambique from the colonial powers; then, who used to call them ‘*turras*’ or used to call them “bandits”?’<sup>98</sup> A female interviewee who self-identified as a Frelimo partisan argued that ‘Matsangaíssa also contributed to this country. We human beings are not perfect; for instance, not everyone likes me, even when I think that I am doing something good not everyone agrees with it. On my side, I think that the attribution of the name is fine. The Beirenses are used to respect the differences. I use the example of my family; in my family we are twins but one of us is handicapped; I don’t think that we must not respect the other twin because she is handicapped. Also in my family, one of my sons belongs to the MDM, whereas the other one belongs to Frelimo like me, but still we have mutual respect’.<sup>99</sup>

Another respondent asserted that ‘the city is moving around on the scene of the dance of names. Dance of names because of political interests, all political parties have interests to defend’.<sup>100</sup> Reiterating his views about complexity and political interests, this interviewee compared his views with the process of honouring official historical figures that occurred in the south of Mozambique: ‘I was in Chibuto, I saw a monument for Ngungunhane; have you been to Barue to find out who Ngungunhane was? For the people of Barue, he was a bandit, an invader. Who gives these acknowledgements to these people? It’s the politicians who have their own interests. Therefore it is necessary to understand who called Matsangaíssa a bandit, who designated Ngungunhane a hero; what Ngungunhane did in Mossurise, what Ngungunhane did in Barue. He invaded, killed and destroyed, but the people from the south call him a hero. He has monuments in Mandhlakaze and Chibuto’. Another interviewee stated that ‘we are in the face of the put and remove, put and remove story... we have to recognise all citizens independent of the person’s affiliation. If we recognise citizens independently of their political affiliations, then we will be able to say that this country has serious criteria to define who should be a hero’.<sup>101</sup>

These four respondents voiced complex positions, and some of them compared the current conflict with the ideological and discursive disputes that prevailed during the anti-colonial war. At the time, the Portuguese military officials regarded Frelimo as a terrorist organisation, but in the end it was proven to the contrary; this comparison was made to imply that in the beginning Renamo were also called ‘armed bandits’ but in the end it was revealed that their armed struggle had political purposes. Another interviewee interpreted the conflict through kinship idioms and politics of the body and politics of toleration by referring to her handicapped sister and her two sons that are members of opposing parties. This complexity was also evident through the interlocutor that placed the disputes over Matsangaíssa Square within the context of the (broader and) enduring ethno-regional conflict, a conflict increased by some of the features of state nationalism.<sup>102</sup> This was strongly influenced and defined by one particular ethnicity from southern Mozambique. The critiques of this influence, which were also made by A. Zacarias (a Renamo MP) and various other deputies and street interlocutors, often use the familiar argument: the first three presidents of Frelimo were from

98 *Turras* is the abbreviation of the word ‘terrorists’ used by the Portuguese to designate Frelimo warriors during the anti-colonial war. Interview with a male interlocutor. Beira, 12 January 2011.

99 Mozambican Democratic Movement (MDM), a new party created by the ex-Renamo member, Davis Simango. Interview with a female interlocutor, 12 January 2011.

100 Interview with an adult male interlocutor. Beira, 12 January 2011.

101 Interview with a man. Beira 12 January 2011.

102 Cahen, ‘Nationalism and ethnicities’.

Gaza. To avoid criticism that Gaza Province was a pure coincidence, the authors of this narrative mobilise strength and credibility by referring to Ngungunhane, which the deputy A. Zacarias and one of the respondents (above) also mentioned.

While the debates over Matsangaíssa Square continued, the central organs of Frelimo attempted to restore their sense of lost ownership of the decentralisation process by going back to the national parliament and amending Law 2/97.

## Recentralisation as Modernisation or as Subversion

The recentralisation process was motivated by serious disagreements over issues of collective memory and national unity and identity. Frelimo initially believed that decentralisation in the context of political pluralism was a threat to their understating of official memory, national unity and identity and commemorations. Renamo's insistence on the legal process and approval of the renaming of Matsangaíssa Square confirmed Frelimo's belief. Frelimo's response in Beira to appeal to the Administrative Tribunal sparked debates in civil society about the issue of national unity, identity and reconciliation that had been dormant. Some local intellectuals unanimously affirmed that 'Davis Simango is right' and that 'the government woke up late'.<sup>103</sup> Others said that 'we speak every day about democracy, but we still have profound difficulties in accepting the rules of democracy when they shock our principles and convictions'; and that in spite of all the efforts to control the political life 'it was expected that Frelimo strategists, at some point, would open gaps and commit mistakes'.<sup>104</sup> Frelimo cadres hardly participated in these public debates; they focused instead on preparing a draft proposal to amend Law 2/97.

In April 2007, the government ascended the rostrum of the national parliament to affirm that the necessity to alter some of the articles of Law 2/97 emerged 'as a result of the experiences of the application of this legislation during approximately ten years...'.<sup>105</sup> From the various articles to be changed, it was Article 45, line 's' that captured most attention and triggered fierce debates particularly among the Renamo MPs. The minister of state administration said that line 's' of Article 45 was going to be changed to include the verb 'to propose' to the competent authority the attribution, alteration of the names of roads, squares, localities and places in the territory of the local authority. This change was necessary 'in order to allow the government to follow this process'.<sup>106</sup> This meant that lines 's' and 't' were merged; from then on the municipalities were forbidden to attribute or change a name without a prior consultation and approval by the central state.

Renamo MPs argued against these changes; one deputy stated that the government was 'subverting the process of decentralisation'; and he further said that 'the municipalities have their own references ... and these references should continue to receive attention by eternalising them with names of roads, squares, localities, and diverse localities as the current law stipulates'.<sup>107</sup>

Frelimo MPs responded in support of the government's alteration proposal, with one deputy affirming that it was unacceptable 'that individuals just because they own a municipality can alter everything in their own favour'.<sup>108</sup> The use of the word 'to own' in these debates was also revealing of Frelimo's understanding of political power – that is,

103 In *O País*, 20 July 2007.

104 Langa, 'Two Weights'.

105 L. Chomera, ex-minister of state administration. AAR, Maputo, 12 April 2007.

106 *Ibid.*

107 J. Palaço. AAR, 12 April 2007.

108 C. Duarte. AAR, 12 April 2007.

power is not acquired to serve the public interest; instead the gaining of political power through democratic elections creates a sense of private ownership. The parties did not reach a consensus on this issue, so the proposals were put to the vote. Taking advantage of their majority of seats, Frelimo passed the changes and reiterated that they had voted in favour 'because we are for the modernisation and permanent actualisation of our legislation'.<sup>109</sup> For Frelimo this meant that modernisation was a return to the status quo ante by recentralising some of the competences that had initially been devolved to the municipalities. Renamo MPs highlighted the contradiction of recentralisation as modernisation by asserting that 'it is worthless to hide behind the finger since you are so huge that you will end up making a ridiculous figure'; and that 'the people are attentive, they will not give you the pleasure of transforming Mozambique into a second Zimbabwe'.<sup>110</sup> Overall, Renamo's position was that 'these alterations substantially reduced the autonomy and independence of local municipalities, reversing the direction and the spirit of the decentralisation which is part of the deepening of democracy'.<sup>111</sup>

In the midst of these contradictions of words and deeds, the Frelimo MPs' posture of unity is also noteworthy, even though some of them disagree with the political orientation of the party and government on certain issues. One prominent Frelimo MP had voted in favour of recentralisation. He told me off the record that 'in my opinion it represented a regression; it was a regression because in fact, Frelimo and the government decided in the quinquennium (1994–1999) programme to move forward with a deep reform of the public administration sector'. Sometimes the contradictions of beliefs and words are anecdotally told and retold in the corridors of the national parliament. One deputy told me that when Frelimo MPs are against a proposal of their own government, for reasons of partisan discipline, they discreetly request Renamo MPs to voice their critiques against the government in the parliament. When Renamo fulfils the request, Frelimo MPs 'stomped the floor with their feet as if clapping hands' to celebrate without being seen by their mates and government members. The corridor talks indicated that various Frelimo MPs 'stomped the floor with their feet' when Renamo MPs criticised the government's recentralisation law.

## **The Future of the Politics of Memory, National Identity and Decentralisation**

The process of decentralisation in Mozambique cannot be separated from the independence struggles, the politics of transition at the time of independence in 1975, the politics of memory and the post-civil war pluralism and democratisation. As in various African countries that underwent major political changes in the postcolonial era, in Mozambique, Frelimo managed to maintain formal control of the principal state institutions.<sup>112</sup> This predicament is similar to the post-liberation politics in various African countries as it has been observed that 'the ownership of the state – and of the nation – is thus firmly held by the power-holders of the former liberation movement'.<sup>113</sup> In Mozambique, the former liberation movement developed a strong sense of ownership on issues of national unity and identity and how decentralisation should evolve. In spite of the recognition of political pluralism, Frelimo have continuously refused to engage in an historical dialogue and accountability and

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109 M. Lampião. AAR, 12 April 2007.

110 A. Milato. AAR, 12 April 2007.

111 A. Victor. AAR, 12 April 2007.

112 B. Berman, D. Eyoh and W. Kymlick (eds), *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa* (Oxford, James Currey, 2004).

113 S. Dorman, 'Post-Liberation Politics in Africa: Examining the Political Legacy of Struggle', *Third World Quarterly*, 27 (2006), p. 1097.

postponed the renegotiation of the post-independence project of public memory that shaped the sense of national unity and identity. This renegotiation is necessary in order to deal with the new pluralistic features of the country's political landscape and the proliferation of conflicting memories of the country's recent history.<sup>114</sup> In this regard, since the Decentralisation Law 2/97 inadvertently opened political spaces in the country's landscape in order to cement other versions of the collective memory and public commemorations, Law (2/97) was amended. The government took back to central state organs some aspects of state authority that had been previously devolved to local municipalities.

The case analysed here differs in terms of the content and its implications from other analyses of recentralisation acts conducted in Mozambique and in other African countries (and beyond such as Argentina and the Philippines).<sup>115</sup> Previous studies on recentralisation in Mozambique focused on juridical alterations that reduced the autonomy of local communities in the management of land resources, the institutionalisation of a state representative in the local municipalities, and administrative procedures that increase the financial dependency of the local municipalities vis-à-vis the central state.<sup>116</sup> In other countries, central state officials recentralised issues of control of land and forestry and administrative finance, or by issues of control of provincial budgets.<sup>117</sup>

The significance of the recentralising act in Mozambique does not conform so much to the assumption of 'opposition weakness in Africa',<sup>118</sup> nor to the view exposed by the leading legal scholar on state administration in Mozambique, Gilles Cistac. He writes that to reduce the local autonomy through 'manipulation of the juridical order to satisfy a selfish political goal is incompatible with the logic of a truly democratic regime and from a political view, it is ethically deplorable'.<sup>119</sup> My analysis in this article is instructive from the perspective of political transformations. The decentralisation in post-civil war Mozambique does not have the immediate effect of attaining its normative goals: to increase the state efficiency in delivering services at local level.<sup>120</sup> Instead, the decentralisation process is instructive in revealing the tensions, fears, fractures and the limits of the power and authority of the Frelimo ruling elite. These tensions have renewed critical arguments about the selective and ethnic basis of the Frelimo's practice of national identity and commemorations. As in other African countries facing similar arguments and challenges, the responses of the ruling elites have been to label the promoters of these types of discussions as 'tribalists'.<sup>121</sup>

Along these lines, the president of the Parliamentarian Commission responsible for developing the law that regulates the attribution of honorific titles and consecrations, a Frelimo MP, said to me that 'this type of argumentation is dangerous because we are not looking at the processes and we want to personalise things. Frelimo was not constituted by

114 H. West, 'Voices Twice Silenced', *Anthropological Theory*, 3, 3 (2003), pp. 343–365; V. Igreja, 'Traditional Courts and the Struggle against State Impunity for Civil Wartime Offences in Mozambique', *Journal of African Law*, 54, 1 (2010), pp. 51–73; V. Igreja, W. Kleijn, B. Schreuder, J. Van Dijk and M. Verschuur, 'Testimony Method to Ameliorate Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms: Community-Based Intervention Study with Mozambican Civil War Survivors', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 184, 3 (2004), pp. 251–257.

115 Eaton, 'Political Obstacles to Decentralisation'.

116 Chisiane, 'O Retorno à Concentração e Centralização do Poder Administrativo em Moçambique'.

117 Manyak and Katono, 'Decentralisation and Conflict in Uganda'; J. Wunsch, 'Decentralisation, Local Governance and "Recentralisation" in Africa', *Public Administration and Development*, 21 (2001), pp. 277–288; Eaton, 'Political Obstacles to Decentralisation'.

118 L. Rakner and N. van de Walle, 'Opposition Weakness in Africa', *Journal of Democracy*, 20 (2009), pp. 108–121.

119 G. Cistac, 'Preface' in E. Chisiane, *O Retorno à Concentração e Centralização do Poder Administrativo em Moçambique* (Maputo, CIEDIMA, SARL, 2011), p. 10.

120 Wunsch, 'Decentralisation, Local Governance and "Recentralisation" in Africa'.

121 D. Kaspin, 'The Politics of Ethnicity in Malawi's Democratic Transition', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 33 (1995), pp. 595–620.

people from the south; the Mozambican Liberation Front was constituted by Mozambicans from all provinces of our country, but it was not possible for all of them to become presidents of Frelimo'.<sup>122</sup> When I asked the commission president why it was dangerous, the answer was that 'it is dangerous because we are qualifying the Mozambicans based on the skin colour or birth place, or origin'. The president further added that 'I can also dare to say that at the level of their party [Renamo], there are also Mozambicans from all the provinces; why is it, we could ask, that the previous leader of Renamo was from the centre of the country and the current leader is also from the centre of the country? This argument could perfectly suit their side. Therefore it should not be said that it is from the south, centre and the north, this is dangerous for our unity.' Within this analysis, the peril does not derive from the fact that the first three Frelimo leaders came from the same province; it was instead dangerous to talk about it. Yet when the president attempted to compare the leadership genealogy of Frelimo and Renamo, she hinted at the ethno-regional divides, since the core of Frelimo leaders were southerners (of the Changane ethnicity) and Renamo from the centre (of the Ndau ethnicity).

Serious disagreements over issues of national identity and commemorations are a common phenomenon around the world.<sup>123</sup> Yet in Mozambique the serious disagreements over time have also been mutually constitutive in that in the everyday of political practice, the Frelimo's essentialist approach to national unity and identity has been paradoxically reconfigured through multiple acts of 'improvisation'.<sup>124</sup> The political improvisations have unexpectedly rendered more visible how decentralisation has eroded the discursive capacity of Frelimo in their claims of possessing the monopoly of the national agenda. Frelimo's recent vow to privatise the Museum of the Revolution further illustrates this process. The museum displays some collective and national aspects of the Mozambican revolution, but Frelimo cadres were quoted by the newspapers arguing that the museum is their own private property, which puts asunder their own statements that the National Liberation Front was a broad national movement.<sup>125</sup> By contradicting themselves, Frelimo cadres inadvertently highlighted the role that the emergent pluralistic democracy and decentralisation and some of its key players have had in disrupting Frelimo's sense of state ownership. In their uncompromising attempt to maintain total political control of the state and national commemorations, Frelimo cadres have unwittingly disregarded their acclaimed broad-base genealogy. They have gradually transformed their officially made history into a factional and private affair and they have strongly indicated a loss of the logic of what should be controlled. Over time these transformations may boost the democratisation process in Mozambique.

In 2009, the process of naming of the bridge over the Zambeze River triggered the climax of the transformations of collective memories into a private affair. It was popularly called Bridge of National Unity because it links the south-central regions with the north of the country. At the time there were many converging debates defending the idea that the bridge should be officially named after Eduardo Mondlane, who is officially regarded as the architect and symbol of national unity. Instead, members of the government applied personal stratagems and named the bridge after the country's current president, Armando Guebuza. This decision relegated this official symbol to a subaltern position in this political competition. This fragility and subalternisation of an official symbol does not derive from Guebuza's own sense of insecurity. Instead, it stems from the prevailing legacy of serious disputes among the Frelimo higher echelons regarding the real contributions of Mondlane

122 Personal interview with T. Pereira, President of the Commission for Social, Gender and Environmental Issues. Maputo, National Parliament, 30 August 2011.

123 J. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 8.

124 Mbembe, 'The Banality of Power and the Aesthetics of Vulgarly in the Postcolony'.

125 A. Nenane, 'Frelimo buys the Revolution Museum', in *Savana*, 20 August 2010.

during the liberation struggle. For instance, before Mozambique's independence, the then prime minister of the transitional government, Joaquim Chissano, spoke out in defence of Mondlane by stating that 'the people were alleging that he was too moderate, for others he was someone that liked an easy life and so on'. He insisted that Mondlane 'never compromised the revolution; in a wrong way, many people thought that Mondlane was an individual with neither ideology nor principles... we that worked with him, we saw him defending the revolutionary positions at all times when it was necessary to make it explicit'.<sup>126</sup> In contrast in 1982, without mentioning directly the period of the Mondlane leadership, Machel stated to his audience, 'but from 1971 onwards, *prontos* [that was it], the war transformed into a revolution'. In a critical tone, Machel added that 'we were just nationalists, we did not have the clear ideology of what is independence, the revolution, we had not assumed it, it was a nationalist fight, it did not have a revolutionary character'.<sup>127</sup> These inconsistent statements demonstrate the discord that prevails about the legacies of Mondlane in recent Mozambican history, and this discord resurfaced during the naming of the Zambeze River Bridge.

Recently, the national parliament approved a law concerning the system of honorific titles and consecrations. With the exception of one of Renamo's suggestions that 4 October (the date of the peace agreement and national day of peace and reconciliation) merited an honorific title, all their other proposals regarding central state recognition of Matsangaíssa, Dlhakama, Maringué and Gorongosa were rejected. Frelimo MPs justified their positions in favour of this law by saying that 'at the level of the African continent and in other continents, the name Mozambique is intimately connected to the name of Frelimo', and repeated in despondent tones that 'this is a reality that no one must deny; Frelimo is Mozambique and Mozambique is Frelimo'.<sup>128</sup> The performative effects of these types of statements and the enacted laws remain elusive as 'the world is under no obligation to conform to the logic by which some people conceive it' – even taking into consideration the diversity of political affiliations demonstrated by the electorate.<sup>129</sup>

On the occasion of the celebration of the 103<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Beira city, for instance, some of the street interlocutors said: 'the authorities can delete the name of the Matsangaíssa Square saying that it is no longer valid, but the people will continue to call it Matsangaíssa Square. The authorities are losing time with these actions, what gives legitimacy is the people's will',<sup>130</sup> or that 'they can change the name of André Matsangaíssa Square many times, but because it is already stored in the memory of the Beira citizens, it will remain Matsangaíssa Square'.<sup>131</sup>

It is at this level of popular and informally decentralised representations of public memory and symbols of unity and identity that Frelimo will continue to compete in spite of their control of most of the legislative bodies in the country. While it cannot be said that Frelimo is lagging behind in this competition, the reality in various newly democratic societies indicates that 'although elites have had more control over the establishment of places of memory in public settings, they cannot control how they are perceived, understood, and interpreted by individuals and various social groups'.<sup>132</sup> In Beira as in other Mozambican cities, various individuals, either driven by their personal sentiments, enthusiasms, or

126 J. Chissano. Interview about the life and achievements of E. Mondlane. RCM, 3 February 1975.

127 S. Machel. Intervention during the Compromised Meeting, 1982. Archives of the Mozambican Radio.

128 R. Pachinuapa, III Ordinary Session of the National Parliament. 24 March 2011. AAR.

129 M. Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1985), p. 138.

130 Interview with a male interlocutor. Beira 22 August 2011.

131 Interview with a female interlocutor. Beira, 21 August 2011.

132 K. Till, 'Places of Memory', In J. Agnew, K. Mitchell and G. Toal (eds), *A Companion to Political Geography* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2003), pp. 297.

political convictions or practical rationalities, have used political opposition memories of heroes, places and processes to reconceptualise the national unity, identity and commemorations. For instance, the bus stop located in the vicinity of Afonso Dhlakama's residence in Maputo is popularly called Maringué, as a reference to the last military headquarters of the Renamo movement before they signed the AGP in 1992. This popular attribution is meaningful since Dhlakama's residence is located close to President Armando Guebuza's residence. Another example is that of the airstrip located in Maringué district called 'Afonso Dhlakama Runway'. This attribution is also meaningful in that even presidential aircraft require an official authorisation from the Renamo's army that controls the region.<sup>133</sup> Other ways of commemorating opposition figures have flourished in the centre of Mozambique through the emergence of *gamba* spirits, which partially bears witness to the sacrifices incurred by Renamo ex-soldiers in the civil war.<sup>134</sup> The informal recognition suggests that national unity and identity 'will be the product of multiple, and sometimes conflicting, "imaginings"'.<sup>135</sup> It has been argued that one way of decreasing the current predicament of tension and sense of permanent political transition, could be by accepting the country's history 'in its fullness and complexity',<sup>136</sup> and by institutionalising 'the cultural diversity and other social complexities'.<sup>137</sup> However this article shows that in fact, over time, Frelimo's ruling elites have paradoxically both rejected and embraced the recognition of the country's complex history and cultural diversity, whereas the ordinary people have interpreted and recreated democracy and decentralisation in their own coherent terms.

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133 In *Canal de Moçambique*, 10 May 2011.

134 V. Igreja, 'Justice and Reconciliation in the Aftermath of the Civil War in Gorongosa', In K. Ambos, J. Large and M. Wierda (eds), *Building a Future on Peace and Justice: Studies on Transitional Justice, Peace and Development* (Berlin, Springer, 2009), pp. 423–437; V. Igreja, B. Dias-Lambranca and A. Richters 'Gamba Spirits, Gender Relations, and Healing in Post-Civil War Gorongosa', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 14 (2008): pp. 350–367; V. Igreja, 'Why are there So Many Drums Playing until Dawn? Exploring the Role of Gamba Spirits and Healers in the Post-War Recovery Period in Central Mozambique', *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 40, 4 (2003), pp. 459–487.

135 West and Kloock-Jenson, 'Betwixt and Between', p. 484.

136 P. Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths: Confronting State Terror and Atrocity* (New York, Routledge, 2001), p. 195.

137 B. Mazula, 'Mozambique: The Challenge of Democratisation', in E. Gyimah-Boadi (ed.), *Democratic reform in Africa* (Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 2004), p. 197.