



Centro de Pesquisas sobre
Governação e Desenvolvimento

**Assessing the Democratic Quality of Local Elections in
Mozambique**

Carlos Shenga

CPGD Working Paper No. 2

March 2013

About the Author

Carlos Shenga is a Ph.D. Candidate in Political Studies at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. He is the Founder and Director of the Centre for Research on Governance and Development (CPGD) in Mozambique.

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info@cpgd.org.mz

Abstract

Based on official data on local elections that have been conducted in Mozambique since 1998, this study finds that whilst the democratic quality of local elections is low, there is evidence these elections are moving the country further towards democratization albeit in a context where the ruling party controls electoral rules and institutions. The assessment found low levels of political participation, competition and election legitimacy but with some progressive changes overtime. Opposition contestation in some elections has produced alternation of political power in some municipalities. The dominant party lost 5 out of 33 municipalities in the 2003 local election and 1 out of 3 municipalities in the 2011 by-election. The incumbent party returned to power in the 2008 local election by taking back 4 of the 5 municipalities they lost in 2003. In the same 2008 election an independent candidate defeated both the dominant party and main opposition candidates in one municipality. This study ends by suggesting areas of further research for Mozambican electoral scholars and highlighting trends that may be of interest to internal and external democratic practitioners' whose aim is to improve the Mozambican electoral democracy.

Assessing the Democratic Quality of Local Elections in Mozambique

1. Introduction

In Mozambique the study of elections was pioneered by De Brito (1996), when he analysed voting behaviour of the 1994 founding democratic election. Since then, however, there have been very few studies assessing Mozambican elections comprehensively and systematically. Mozambican electoral scholars have tended to focus only on single elections adopting theories and concepts unsystematically often involving traditional analytical methods of single case studies and historical descriptive narratives. This has often produced simplistic and even misleading conclusions. The goal of this study is to understand Mozambican local elections using a comprehensive and systematic approach.

This study aims to assess and compare the democratic quality of local elections so far conducted in Mozambique. It reviews the quantity of local elections and assesses *political participation* in local elections including voter turnout and whether opposition parties contested or boycotted elections. It examines the *political competition* of local elections including levels of competitiveness such as the share of the winners vote and whether the election produced alternation of power. It also evaluates the *legitimacy* of local elections including the extent to which losers accept defeat, whether the election process was peaceful and democratic regime survival.

The study of democratic quality of elections is important because elections democratize polities. “Elections bring to the fore fundamental features of equal citizenship: the right to universal suffrage, the right to choose between candidates and parties, freedom of opinion and voice, and the right to form and lead associations” (Lindberg 2006:146).

This study employs a local election dataset on turnout and competitiveness. The data has been gathered by the author and it is based on objective official information from the Constitutional Council of Mozambique, the judiciary body that validates election results, the National Electoral Commission, the institution that administers and supervises elections and other secondary documents. Data on other indicators of democratic quality of elections has been gathered from many secondary sources, including national media.

2. The Quantity of Local Elections

National elections have been carried out regularly in the country since 1994 but sovereignty or ultimate power to the citizens at the local level was only given to Mozambicans in 1998. Since 1998 three regular local elections have been held as

well as three by-elections (see Table 1). In 1998 Mozambican citizens elected for the first time their mayor and local Assembly representatives in 33 municipalities. The ruling party, Frelimo, won all of the 33 municipalities as very few opposition parties participated. The main opposition party, Renamo, and others boycotted the election alleging major irregularities in voter registration.

In the 2003 local elections the main opposition Renamo was able to win 5 of the 33 municipalities: Angoche, Beira, Ilha de Moçambique, Marromeu¹ and Nacala-Porto. Following the death of the Frelimo mayor in Mocímboa da Praia, a by-election in 2005 saw Frelimo continuing to keep this municipality.

Table 1: Summary of Local-Municipal Elections in Mozambique

| Year | No of municipalities |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1998 | 33 |
| 2003 | 33 |
| 2005 (by-election) | 1 (Mocímboa da Praia) |
| 2008 | 43 |
| 2011 (by-election) | 3 (Cuamba, Pemba and Quelimane) |
| 2012 (by-election) | 1 (Inhambane) |

2005 by-election following the death of the Mocímboa da Praia mayor.

2011 by-election following the resignation of the mayors of Cuamba, Pemba and Quelimane.

2012 by-election following the death of the Inhambane mayor.

In the 2008 local election, Frelimo won 42 municipalities out of the 43². The main opposition Renamo lost all of the municipalities they held in 2003. An independent candidate, Daviz Simango, a former Beira mayor from Renamo³, was able to defeat both the dominant party and main opposition candidates in the municipality of Beira. Daviz Simango subsequently formed a new political party (MDM – *Movimento Democrático de Moçambique*) in early 2009. In the 2011 by-elections, MDM candidate Manuel de Araújo won in Quelimane, with Frelimo candidates retaining Cuamba and Pemba after the resignation of Frelimo mayors. The main opposition party decided not to stand in these by-elections alleging that they did not see a reason for the resignation of the mayors.⁴ In the 2012 by-election Frelimo maintained Inhambane municipality after the death of the Inhambane mayor. Again the main opposition Renamo did not participate in this election, alleging that the results were already forecast for dominant party victory.⁵

3. Political Participation in Local Elections

Political participation can be defined as the “legal activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel

¹ In Marromeu, Renamo won the mayor ship while Frelimo controlled the local assembly.

² As part of the process of decentralization 10 new municipalities were established, one in each province, in 2007.

³ Daviz Simango was expelled from Renamo in 2008.

⁴ <http://pda.verdade.co.mz/nacional/22602-eleicoes-intercalares-renamo-confirma-ausencia> accessed on 14 January 2013.

⁵ <http://noticias.sapo.mz/lusa/artigo/13568304.html> accessed on 14 January 2013.

and the actions they take” (Verba, Nie and Kim 1978). The underlying assumption of this definition is that people behave pragmatically, that is, they take political actions and choose channels of representation on the basis of what works best. Voting, campaigning, communing, contacting and protesting are varieties of citizens participation in politics (Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005), but voting tends to be most known. This study assesses political participation in the form of voting.

Voter Turnout

Voter turnout is one of the dimensions of citizen political participation. It is expressed by the percentage of voters who cast a (blank or valid) vote at an election (Pintor 2002:75). Turnout, as a percentage of the registered electorate can be calculated as the number of votes divided by the number of citizens who are legally registered to vote; and, as a percentage of the voting-age population it can be calculated as the number of votes divided by the voting-age population (Norris 2002). This study employs the first perspective (referred to briefly as vote/registered) for measuring turnout. “This measure can be misleading, however, in a situation with a restricted franchise, for example, if only men are eligible to vote, as in Kuwait, or if only whites can vote, as was under apartheid in South Africa, since in these countries official estimates of turnout can be relatively high even if the voices of all women or ethnic majorities are excluded” (Norris 2002:40). The vote/registered measure provides no major misleading for this study as there is no restricted franchise in the Mozambican context: all adults aged 18 and over, are eligible to vote.

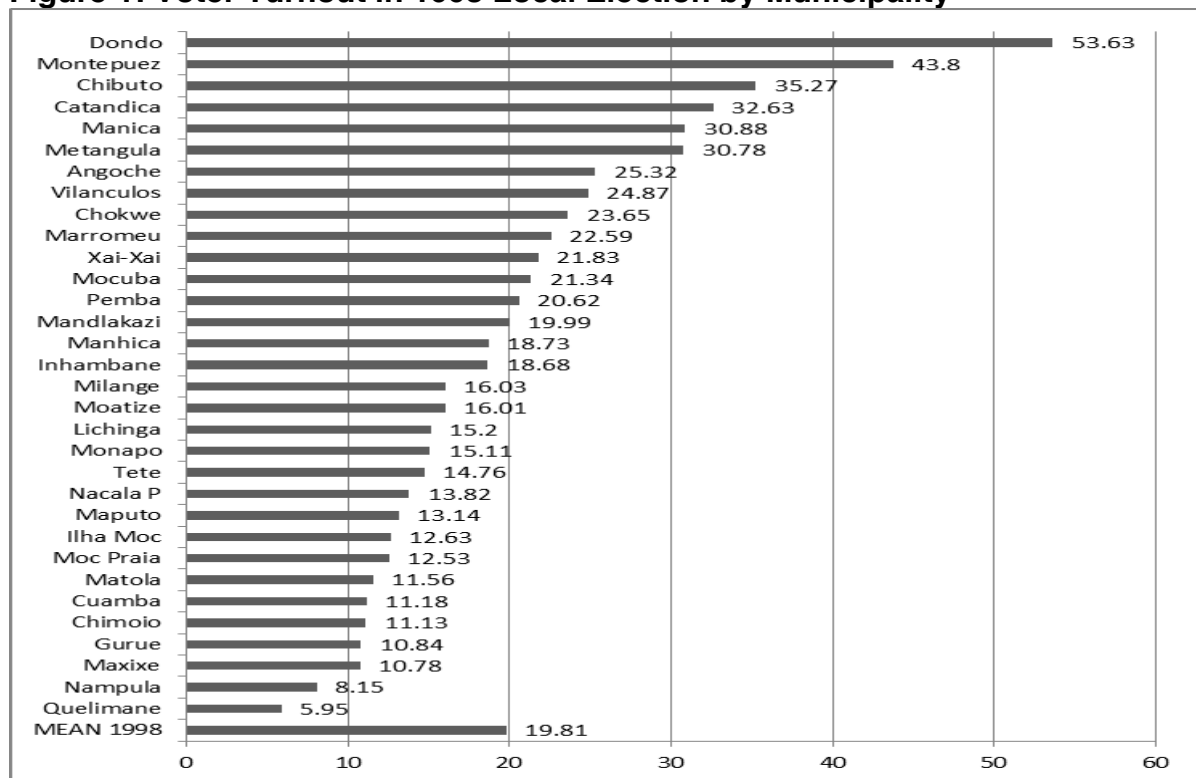
Voter turnout in the 1998 Mozambican founding or first local election was the lowest compared with other local regular elections (see Figure 1). The opposition’s decision to boycott the 1998 local election contributed to a considerable extent for the low turnout. The main opposition supporters did not vote as the party that they identify with did not participate. The data also reveals that turnout is higher in the 2003 and 2008 elections where the main opposition did participate (Figure 2 and Figure 3). The same even applies with respect to by-elections; the voting turnout was low where the main opposition did not participate (that is, 2011 and 2012 by-elections) and high where it did (the 2005 by-election).

Assessing changes over time in the levels of voter turnout of regular local elections, the data reveals that there is a very significant increase. Regular local election voter turnout increased from 1998 (19.81 percent) to 2003 (27.41 percent) and 2008 (48.68 percent). With respect to local by-elections, turnout decreased very significantly from the 1-municipality election (Mocímboa da Praia) in 2005 (55.67 percent) to the 3-municipality election (Cuamba, Pemba and Quelimane) in 2011 (20.23 percent) but it increased again in the 1-municipality election (Inhambane) in 2012 (38.8 percent).⁶

⁶ Data calculated by the author from *Acordão do Conselho Constitucional No 3/CC/2005*, of 28 July; http://www.cip.org.mz/cipdoc%5C152_Mo%C3%A7ambique_Boletim_51_elei%C3%A7%C3%B5es_intercalares.pdf; <http://allafrica.com/stories/201204241391.html>; <http://noticias.sapo.mz/aim/artigo/327512122011204509.html>; <http://allafrica.com/stories/201204241391.html>

Besides assessing general voter turnout of each local election, this paper also examines it by municipality. In the 1998 local election, only one municipality, Dondo, had voting turnout above 50 percent (53.63 percent). Montepuez municipality (43.8 percent) came next followed by Chibuto (35.27 percent), Catandica (32.63 percent), Manica (30.88 percent) and Metangula (30.78 percent). The municipality of Quelimane presents the lowest level of turnout (5.95 percent). Among those that lag behind the average of the 1998 voting turnout (19.81 percent), besides Quelimane, include: Manhiça, Inhambane, Milange, Moatize, Lichinga, Monapo, Tete, Nacal Porto, Maputo, Ilha de Moçambique, Mocímboa da Praia, Matola, Cuamba, Chimoio, Gurue, Maxixe, and Nampula. All others are between the 1998 voter turnout average and 25 percent (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Voter Turnout in 1998 Local Election by Municipality

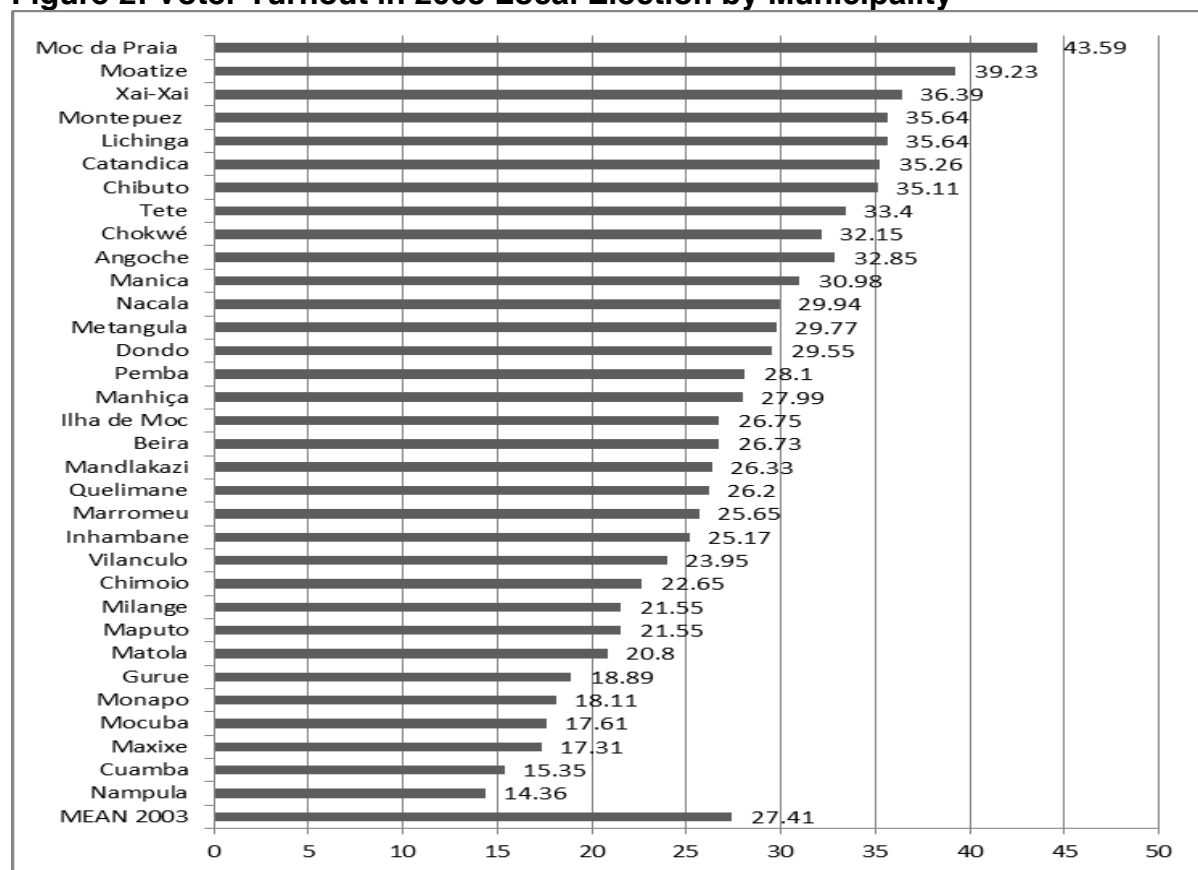


Data calculated by author from Acordão do Tribunal Supremo 1998, of 17 August. The acordão shows a turnout at 14.58 percent for the 1998 local election. But if you calculate the arithmetic mean or average of individual turnout of the 33 municipalities you will obtain the figure reported in Figure 1 (19.81 percent).

In the 2003 local election, none of the 33 municipalities had turnout levels above 50 percent. In this election voter turnout is highest in Mocímboa da Praia with 43.59 percent followed by Moatize, Xai-Xai, Montepuez, Lichinga, Catandica, Chibuto and Tete. Lagging behind the 2003 turnout average (27.41 percent) are the following municipalities: Ilha de Moçambique, Beira, Mandlakazi, Quelimane, Marromeu, Inhambane, Vilanculo, Chimoio, Milange and Maputo. Voting turnout is lowest in Nampula, Cuamba, Maxixe, Mocuba, Monapo, Gurue and Matola (Figure 2).

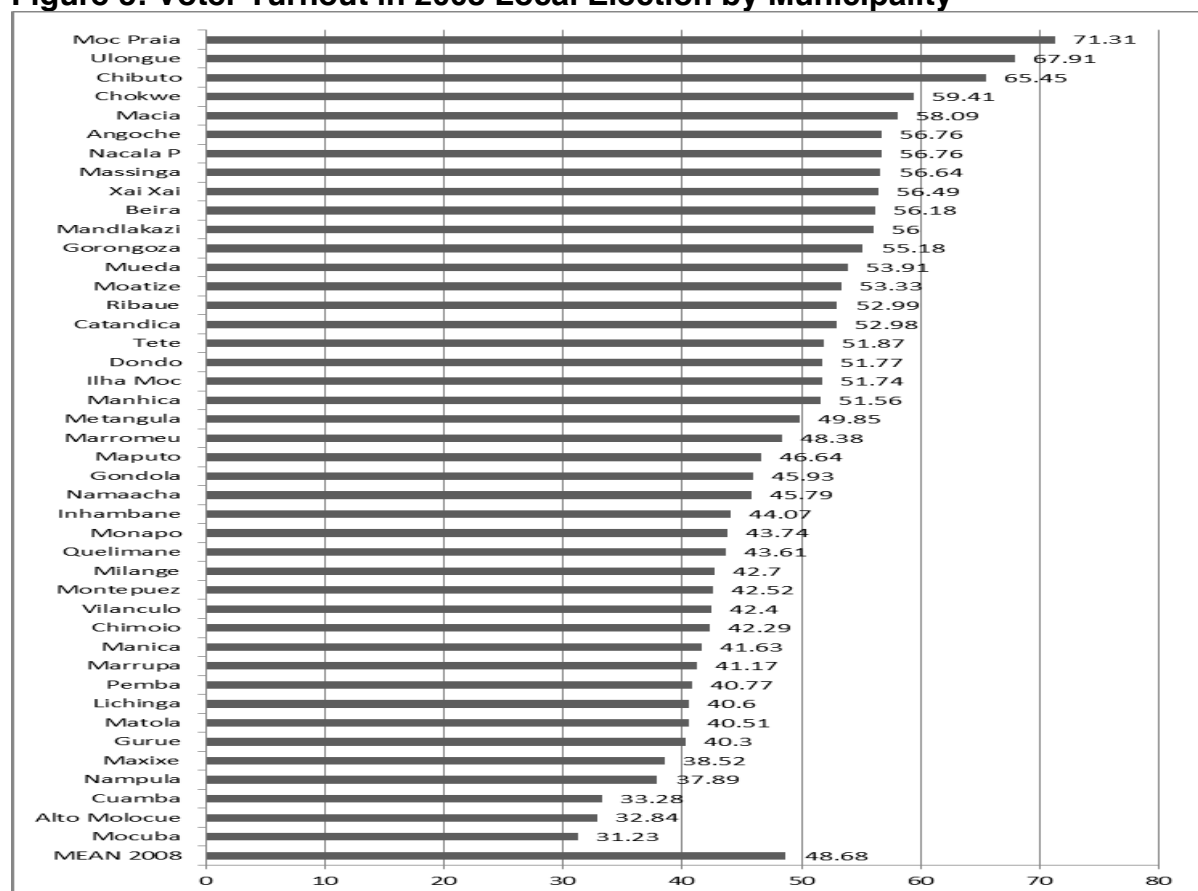
In the 2008 local election, voter turnout reached the highest levels among all elections in Mozambique. Twenty municipalities had turnout above 50 percent with Mocímboa da Praia having the highest turnout (71.31 percent); the same number of

Figure 2: Voter Turnout in 2003 Local Election by Municipality



Figures calculated by the author from Deliberação do Conselho Constitucional No 14/CC/04, of 14 January.

Figure 3: Voter Turnout in 2008 Local Election by Municipality

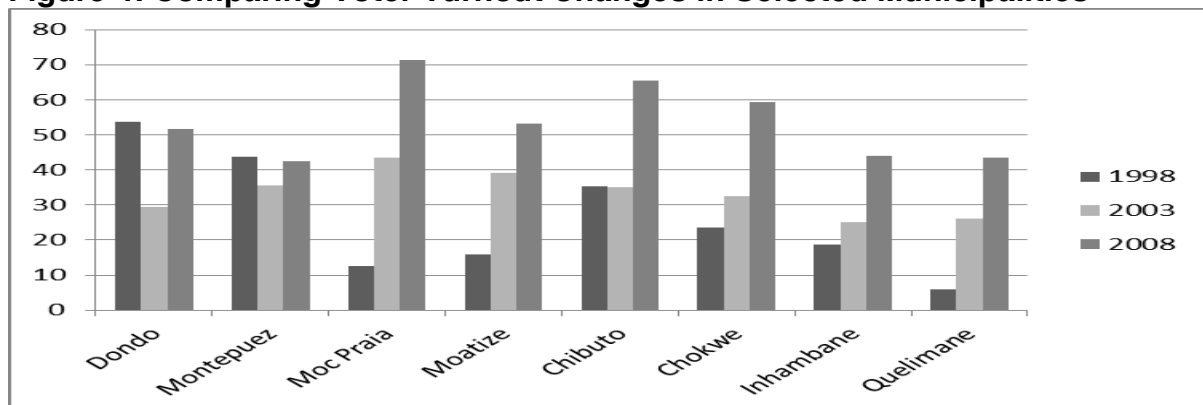


Information calculated by the author from Annex 2 of Acórdão do Conselho Constitucional No 2/CC/2009, of 15 January.

municipalities had turnout between 37 to 50 percent. However, Mocuba, Alto Molocue and Cuamba lag behind with the lowest voter turnout of all municipalities (Figure 3)

Moving to by-elections, in the 2005 single municipality by-election voter turnout in Mocímboa da Praia was 55.67 percent. In 2011 the by-election voter turnout was highest in Quelimane (27.9 percent) and lower in Pemba (18.2 percent) and Cuamba (14.6 percent). In the 2012 single municipality by-election voter turnout was 38.8 percent. By comparing changes over time of individual municipalities, this study selected Dondo, Montepuez, Mocímboa da Praia, Moatize, Chibuto, Chokwe, Inhambane and Quelimane. The first two municipalities lead in voter turnout in the 1998 local election, the second two in 2003, the third two are among the leaders in 2008⁷ while the last two in 2011 and 2012 by-elections. The results in Figure 4 show that, from 1998 to 2003 and 2008 local elections, voter turnout decreased and then increased in Dondo and Montepuez. On the other hand, there was an increase in Mocímboa da Praia, Moatize, Chibuto, Chokwe, Inhambane and Quelimane from 1998 to 2003 and 2008 elections. Exception applies to Chibuto from 1998 to 2003 where turnout was about the same (Figure 4). Adding the by-elections, from 2008 regular to 2012 by-elections voting turnout declined in Inhambane. The same can be said with respect to Quelimane in the 2011 by-election. However, voter turnout increased each time there was an election in Mocímboa da Praia.

Figure 4: Comparing Voter Turnout Changes in Selected Municipalities



What Explains Voter Turnout?

There are many factors that may account for variation in the levels of voter turnout. Although it is not the intention of this study to test the factors that influence voter turnout in Mozambican local (or other) elections, it reviews and examines, to some extent, some of them in general. Nohlen (2002) points out four factors that negatively affect voter turnout, namely: *high degree of social inequality, governmental or societal focus of the political culture, lack of governability and rule of law, and strong distrust of political institutions and low accountability*. Nohlen adds that “when the level of *poverty and social injustice* is high, elections are not seen as an act of political empowerment by the majority of voters” (Nohlen 2002:15-16).

⁷ Ulongue municipality which presents higher turnout after Mocímboa da Praia was excluded from analysis as 2008 was its first or founding democratic local election. No additional data exists for comparison.

However, *country specific political culture or institutional design* intervenes in the relationship between these factors and voter turnout (Nohlen 2002; Pintor, Gratschew and Sullivan 2002, Norris 2002). Less competitive constituencies or party strongholds tend to contribute to low electoral participation. By testing the relationship between voter turnout and competitiveness in the Mozambican local election context however this study found no correlation at all. Overall, voter turnout and competitiveness produced an insignificant negative correlation coefficient (Pearson $r=-.258$).

But by selecting municipalities with higher levels in voter turnout (Dondo, Mocímboa da Praia, Moatize, Chibuto, Chokwe, Inhambane and Quelimane) and comparing their levels of political competition, this study found some association between these variables. The increase in the level of voter turnout in Mocímboa da Praia and Quelimane is associated with an increase in levels of political competition. This suggests a positive relationship between citizen's participation in elections and political competition. However the increase in citizens' participation in the Moatize, Chibuto and Chokwe elections is negatively associated with political competition. For these municipalities, voter turnout is not fostered by political competition but by other factors. To understand the dynamics involved it will be important for further research to be undertaken in this area to assess what factors may have influenced voter turnout in these municipalities. Possible factors that may play a major role are the perception or possibility of irregularity and fraud or political intolerance, characteristics which tend to be associated with ruling party strongholds. Other municipalities such as Dondo, Montepuez and Inhambane are also difficult cases to analyse. Their voter turnout does not show a consistent pattern with political competition. Therefore voter turnout in these municipalities may be accounted for by other considerations which will need to be investigated and tested.

The *legitimacy of the electoral system* as a whole may also contribute to determining levels of voter turnout. When citizens perceive that their electoral system is not fair they may form political behaviour that moves them away from voting. The Mozambican proportional representation (PR) closed list electoral system combined with partial and non-independent electoral rules and institutions (including the National Electoral Commission and Constitutional Council) might be responsible for some Mozambican voters not voting during elections. The perception by the main opposition party Renamo that Mozambican electoral arrangements lead the ruling party to make irregularities, fraud, manipulate and forge election results have led this party and its supporters to (say that they will) not participate in politics. The opposition boycott of the 1998 local election and the 2012 local by-elections and the respective lower voter turnout is evidence of this. In addition the current Renamo expression that they will not contest the 2013 local and 2014 national elections, if electoral rules do not improve, is other evidence. With respect to the type of electoral system that leads to better voter turnout, Norris (2004) found that PR systems tend to boost voter participation when compared with majoritarian and mixed systems.

The role of *mobilizing agencies* may also influence voter turnout. "An enormous information network of voter education campaigns in the 1994 founding national election involving almost all the country broadcasting, video and advertisement

companies, dozens of related institutions, and thousands of young Mozambicans played a major role” (de Maia 1996:151) accounting for high levels in the 1994 national election voting turnout. It is possible that this enormous network did not continue, or at least with the same intensity in the following national and local elections, resulting in lower voter turnouts. The National Electoral Commission, especially the Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration, is an important mobilizing agency for voter turnout. If it does not have enough capacity and is not well organized to mobilize voters voter turnout is likely to be lower.

Voter registration may also affect citizen participation in elections. “Comprehensive, continuously updated voter registers will produce higher voter turnout rates, although as an indirect effect” (Pintor and Gratschew 2002). In Mozambique the perception by the opposition that voter registration by the National Electoral Commission had major problems precipitated the opposition boycott to the 1998 local elections and the respective lower voter turnout. It is also likely that some Mozambicans could not vote because they did not find their name in the voter registers.

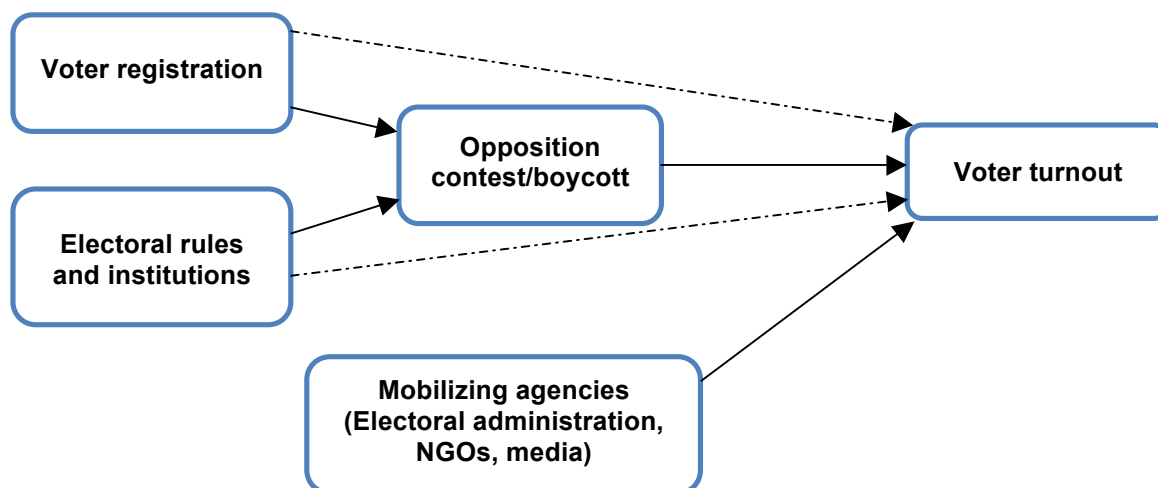
The impact of *socio-economic development* on voter turnout is also commonly evoked in global comparison (Norris 2002). Going back to Marx and Weber, modernization theories assume that “changes to the economic structure of production are at the roots of social relations, cultural shifts, and political development” (Norris 2002). Norris (2002) also points out the following social preconditions underlying democratic participation: *greater literacy, formal education, income and wealth; growing urbanization and suburbanization; the expansion of media access (e.g. newspapers, radio, and television); the rapid expansion in the size of working class; the rise of professional, managerial and intellectual bourgeoisie; and development of mass based urban organizations to mobilize these citizens, including social democratic parties, trade unions, workers’ cooperatives, charitable organizations, and municipal associations.* Dalton (2002) found that formal education has a positive and strong impact on voter turnout in the United States. Whereas Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi (2005:297) found that media access has positive weak impact in African countries but formal education has no impact at all. In the Mozambican agrarian society, it can be hypothesized that “turnout will increase significantly during the first stage of modernization as agricultural societies move toward becoming industrialized” (Norris 2002). Party attachment, union attachment, political ideology, political satisfaction, religiosity, age, gender, and political efficacy appear also as influential on voter turnout (see Dalton 2002; Norris 2004; Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005, Bratton, Chu and Lagos 2005).

Based on existing data this study developed a possible model accounting for variation in (low) voter turnout in Mozambican elections (Figure 5). The model can be summarized as follows:

- *Voter registration has an indirect impact on voter turnout.* It impacted indirectly and negatively when opposition parties boycotted the 1998 local election citing irregularities in voter registration. It is also possible it had a direct and negative impact linked to inaccurate voter registers impeaching people from voting, for instance, by not finding their name in the voters’ register;

- *Electoral rules or institutions have an indirect effect.* It affected indirectly and negatively voter turnout in the 2012 by-election when the main opposition boycotted it claiming that elections results were already forecast for dominant party victory because of the ruling party's control over electoral rules and institutions. It may also affect it directly and negatively, if ordinary citizens perceive that electoral institutions and rules are biased to one party thus marginalizing others. Alternatively, if there are more independent and impartial electoral institutions and rules it may be conducive for higher turnouts.
- *Mobilizing agencies, including electoral administration, non-governmental organizations and media, have a direct impact.* They affected positively voter turnout in the 1994 founding national elections to some extent. The intensity and national coverage of these agencies described by Da Maia (1996) in mobilizing voters in the 1994 founding election is associated with higher turnout. The likely decline in the intensity of their work in mobilizing voters over time could be associated with lower turnout in local elections.

Figure 5: Model Accounting for Variation in Voter Turnout in Mozambican Elections



Opposition Contests versus Boycotted Elections

Opposition contestation versus boycott of elections is another dimension of political participation. In this dimension, participation is by political parties rather than citizens as in voter turnout. To what extent do opposition parties contest or boycott local elections in Mozambique?

The 1998 founding local election was boycotted by opposition parties. As observed earlier, the main opposition party Renamo plus others did not participate in the 1998 election alleging the existence of major irregularities in voter registration. As a consequence, in most municipalities, there was no opposition candidate to challenge the ruling party candidate.

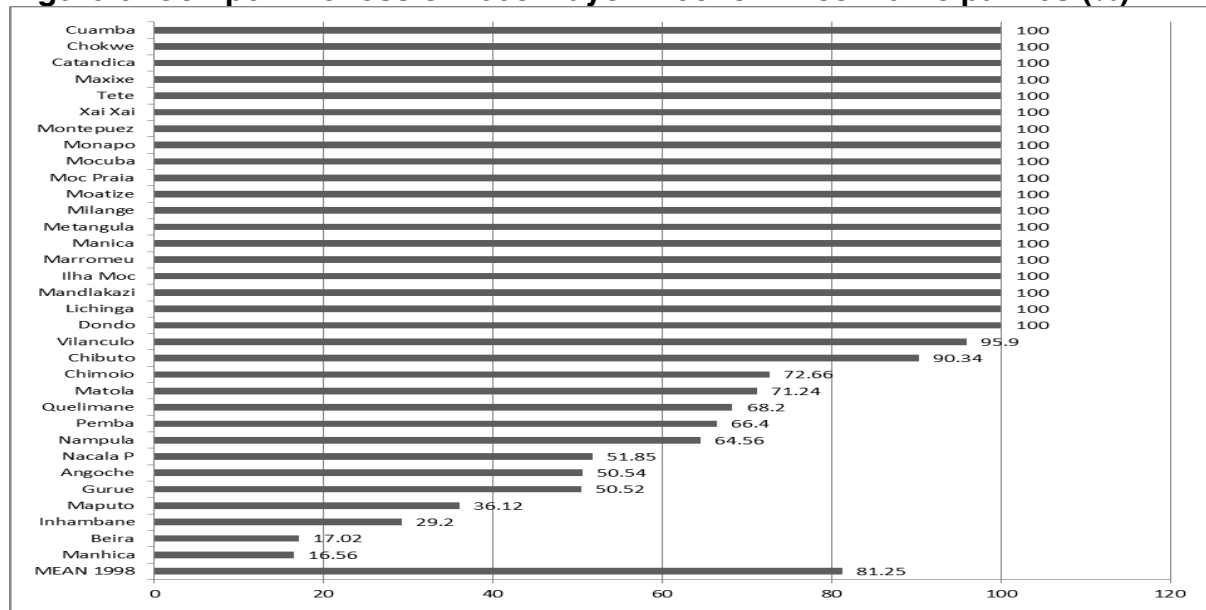
All other regular local elections were contested by opposition parties. However the main opposition boycotted the 2011 by-election in Cuamba, Pemba and Quelimane municipalities; and the 2012 by-election in Inhambane. For the first, they expressed

that they did not see a valid reason for the resignation of the mayors in those three municipalities while for the second they remarked that the results were already forecast for dominant party victory. Although the first reason makes no sense for the opposition to boycott, the second might be valid. The rule for appointment for all electoral institutions (National Electoral Commission and the judiciary Constitutional Council) is based on the PR system, thus the electoral arrangements or institutions are set up to contribute to determining a ruling party victory since they are composed predominantly of officials appointed by the ruling party making them non-independent and partial.

4. Political Competition in Local Elections

The second dimension of democratic quality of elections is political competition. Elections are considered competitive when there is a very low difference in the percentage or number of votes between the first and second most voted for candidates or parties. Overall, the data shows Mozambican local elections are not competitive. The differences in the percentage of votes between the first and second most voted for candidates are very high as well as being above 50 percent⁸. The average difference in the 1998 local election is 81.25 percent while in 2008 it is 60.95 percent (Figure 6, Figure 7 and Figure 8).

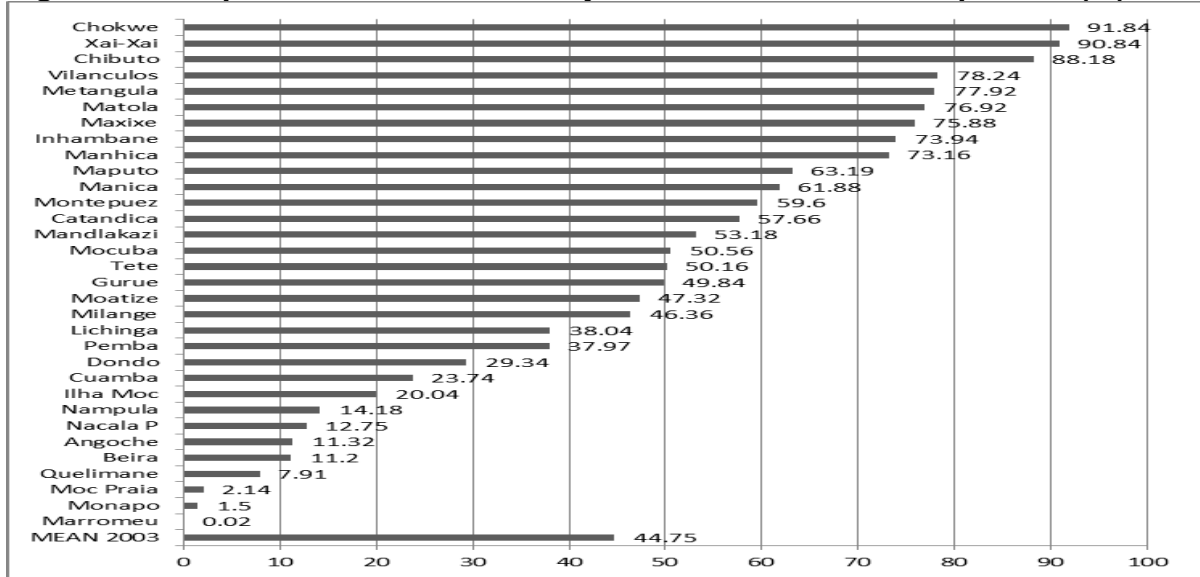
Figure 6: Competitiveness of 1998 Mayor Election in 33 Municipalities (%)



Data calculated by author from Acordão do Tribunal Supremo 1998, of 17 August.

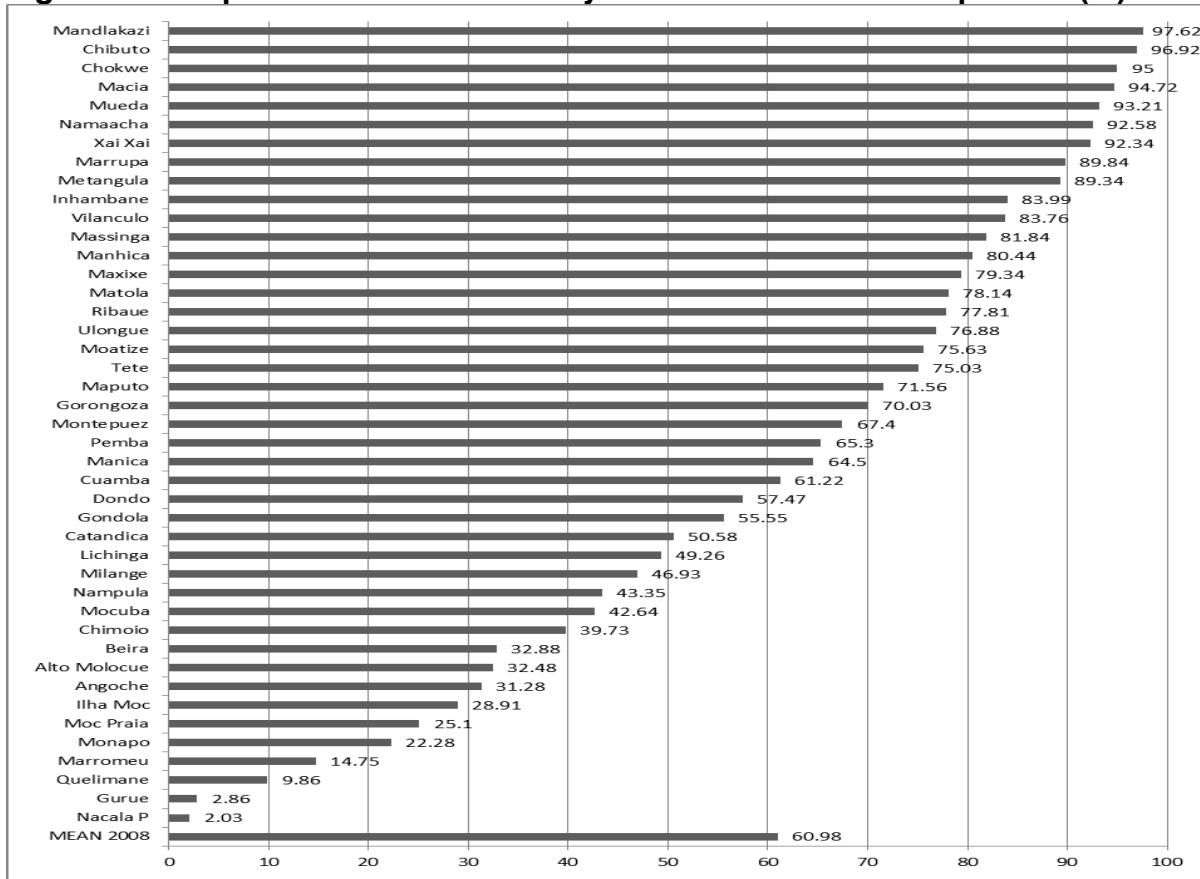
⁸ With the exception of the 2003 mayor election even though its average percentage is still high (44.75 percent)

Figure 7: Competitiveness of 2003 Mayor Election in 33 Municipalities (%)



Figures calculated by the author from *Deliberação do Conselho Constitucional No 14/CC/04*, of 14 January.

Figure 8: Competitiveness of 2008 Mayor Election in 43 Municipalities (%)



Data calculated by the author from *Annex 2 of Acordão do Conselho Constitucional No 2/CC/2009*, of 15 January.

Of the three regular local elections, the 1998 local election is the least competitive. Besides the 1998 average difference being high, there were 19 municipalities (57.57 percent) out of 33 in 1998 where only one candidate (from the ruling party) contested (because the opposition boycotted). However, in those few municipalities where the

opposition candidates did participate, elections were to some extent competitive in Manhica (16.56 percent) and Beira (17.02 percent) and to a lesser extent in Inhambane (29.2 percent) and Maputo (36.12 percent). All others cannot be considered competitive even though the winning candidate competed against an opposition candidate; the differences in the percentages of votes between the first and second most voted for candidates are all above 50 percent.

The most recent 2008 local election in 43 municipalities was also not competitive. Of the 43 municipalities, 28 (equivalent to 65.1 percent) had levels of differences above 50 percent. This refers to elections of Mandlakazi, Chibuto, Chokwe, Macia, Mueda, Namaacha, Xai-Xai, Marrupa, Metangula, Inhambane, Vilanculo, Massinga, Manhiça, Maxixe, Matola, Ribaué, Ulongue, Moatize, Tete, Maputo, Gorongosa, Montepuez, Pemba, Manica, Cuamba, Dondo, Gondola, and Catandica.

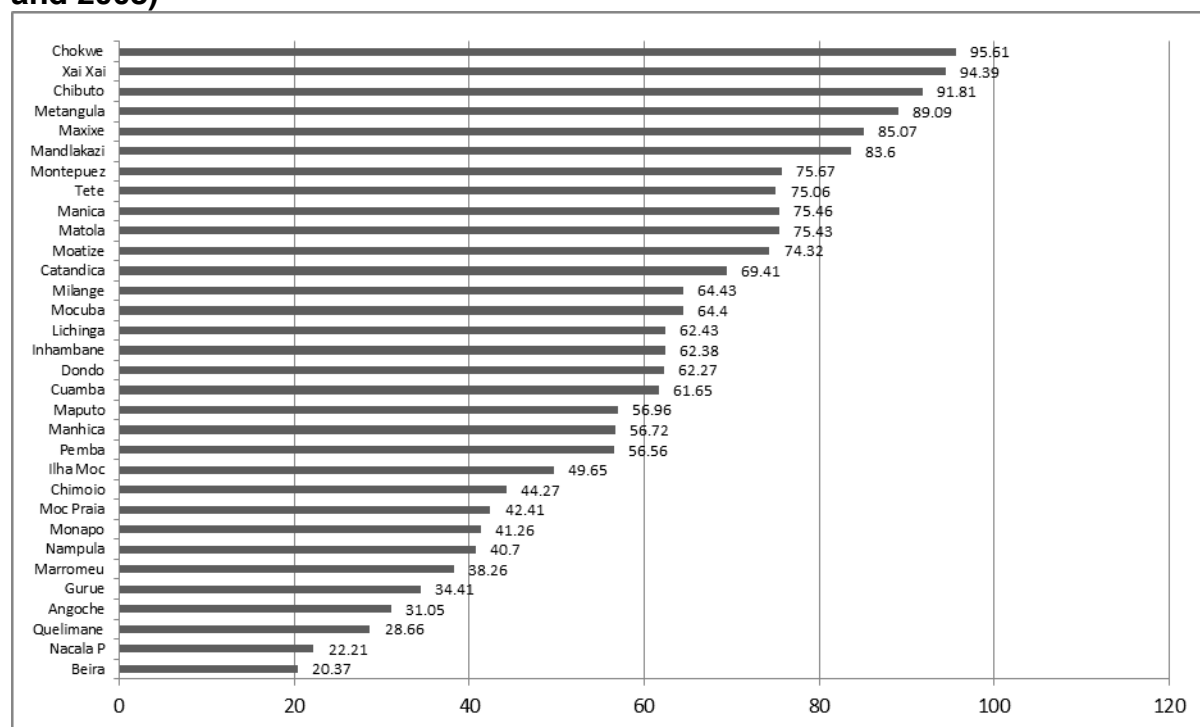
Although 11 local elections (25.6 percent) have levels of difference between 20 percent and 50 percent, these levels are still considered high and thus cannot be classified as competitive. This includes elections in the following municipalities: Lichinga, Milange, Nampula, Mocuba, Chimoio, Beira, Alto Molocue, Angoche, Ilha de Moçambique, Mocímboa da Praia, and Monapo.

Only 4 elections (9.3 percent) of the 43 municipalities can be considered competitive: Nacala Porto (2.03 percent), Gurue (2.86 percent), Quelimane (9.86 percent) and to some extent Marromeu (14.75 percent).

Comparing with the others, the 2003 mayoral election is the most competitive. The average difference of the 33 mayoral elections in 2003 is below 50 percent (44.75 percent). This is the election where the opposition was able to defeat ruling party candidates in 5 municipalities, namely: Ilha de Moçambique, Nacala-Porto, Angoche, Marromeu and Beira. Among these municipalities, Marromeu is the most competitive. Firstly, the difference in the proportion of votes between the first and second most voted for candidate is minimal (.02 percent). Secondly, the opposition candidate won the mayor ship despite the ruling party winning the local municipal assembly.

After Marromeu follow Monapo, Mocímboa da Praia and Quelimane being highly competitive municipalities in the 2003 mayoral election. Beira, Angoche, Nacala Porto and to some extent Nampula and Ilha de Moçambique were also competitive. However, only 16 (48.48 percent) municipalities have levels of competitiveness below 50 percent in the 2003 local election.

Aggregating these elections together the municipality that is the most competitive is Beira followed by Nacala Porto, Quelimane, Angoche, Gurue, Marromeu, Nampula, Monapo, Mocímboa da Praia, Chimoio and Ilha de Moçambique (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Political Competition Index in Local Regular Elections (1998, 2003 and 2008)

Figures refer to 3 regular local elections so far conducted in the country: 1998, 2003 and 2008. Data on 10 new municipalities in the 2008 local election were excluded from analysis. Absence of early elections in these municipalities make their figures uncomparable.

Assuming these trends hold true it can be predicted that these municipalities are where opposition parties are most likely to win in the forthcoming regular local election, currently scheduled for 20 November 2013. This assumption, which is based on regular local elections, is corroborated by the 2011 Quelimane by-election won by an opposition candidate. Quelimane had been a competitive municipality in both the 2003 and 2008 local elections.

Alternation of Political Power

According to Cheibub, Gandhi and Vreeland (2010:69), democracies must meet four conditions: an elected head of government, an elected legislature, more than one party competing for major offices, and an “alternation in power under electoral rules identical to the ones that brought the incumbent to office”. Multiparty societies can therefore democratize when there is alternation of political power in government. However even though electoral alternation is a valuable indicator of democracy it is neither necessary nor a sufficient condition for a country to qualify as democratic (Boix, Miller and Rosato 2011). To remain democratic it is important that the new ruler does not change the constitution and/or the electoral rules against its opponents.

Some of the regular local elections in Mozambique brought alternation of political power. There was alternation of political power in the 2003 election in five municipalities, which turned to the main opposition control. Nevertheless, in the 2008 election, the main opposition lost all five municipalities: four turned back to the dominant party while one (i.e. Beira) was won by an independent candidate. Local

by-elections also brought alternation of political power. Of the three municipalities in the 2011 by-election there was alternation of power in one (i.e. Quelimane). Further, where there has been alternation of power the new ruler has not sought to change electoral rules against its opponent (although it should be noted that even if they wanted to do so they could not given their power is at the local not national level). This finding suggests that the country has at least been democratizing to a certain extent at the local-municipal level through alternation of power. However this democratization is taking place in the context where it has been also pushed back for not having impartial and independent electoral rules and institutions that can promote more legitimate, free and fair elections.

5. Legitimacy of Local Elections

To be able to assess the extent to which Mozambican local elections are legitimate there are some important elements to consider. The extent to which the elections are free and fair; whether the losing candidates accept the election results; whether the electoral process is peaceful; and whether the democratic regime has survived.

Free and Fair versus Flawed Elections

All local elections in Mozambique have been deemed free and fair by both the internal and external election observers. They report so with minor and even major election problems. Electoral observers observe the electoral process including the voting day itself, vote counting and the release of results. However they do not take into account the contribution of electoral arrangements in determining election results in their observation. In Mozambique electoral arrangements contribute to determining the victory of the dominant party and marginalize opposition parties. As referenced above, all electoral institutions are comprised of officials that are predominantly appointed by the ruling party. Thus, elections are more likely to be flawed rather than be truly free and fair.

While electoral observers' assessments of elections matter, the opinions of the general public towards elections are also important to consider in this area (Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005). As, unfortunately, public opinion surveys in Mozambique have been focusing on elections at the national level rather than at the local level, it is not possible to know the extent to which local elections have been free and fair or flawed from the perspective of ordinary Mozambican citizens.

Acceptance by Losing Candidate

Even though Mozambican elections have been characterized with minor and even major problems by electoral observers, losers have been accepting defeat to a considerable extent. The ruling party accepted the election results when it lost five municipalities in favour of the main opposition party Renamo in the 2003 local election. But it has been difficult for the main opposition party to do so, citing the biased electoral rules and institutions, as referenced above.

The opposition have been expressing fraud and irregularities in most of the elections they lose. A typical example is from the 2005 by-election. The main opposition Renamo plus 10 other parties (that is the Renamo-Electoral Union) protested first,

against excessive presence of the police force on the streets during the voting day as well as the detention of four of its election observers during the vote counting⁹ of the 21 May 2005 by-election in Mocímboa da Praia municipality. An electoral observer noticed that observers from both parties (incumbent and opposition) were close to the ballot box – “a thing that extremely violates the climate of tranquillity that the [electoral] process demands”, but only opposition observers were detained by police.¹⁰

Secondly, the Renamo-Electoral Union protested by stating that more than 500 Renamo votes were unutilized to favour the ruling party candidate. The National Electoral Commission rejected the Renamo-Electoral Union protest alleging lack of proof; and then, the judiciary Constitutional Council rejected it because by law it can only consider claims that can change election results. The total count of invalid votes was only 444, less than the difference between the two candidates and less than the Renamo claim of “more than 500”. Regardless of this the Renamo-Electoral Union demonstrated on 7 July 2005 in Mocímboa da Praia.

The 2008 local election was to some extent accepted by the opposition. This occurred when an independent candidate defeated both the main opposition and ruling party candidates in Beira municipality.

Peaceful Process

Local elections in Mozambique have not been always peaceful. Potential and violent conflicts have been part of them. However this has varied according to municipality. In some municipalities elections tend to be more peaceful than others. Stronghold municipalities have been characterized by violent attacks as well as those that are very competitive. Mocímboa da Praia is a very competitive municipality where tensions between the ruling party and the main opposition supporters have led to violent conflict. Conflict occurred in the 2005 by-election in Mocímboa da Praia.

The municipalities of Chokwe and Xai-Xai in Gaza Province are also examples of ruling party strongholds where it is difficult for the opposition to campaign (Shenga 2009). Opposition supporters are either received with stones during their rallies or see their offices attacked and vandalized.¹¹

Regime Survival

After three regular local elections, an equal number of by-elections and despite minor and major election problems, the democratic regime in Mozambican municipalities has survived. Democratically elected local institutions have been functioning trying to deliver goods and services with relative success. However, in the period between elections most opposition parties tend to be silent and even away from politics.

⁹ *Boletim do Processo Político* No 35 of 15 July 2005, pp 5.

¹⁰ *Boletim do Processo Político* No 35 of 15 July 2005, pp 6.

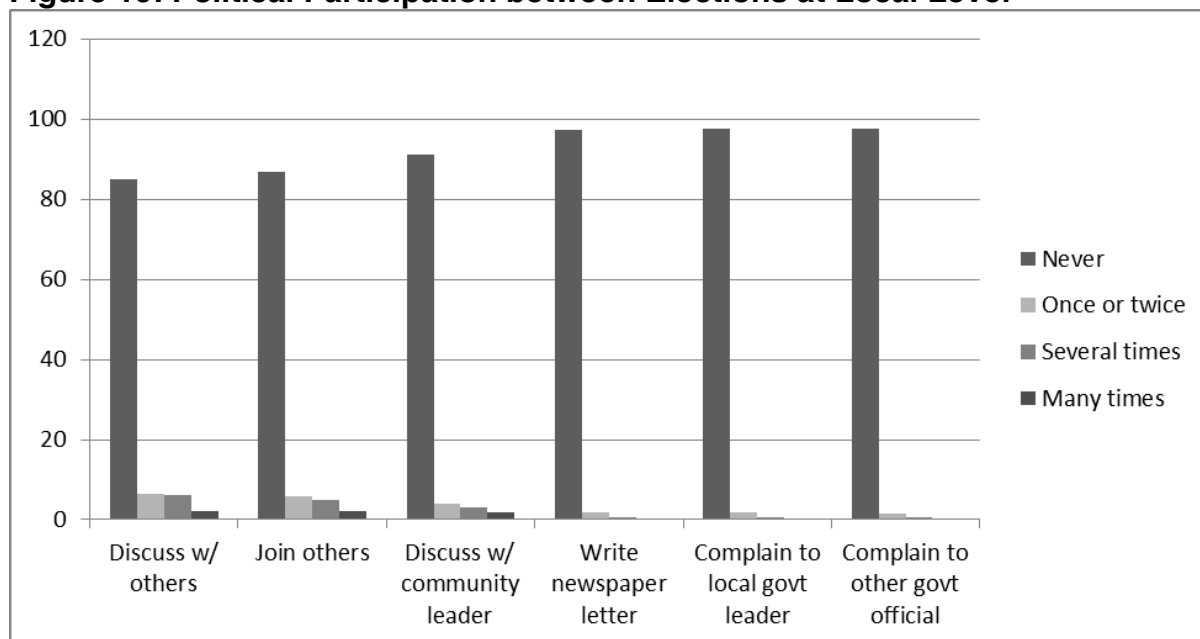
¹¹ *Canal de Moçambique*, 14 September 2009; and 14 March 2013. See also Missão de Observação Eleitoral da União Europeia – Moçambique Relatório Final sobre as Eleições Presidenciais, Legislativas e das Assembleias Provinciais – 2009, searched on 15 March 2013: http://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/mozambique/documents/eu_mozambique/021_annex_eu_eom_mozambique_2009_final_pt.pdf

These tend to be those parties with no representation at the local and national assembly and at the executive.

The same occurs with respect to voters. Based on an Afrobarometer public opinion survey on the quality of democracy and governance in Mozambique, this study examined whether Mozambican citizens continue to participate in politics in the period between elections once they have elected their representatives.

The 2008 survey results¹² show that Mozambicans are much less likely to participate between elections at lower levels of politics.

Figure 10: Political Participation between Elections at Local Level



2008 Afrobarometer survey question: How often, if at all, did you do any of the following: A. Discuss the problem with other people in your community? B. Join with others in your community to address the problem? C. Discuss the problems with other community, religious, or traditional leaders? D. Write a letter to a newspaper or call a radio show? E. Make a complaint to local government officials, for example, by going in person or by writing a letter? F. Make a complaint to other government officials, for example, by going in person or by writing a letter?

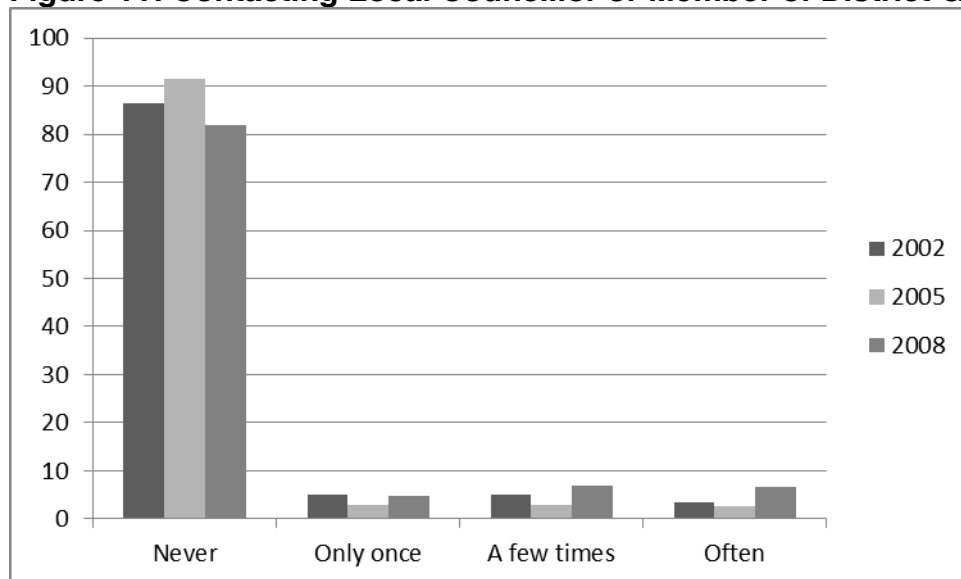
The overwhelming majority (more than 85 percent) responded ‘never’ when asked how often, if at all, they discuss a problem with other people in community; join with others in the community to address a problem; discuss a problem with other community, religious, or traditional leaders; write a letter to a newspaper or call a radio show; make a complaint to local government officials, for example, by going in person or by writing a letter; or make a complaint to other government officials, for instance, by going in person or by writing a letter (Figure 10).

Mozambicans are also less likely to engage with or contact formal leaders about important community problems or to give them their views. An overwhelming majority of more than 80 percent of Mozambicans expressed to Afrobarometer interviewers that they never contacted their local councillor or member of district council (i.e.

¹² Afrobarometer survey results are based on a nationally representative random stratified probability sample of the adult population.

District Administrator and *Directores de Serviços*). This level increased from 2002 to 2005 but declined in 2008 (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Contacting Local Councillor or Member of District Government



2002, 2005 and 2008 Afrobarometer survey question: During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views? A. A Municipal councillor or member of a district council

6. Conclusions and Discussions

Based on objective official data, this study assessed and compared the democratic quality of Mozambican local elections. It found local elections in Mozambique to have low levels of democratic quality but with some progressive changes over time.

Overall the study found first, low levels of political participation in Mozambican local elections. The average voter turnout is only 31.9 percent (excluding by-elections) and 35.1 percent (including by-elections). However, voter turnout at regular local elections increased from the founding to the second and third elections. It declined in by-elections from 2005 to 2011 but increased in 2012. Of the six regular and by-elections, the main opposition contested only in three (2003, 2005 and 2008) elections. The existence of non-independent and partial electoral institutions or rules has been the major reason for the main opposition party to boycott elections, with the exception of the 2011 by-election.

Secondly, this study found that Mozambican local elections tend not to be competitive. The difference between the first and second most voted for candidates is very high (62.3 percent excluding by-elections and 49 percent including by-elections), suggesting less-competitive elections. Of the three regular local elections, political competition is highest in 2003; and of the three by-elections it is highest in 2005 in Mocímboa da Praia. However, of the 33 municipalities in 1998 and 2003 elections and the 43 municipalities in the 2008 local election 11 are to some extent competitive. These municipalities are those that have already experienced alternation of political power (i.e. Beira, Nacala Porto, Quelimane, Angoche, Marromeu, and Ilha de Moçambique), with the exception of Gurue, Nampula,

Monapo, Mocímboa da Praia and Chimoio. They are the most likely to be won by the opposition in the forthcoming local elections in November 2013.

An important observation has also been made in relation to alternation of power. Alternation of power in Mozambique suggests the country has at least been democratizing to a certain extent at the local-municipal level, fostering more political acceptance or tolerance by the dominant party by being ruled by the opposition in the municipalities they have lost. On the other hand, democratization has been also pushed back for not having impartial and independent electoral rules and institutions that can promote more legitimate, free and fair elections. Therefore it can be said that alternation of power has been occurring in a context without democracy.

Thirdly with respect to the legitimacy of local elections, elections have been deemed free and fair by both internal and external electoral observers. However this assessment only focuses on the electoral process and does not look at electoral rules or the institutions themselves. It will therefore be important to complement this with further research on the extent to which local elections are considered free and fair or flawed from the perspective of ordinary Mozambican citizens.

This study also showed that despite local elections being characterized with minor and even major problems by electoral observers, losers from the incumbent side have accepted defeat, although the main opposition party has tended to not accept. Further the electoral process has not always been peaceful irrespective of whether a municipality is a party stronghold or a more competitive area. Potential and even violent conflict has been part of local elections. However, regardless of minor and even major problems that have occurred the democratic regime of Mozambican municipalities has survived so far. Since the founding local election democratically elected local bodies have been functioning and delivering social, economic and political goods albeit to varying degrees.

Fourthly, and accounting for variation in the levels of voter turnout, this study found no statistical correlation between overall voter turnout and political competition. However it did when selecting some municipalities with higher levels in voter turnout and comparing their levels of political competition. The increase in the level of voter turnout in Mocímboa da Praia and Quelimane is associated with an increase in levels of political competition, suggesting a positive relationship between voter turnout and political competition. On the other hand, the increase in citizens' participation in the Moatize, Chibuto and Chokwe elections is associated with a decrease in political competition.

Other considerations accounting for the variation of voter turnout are: voter registration, electoral rules or institutions, and mobilizing agencies. This study found that voter turnout was lower when opposition parties boycotted the 1998 local election, as a result of their claim of irregularities in voter registration.

Electoral rules or institutions affected indirectly and negatively voter turnout in the 2012 by-election when the main opposition boycotted it alleging that the results were already forecast for dominant party victory.

The intensity and national coverage of the mobilizing agencies (including electoral administration, NGOs and media) described by Da Maia (1996) mobilizing voters in the 1994 founding election is associated with 1994 higher turnout. The likely reduction in their intensity over time could be associated with respective lower turnout in local elections.

For Mozambican electoral scholars, it will be important for further research to take place to simultaneously take into account the effect of the varying factors that contribute to determining voter turnout. Most of these factors were reviewed in this study but due to the limitation of data remain untested. The future aim is to identify what factors matter, how they matter and which one(s) have the most significant impact.

For internal and external democracy practitioners in Mozambique, those municipalities that have already experienced alternation of power and present higher levels of both voter turnout and political competition may be of interest. These are the municipalities where the most significant outputs and outcomes of democracy and governance are more likely to be observed in the mid-term, if this is the practitioner goal. However, those municipalities furthest away from facing alternation of power and with lower levels of political participation and competition may also be of interest to those practitioners interested in providing indirect support to national level institutions including electoral institutions. For instance, the electoral administration may require continuous support to conduct comprehensive, accurate and updated voter registration, something that was found to have an indirect impact in determining voter turnout in 1998 election. Together with other mobilizing agencies (NGOs and media) it may also need support for voter civic education to mobilize voters to vote. The democratisation process may also need support to reform electoral rules and institutions to be impartial and independent as stated in the Constitution under Article 135, No 3.

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