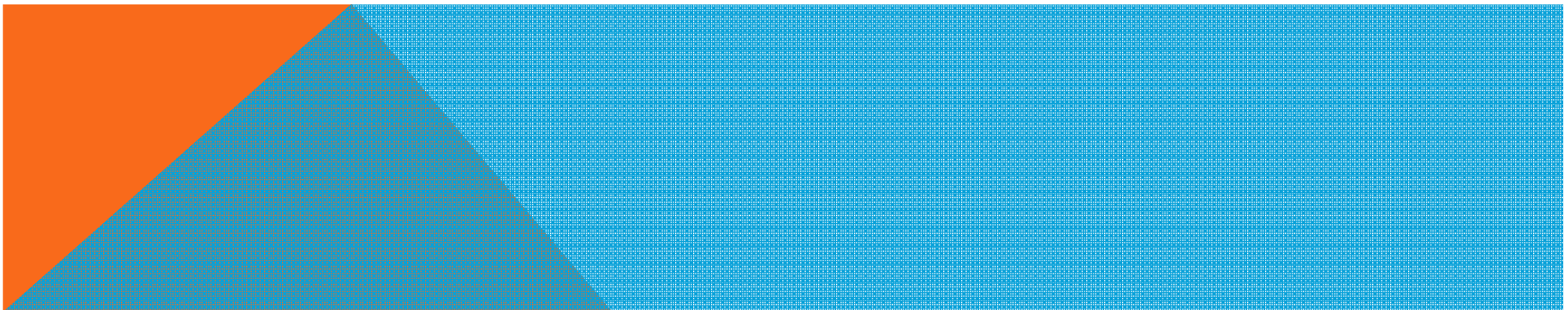# INTERROGATING CIVIL SOCIETY
A VIEW FROM MOZAMBIQUE

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NOVEMBER 2014

CONTENT

1. **Civil Society in Africa: Walk the talk?**
2. **Civil Society discourse during times of neo-liberal globalization**
3. **Research Perspective**
4. **Civil Society in Mozambique**
5. **Review of Civil Society Mapping in Mozambique**
6. **Methodological considerations**
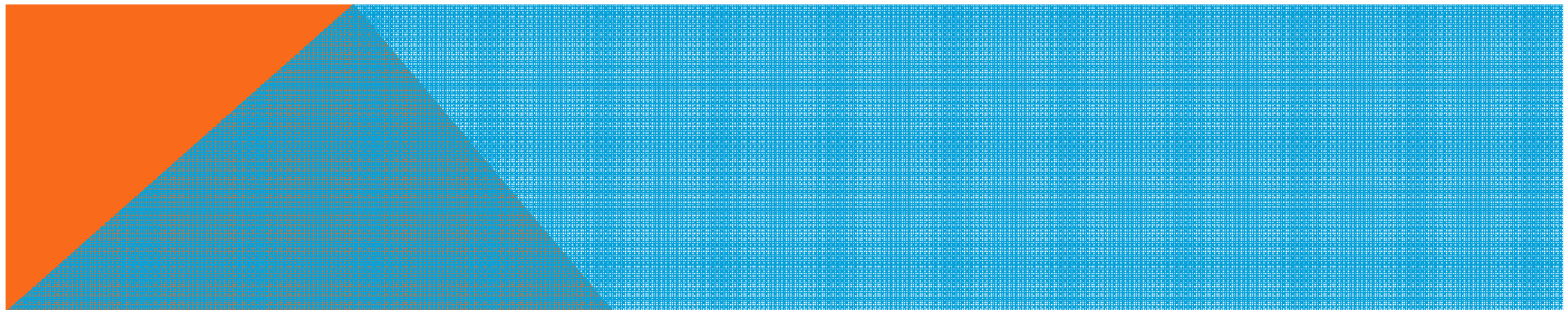
1. CIVIL SOCIETY IN AFRICA: WALK THE TALK?

COMMUNICATIVE RATIONALITY?

EMANCIPATION?

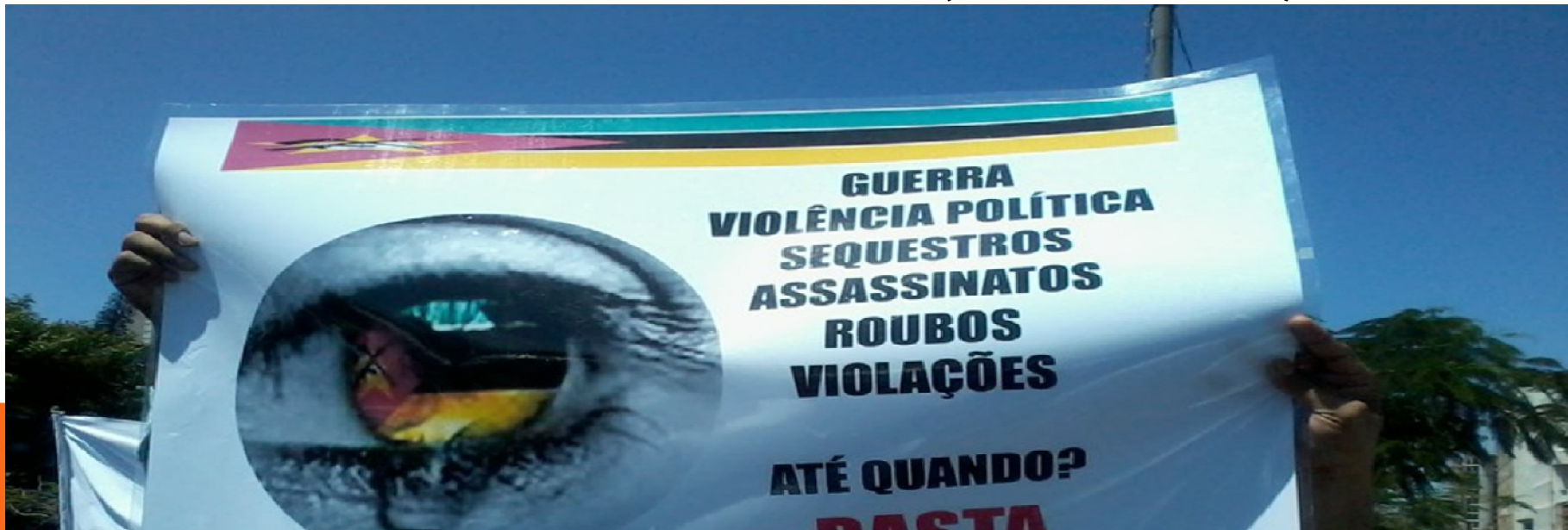# 2. CIVIL SOCIETY DISCOURSE DURING TIMES OF NEO-LIBERAL GLOBALIZATION (1/5)

Civil society as an idealized virtual space of communicative rationality ? (Habermas, 1984)

Communicative Power. . . does it emerge in its purest form in those moments when revolutionaries seize the power scattered through the streets; when a population committed to passive resistance opposes foreign tanks with their bare hands? When convinced minorities dispute the legitimacy of existing laws and engage in civil disobedience; when the sheer 'joy of action' breaks through in protest movements? (Habermas 1996)

2. CIVIL SOCIETY DISCOURSE DURING TIMES OF NEO-LIBERAL GLOBALIZATION (2/5)

CIVIL SOCIETY AS A CONCEPT THAT NEEDS TO BE EMANCIPATED BEFORE IT CAN BE OF USE FOR BUILDING AFRICAN REGIONAL CO-OPERATION, STABILITY SECURITY AND PEACE" (MUCHIE 2002)."

2. CIVIL SOCIETY DISCOURSE DURING TIMES OF NEO-LIBERAL GLOBALIZATION (3/5)
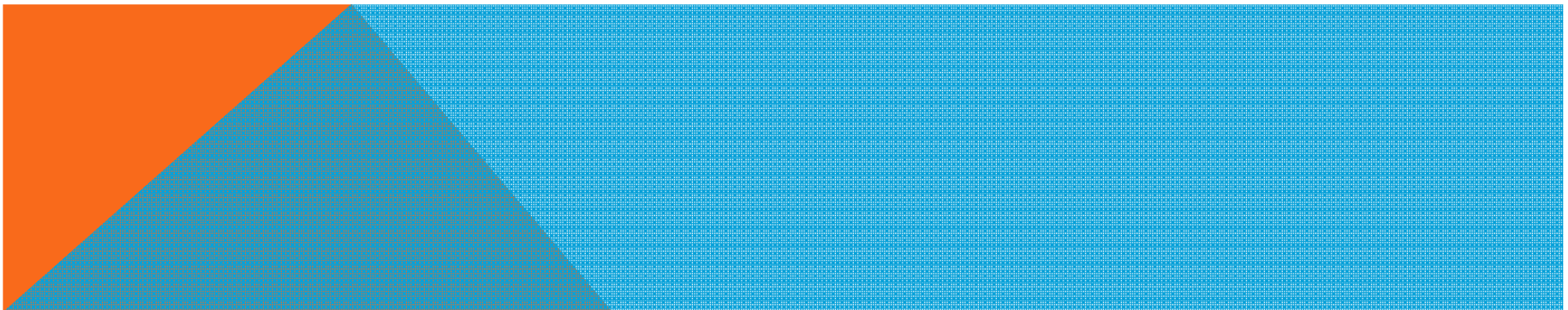
"We will always be poor and they will continue to get richer. For how much longer can we get poorer? Does it always have to be the future that is better – will it never be the present?" (24-year old male demonstrator)
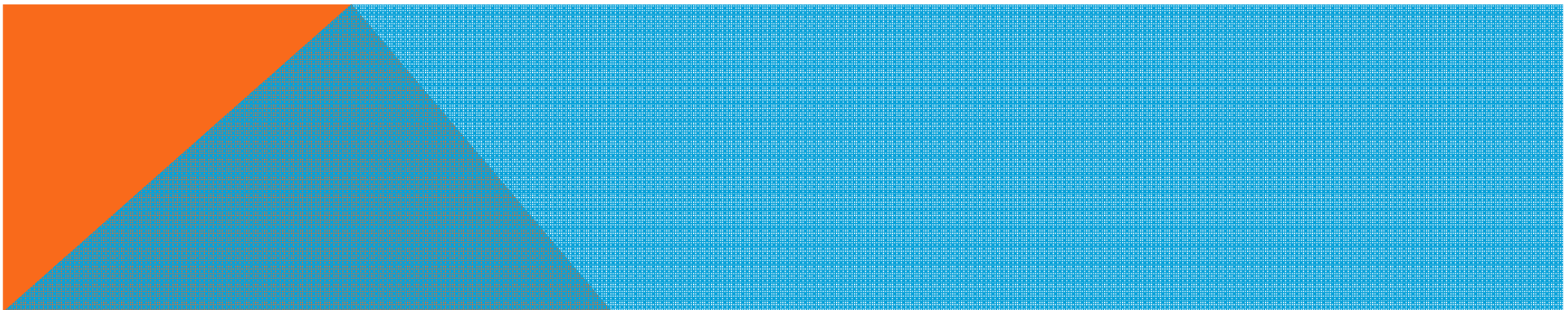
"Violence is not the best way, but when it comes to survival, the weak person chooses the best way to save himself, like self-defence ."(19 years old female demonstrator).

2. CIVIL SOCIETY DISCOURSE DURING TIMES OF NEO-LIBERAL GLOBALIZATION (5/5)

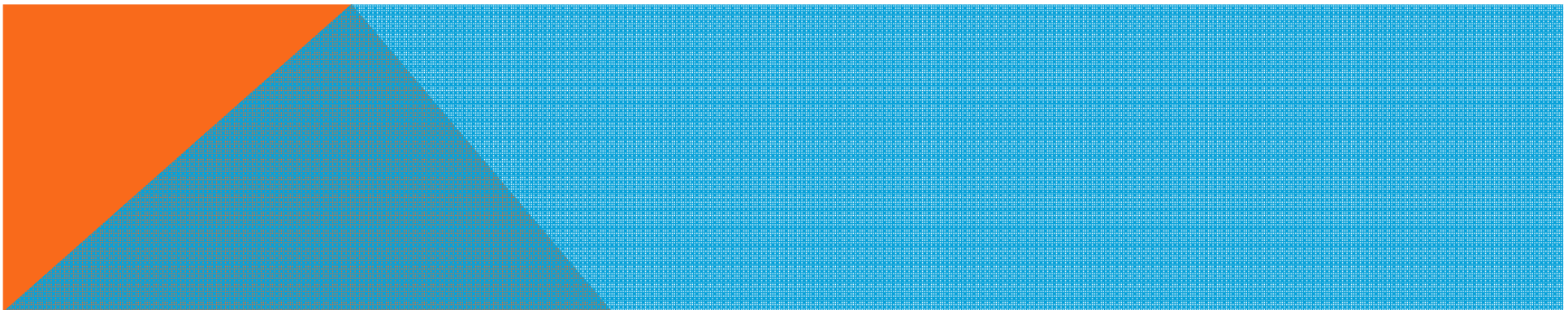"…the general feeling was that civil society participation is weak. Civil society never comes together at critical moments to defend its own interests, for example: rising prices, ill treatment of other citizens, damage and harm caused by the negligence of institutions, among others. It is felt that civil society sometimes allows itself to be instrumentalised by the Government."

(FDC/CIVICUS, 2007)

3. OUR RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

➢ **Analyse real weaknesses of the Western (liberal, neoliberal) influenced concept of civil society as it gets applied to an African context.**

➢ **Have a specific focus on 'uncivil' elements of civil society that mostly have strong associational life.**

➢ **Attempt to be accountable to the complexity of social life, self-protection and active resistance to increasing social inequality in a particular context.**

➢ **Work in an interdisciplinary way.**

3. INSPIRED BY... ANTONIO GRAMSCI
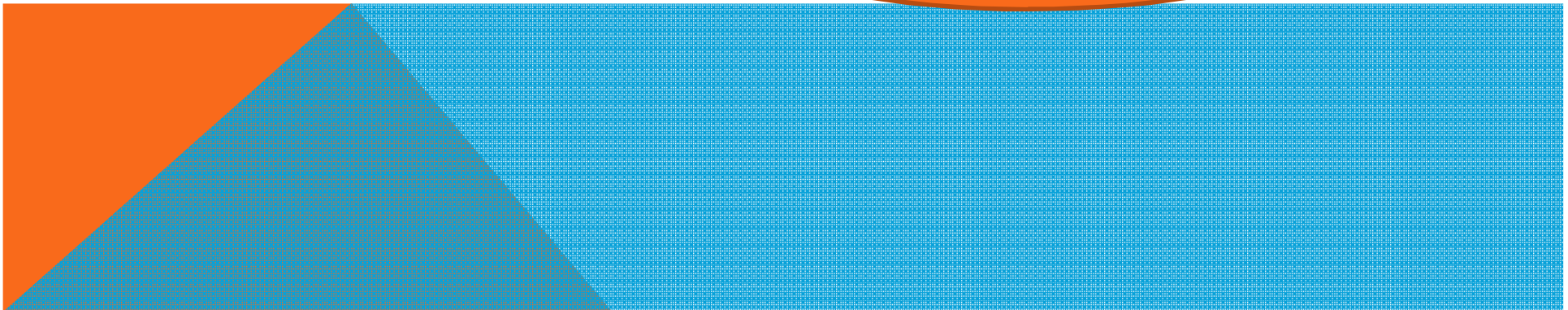
Super-Structure

Political Society

Civil Society (Trade Unions, Associations, Religious Congregations, Education)

Legitimization of the State

⬍

Articulation of alternative
hegemonial projects
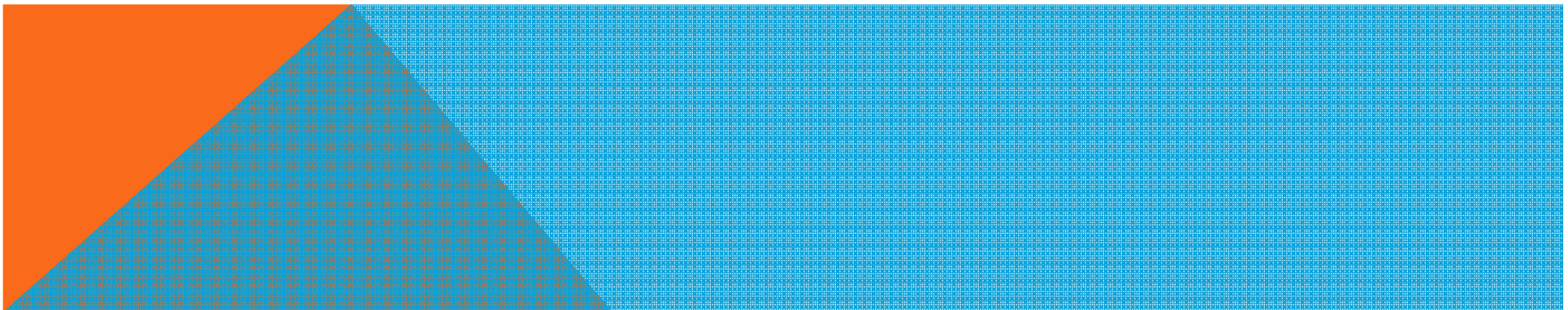'another world is possible'

4. CIVIL SOCIETY IN MOZAMBIQUE:
4.1. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

- **Associative life emerged during the time of opposition to the colonial regime.**

- **Pan-african ideas**

- **National Independence**

- **Socialism (democratic mass based organizations)**

- **Civil war (humanitarian assistance)**

- **Structural adjustments (NGOs)**

- **Democratization and good governance**

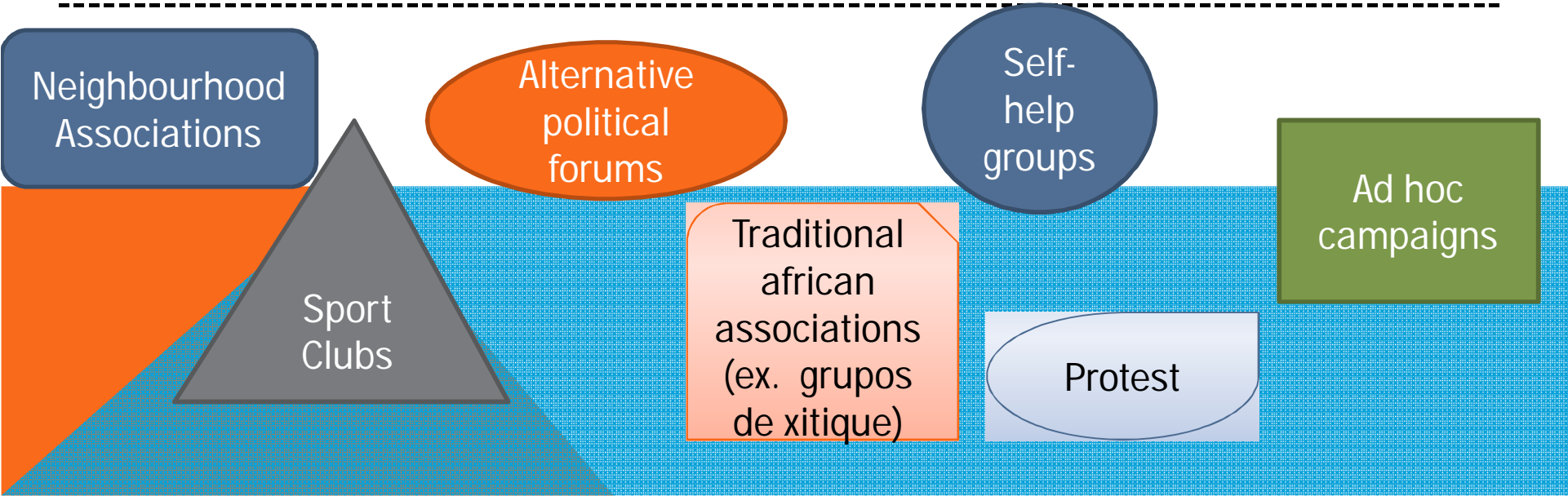 **Considerable expansion of NGOs and networks**

4.2 CURRENT SITUATION: THEORETICAL SAMPLING

Formal dimension of NGOs

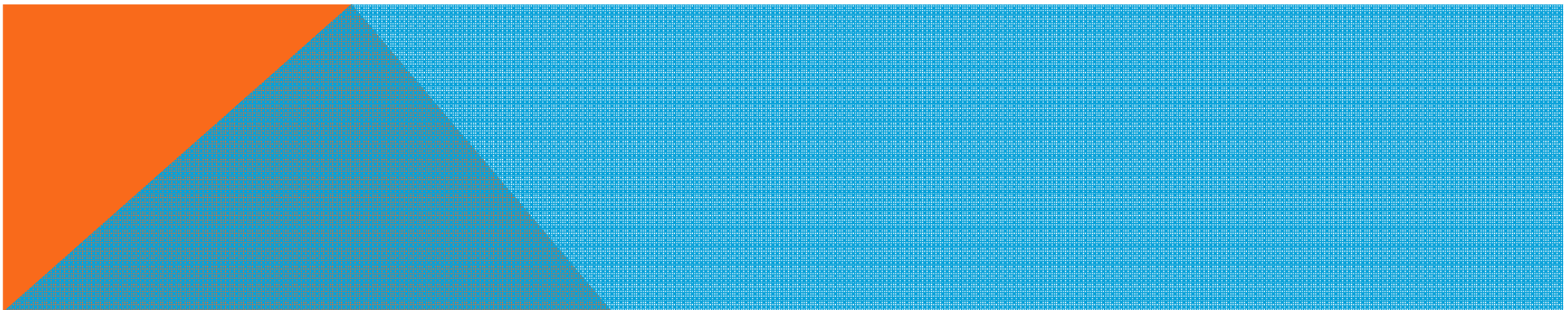**national**   **international**

'domesticated' civil society

Neighbourhood Associations

Alternative political forums

Self-help groups

Ad hoc campaigns

Sport Clubs

Traditional african associations (ex. grupos de xitique)

Protest

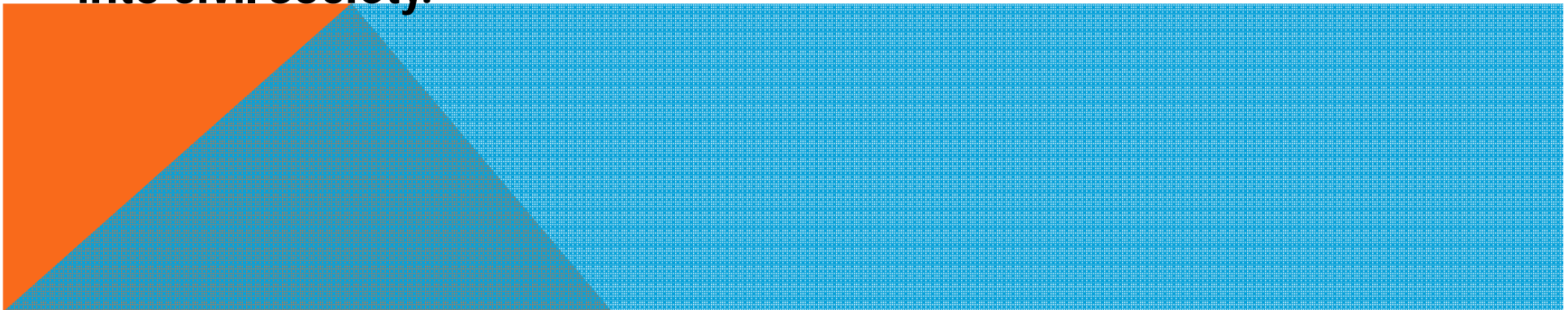# 5. REVIEWING CIVIL SOCIETY MAPPING IN MOZAMBIQUE (1/3)

"...generally, civil society has shown various significant weaknesses, related to their political-legal institutional set up, their values and their coordination with structures with the government, private sector and donors."

(FDC/CIVICUS, 2007, Mozambican Civil Society Within: Evaluation, Challenges, Opportunities and Action)
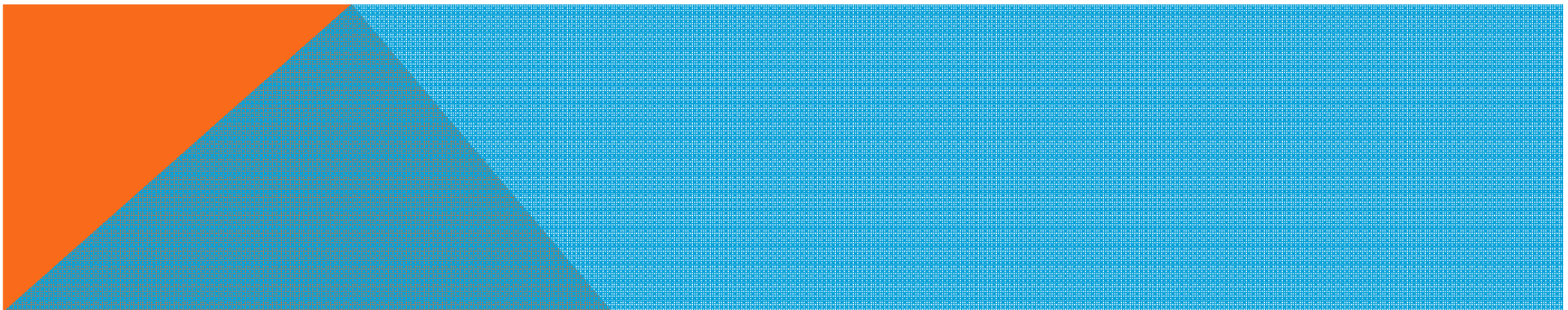
5. REVIEWING CIVIL SOCIETY MAPPING IN MOZAMBIQUE (2/3)

- **Lack of contextualization to the country context**

- **Most civil society associations are based at district or lower level but haven't been consulted $\longrightarrow$ the invisible (silent?) actors**

- **Mostly, formal and registered organizations are described**

    $\longrightarrow$ the visible

- **There is a government discourse that most civil society organizations are coming from the 'outside' (INE 2003), most civil society organizations are being ignored.**

- **Lack of clarity whether political parties are conceptually included into civil society.**

5. REVIEWING CIVIL SOCIETY MAPPING IN MOZAMBIQUE (3/3)

- **Lack of consideration of the factor "intimidation " during mappings.**

- **The time (and funding) necessary to conduct profound mapping doesn't respond to the complexity of civil society and is thus being underestimated.**

- **Just a limited number of mapping exercises have been accompanied by training for the participating organizations.**

- **The mapping implementation processes have been weak, limited nr. of collaboration and networks resulted.**

- **Many recommendations made as part of mapping haven't been used in practice.**

6. RESULTING METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- Need to understand power as dynamic and situational, from 'above' and 'below'.

- Civil Society not as a normative concept but as a political concept linked to social transformation.

- Importance to understand individual, collective and silent human actors, nonhuman elements, discourse constructions, political-economic elements, sociocultural symbolic, temporal and spatial elements, as well major debates and related public discourses.

- Contribute towards the deconstruction and re-definition of civil society taking a bottom up approach.

- Actively contribute to a political and democratic process at various levels of society.