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## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND PATRONAGE: EFFECTS ON POPULAR MOBILISATION IN DRC'S OILFIELDS, MUANDA

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‘The local population don’t have information on retrocession.  
For them, what matters is that the sons of the territory are employed.’  
Interview 48: 17 November 2017

‘When the people become hungry, they eat and close their eyes.  
It just takes knowledge.  
All you need is to know the truth. But Perenco doesn’t like to be unveiled.  
They isolate you and the thing is broken.’  
Interview 36: 9 November 2017

## Introduction

At the diminutive coast of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), around the town of Muanda, are the country’s only productive oil blocks. Onshore and offshore wells pump 25,000 barrels a day (EITI 2012: 30). These are run primarily by Perenco, a Franco-British international company. When oil prices were high in the years before 2014, this production provided nearly half a billion dollars to DRC’s state revenue (EITI 2015a: 7). Yet, as regularly remarked by locals, Muanda’s poverty stands in stark contrast to the bright lights of Angola’s oil towns on the Soyo peninsula, visible across the mouth of the Congo river. Locals are largely convinced that the benefits of production are not shared much at local level.<sup>2</sup>

The primary reason for this is that the taxes and other state revenues derived from oil are not shared with local state administrations. Retrocession to the provincial level is limited. In turn, the province retrocedes next to

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<sup>2</sup> Angolan oil production is also well known to locals. The illicit trade of Angolan oil from both Soyo and Cabinda has long been a staple economic activity for the fishermen of Muanda.

nothing to Muanda territory. However, there is little to no local contestation in any form of this situation, although viewing comparable contexts, one might expect some contestation. For example, in eastern DRC, at the gold mines of Banro, one finds fragmented but highly active and violent popular mobilization against perceived injustices relating to natural resource exploitation by international actors (Geenen & Verweijen 2017). Yet one sees significantly less popular protest or social action against these issues in Muanda. In other words, although visible inequalities are created through the vast natural resource wealth, and although the local population clearly is missing out on potential benefits, there is no contestation of this situation.

This chapter aims to explain this lack of contestation. It specifically looks at the strategies used by the oil company Perenco, and more particularly how corporate social responsibility (CSR)<sup>3</sup> affects the nature and outcome of protests in place.

In doing so, it shows how CSR forms the basis of a structured patronage system: the immediate benefits provided by Perenco (both jobs and CSR), though meagre in comparison to potential tax retrocession, placate a minority. At the same time, these benefits are part of a broader patronage system which ties hopeful candidates (for example for jobs, project funding or scholarships) into 'good behaviour'. That is, those which wish for such benefits must not contest the status quo. This greatly magnifies the effects of provision on local society's ability and willingness to conceive of, and act upon, the reasons for the limited sharing of natural resource wealth in the area of production.

In sum, this chapter analyses how patronage logics form around CSR at local level: It explains how the private actor's provision of goods and services co-opts various tiers of local elite. These elite actors in turn act both as gatekeepers to provision and censors of local political discourse and practice. This transformation of standard corporate practice by local political dynamics serves to constrain and limit contestation, particularly eliminating structurally transformative content to such contestation.

The chapter is structured in the following way. First we introduce the theoretical backdrop, namely the ways in which patronage dynamics affect protest (and its absence). Second, we show the key contextual features of Muanda. We then discuss the economic impact and public goods provision of Perenco, and analyse how this provision largely ties the population, via local elites, into a patronage pyramid. We then discuss in detail a key component

of that pyramid, the formal committee which makes recommendations to Perenco on social payments, before analysing how the structure of provision precludes claims to structural change. We next discuss the edges of this patronage system, outlining how protests focused on temporary employment lists function, how these protests are limited through the withdrawal of favour, and how the use of force limits protest to these specific, short-term claims. Finally, we clarify our conclusions on how these patterns constitute a 'devil's deal'.

This chapter is based on field research conducted by the authors in Muanda and Kinshasa between September and December 2017, as part of a broader research project on oil in DRC (Titeca and Edmond 2019). Across the project, fifty-nine semi-structured interviews, of which eighteen were in Muanda, were conducted with a wide range of actors, including current and former government officials, analysts, and civil society representatives<sup>4</sup>. Local contacts in Muanda began from a network of civil society met while attending a three-day workshop on the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in Muanda. This wide range of individuals introduced us to persons such as journalists, protestors, protest organisers, and local state officials. Casual conversations with citizens across the town and nearby villages were also conducted to place specialist conversations in context. Additionally, a review of the academic and grey literature on the issue was conducted.

## 1. Oil capture in Muanda

Kongo-Central (former Bas-Congo) is DR Congo's only oil-producing region. Production began in the 1960s, and offshore and onshore fields close to the coast at Muanda have long produced roughly 25,000 barrels per day (EITI 2012: 30). These fields were taken over by Perenco, a Franco-British firm run by the Perredo family, at the beginning of the 2000s (Gaudard 2013: 5).

Despite this production, oil provides very limited benefit to the local population. There may indeed be limited provision to public revenue. Perenco and its partners pay large sums in tax, and share profits through shares in the legal entities which operate the fields. This tax and share revenue is paid into accounts indicated by the state, and formally reported as received by the state. However, it is unclear where these funds end up:

<sup>3</sup> 'Corporate social responsibility' refers to a broad possible range of actions by private sector actors aimed at improving conditions in their regions of work, minimising the negative effects of their commercial activity, or in any way viewing their responsibilities as lying beyond their own economic profit incentives (See for example: Hilson 2012; Campbell 2012). The specific financial objects of CSR provision by Perenco are discussed below.

<sup>4</sup> Senior management of Perenco at the national and local level were contacted to organise interviews, but without success. We would welcome such interviews in future. We feel however that their absence does not preclude the validity of our findings, particularly since the official model of Perenco's corporate action is communicated publicly, such as on their website.

these accounts are possibly not those of the state itself, and are very likely held by regime figures. This amounts to a disguised privatisation of oil. This is consistent with earlier times. Under Mobutu, this privatisation was overt and direct. Local civil society noted that during this period, villagers would refer to oil wells according to the minister who 'owned' them (Interview 39: 12 November 2017). Analysts recalled how a minister responsible for oil had lost his role for attempting to verify declared production figures (Interview 14: 3 October 2017). These days, however, the privatisation of oil through state representatives is more disguised. There are seemingly some Congolese shareholders of Perenco, but according to civil society, they do not appear to be of a family connected to the inner circle of the Kabila regime (Interview 52: 22 November 2017). On the ground, the public-private boundaries of Perenco are kept very clear, and there are no obvious signs of corruption.

Most significant, however, is the above-stated fact that the regime diverts taxes and other revenues derived from oil production before they reach the public purse. This is worth explaining in detail. In general, the DRC oil sector functions as a source of regime finance (Edmond & Titeca 2018a, 2018b). Formally, the local government has rights to a significant percentage of the tax revenues, generated by the oil revenue. Article 175 of the DRC Constitution establishes that the percentage of national revenues allotted to the provinces is fixed permanently at 40%, and that this sum be 'retained at the source'<sup>5</sup> (Constitution of the DRC: Art. 175). For taxes related to oil extraction, 10% of the sum already retroceded is attributed as compensation, principally to repair environmental damage resulting from extraction (DRC 2011: Art. 218-221). According to both company and government figures, tax revenues from the productive companies around Muanda are in the millions of dollars, approximately \$462 million in 2013 (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative [EITI] 2015a: 10), \$410 million in 2014 (EITI 2015b: 14), \$209 million in 2015 (EITI 2017: 17). 40% of these sums would come to \$185 million in 2013, \$164 million in 2014, and \$83 million in 2015. These sums should by law be retroceded at least to the provincial level, if not also to the territorial level. This is not the case. No trace of these payments can be found in the EITI reports<sup>6</sup>, in which one only finds declarations of expectation (e.g. EITI 2017, section 4.5.4: 66). As a civil society representative stated, 'If there were proof provided to EITI of such transfers, it would be in the report [...] Any such transfer, insignificant or not, should be declared. Even if it is \$1,000 paid to provincial or territorial

government. If you ask the provincial government, they say they either received nothing or only a tiny quantity' (Interview 35: 8 November 2017).

An audit of the retrocession of state revenues to province level shows several interesting points on this matter. First, the audit states that instead of the 40% to which the province has a legal right, in the years 2007-2010, on average 9% of total tax revenue from Kongo-Central was retroceded (Cour des Comptes 2013: 17-19)<sup>7</sup>. As such, this reflects general tendencies in other provinces. As the report argues:

'Contrary to ... constitutional provisions, central government collects all monies, and retrocedes to the province on the basis of national solidarity. The provinces assess that they collect amounts that not only do not permit them to retrocede monies to decentralized territorial entities, but also and above to develop' (Cour des Comptes 2013: 23).

Even further, this audit omits oil revenues, making the actual percentage retrocession far lower than 9%<sup>8</sup>.

It may be that retrocession is limited because oil taxes are not received by the state. Civil society actors informed us of interviews they conducted with civil servants, who claimed that the tax dollars paid by Perenco to the Congolese state are diverted at the point of payment to unknown bank accounts, and officially published declarations of received sums are fabricated (Interview 35: 6 November 2017).

In sum, although the province in theory has a formal right to millions of dollars annually, warranted by legal dictate, this never arrives in the provincial budget. Yet, there has been no fundamental contestation of this situation. At local level the lack of retrocession is not discussed, and the one or two journalists discussing the issue are ignored.

<sup>7</sup> This is in contrast to an average percentage of expected retrocession across all provinces of 16.8% retrocession of total receipts per province. Some provinces received via retrocession from central government over 400% of the tax receipts collected within the respective provinces (Cour des Comptes 2013: 23).

<sup>8</sup> Concretely, the report states that 'The Cour des Comptes signals that for the DGRAD and the DGI, it is interested exclusively in receipts outside of oil producers, the receipts of oil producers being mobilized by the sole province of Bas-Congo' (Cour des Comptes 2013: 11). It is not clear that this justification holds water. More importantly, it is these two entities (DGRAD and DGI), as well as the General Secretariat of Hydrocarbons, the state oil company Sonahydroc (formerly Cohydro) and the Ministry of the Environment, that collect revenues from oil production. The third state entity audited by the Cour des Comptes, DGDA, has never been responsible for state oil revenue collection (see all EITI reports under sections titled '*Flux de paiement*'). Therefore, by omitting oil revenues of DGRAD and DGI, the audit reports no oil revenues whatsoever. As such, the figure for retroceded revenues is far lower than 9% of total provincial revenues, when receipts of oil producers are included in the total provincial tax revenues.

<sup>5</sup> That is, 40% of tax receipts should be retroceded to sub-national governments in whose jurisdictions the oil blocks are to be found.

<sup>6</sup> The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) is an international body providing accreditation for states meeting standards of transparency.

## 2. Protest and patronage

The patrimonial features of the African state, and the resultant effects on its governance structures, have been widely demonstrated in the literature (eg. Bayart 1993; Bratton & van de Walle 1997; Titeca 2006b), as well as specifically for the DRC (Englebert & Tull 2013; Malukisa 2017; Trefon 2011). Civil society, and protest arising from it, cannot be seen as being independent from those state dynamics (Titeca 2007; Larmer 2010). Instead, these protests should be seen as 'an expression of the contradictions and hierarchies of the society in which they operate, whose debates and conflicts express inequalities of resources, influence and education and differences of class, gender and ethnicity, amongst others' (Larmer 2010: 252). These factors limit these movements' potential for structural change. In the words of de Waal and Ibreck (2013: 305), 'popular movements are weak and especially vulnerable to co-option or collapse', as their efforts are mainly focused on trying to 'win concessions for individuals within patronage systems in a harsh economic climate' (*idem*). In other words, protest is used to integrate into existing patronage networks. As Badimon (2013: 206) shows for Morocco: 'taking the claims of unemployed into account favours the adoption or the maintenance of informal practices of public resource management. Through the recruitment of new civil servants, elected or civil servant representatives enlarge their clientelist networks'.

There also are various mechanisms facilitating the incorporation in patronage networks, co-opting forms of protest. There is a range of literature showing this particularly for protests against corporations: patronage politics, and the integration of social movements and protests in it, can result both from the state as well as companies involved in extraction. There is an increasing literature on the ways 'corporations employ to pre-empt or quell resistance, including divide and rule initiatives like co-optation and astroturfing, public relations efforts, lobby campaigns, and direct and indirect forms of repression and intimidation' (Geenen and Verweijen 2017: 2). For example, Bebbington *et al.* (2008: 2893) show how mobilization against mining projects is influenced by economic and political opportunity structures, in which for example the position of the state depends on the importance of mining in the local communities.

Corporate Social Responsibility<sup>9</sup> projects play an important role in this. These projects take over many responsibilities in the field of development intervention, which were usually carried out by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and a number of analyses look at the role CSR plays in the field of development (Tallio 2015). In this context, CSR has become

an 'industry' (Welker 2009). Analyses not only focus on development as such, but also how CSR has become a form of corporate security, in which for example local elites are consciously enlisted as 'the first line of corporate defense' (Welker 2009: 143). In this way, however, CSR projects produce 'fresh zones of struggle and new forms of violence' (Welker 2009: 148). Specific to the DRC, Geenen and Verweijen (2017: 765) show how mobilization is affected by a 'wider context characterised by scarce livelihood possibilities, intra-community divisions, patronage-based politics, and repression' as well as 'company practices, like co-optation acquiescence of favouritism, limited supervision of security personnel, and ambiguous commitment to community participation'.

Equally useful in this context are the debates on the informal economy. Judith Tendler (2002) coined the expression the 'devil's deal' to express how informal actors (such as motorcycle taxis or market vendors) unofficially are exempted from taxation and regulations by politicians in exchange for votes. While this protects informal actors in the short term, it hurts their interests in the long term – hence the term, the 'devils deal': they are unable to protect or advance their labour rights, and remain dependent on these clientelist linkages.

In other words, the nature of the connections of the informal sector (and wider population) with the state are central (Meagher 2010a). For structural changes to occur, connections providing the protection of rights, or the conditions for their protection, are needed. The only options available are clientelist linkages. For example, when discussing weaver associations in Nigeria, Meagher shows how members are 'desperate for effective linkages with the state, through which they can get information, assistance with marketing problems, or lobby for restrictions on textile imports. The only linkages available to them, however, are client ties to individual officials' (Meagher 2008: 14).

In certain cases, these clientelist linkages 'can actually go a long way in enabling informal actors to pursuing their livelihoods' (Prag 2010; Goodfellow & Titeca 2012: 266; Titeca 2006a, 2014). In the case of an absent or neglecting state, clientelist linkages are able to provide the necessary goods, services, and protection which are necessary to survive in challenging circumstances. At the same time, they present severe challenges: as highlighted by the above studies, these interactions are characterised by dynamics of capture and marginalization, with very limited political voice (Meagher 2010b; Brown & Lyons 2010; Prag 2010). William Reno shows how popular movements and actors are captured through patronage networks, which either can be organised with central control, or operate in a more fragmented manner through local political entrepreneurs. Economic opportunities and/or social domination are used to buy loyalty of sections of the wider population (Reno 2002). Similar findings have been shown for

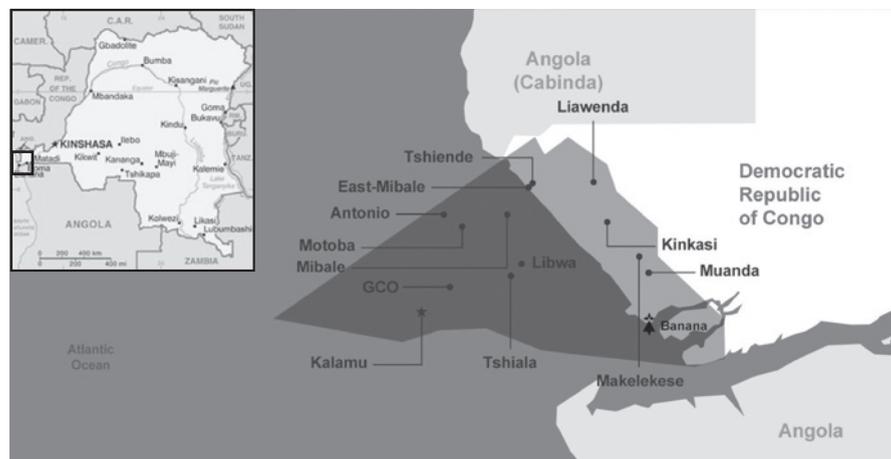
<sup>9</sup> CSR can be seen as a 'catch-all term for referring to voluntary codes or declarations aimed at sustainable development' (Haalboom 2012: 970).

the DRC, for example through the ways in which market vendors (Malukisa & Titeca 2018) and the informal transport sector (Malukisa and Titeca forthcoming) are part of patronage dynamics. By doing so, these sectors are kept largely underdeveloped.

In the next sections, we build further on these findings. We will show the ways in which protest focuses on delivery of patronage. We also show how protest on structural claims is restricted by patronage. Instead, protest is reduced to tangible claims, as well as being channelled and shaped by patronage dynamics. Further, protest becomes part of patronage structures and patronage dynamics emerge within protest movements.

### 3. Setting the scene: Muanda

Figure 1: map of Muanda and oil fields



Source: Perenco DRC website.

Muanda is DRC's only coastal town. It sits at the southern side of the vast country's minute strip of coastline, less than 40 km wide. It is squeezed between the river Congo – bounded by mangrove swamps and the site of the Angolan border – and the oil rich Angolan enclave of Cabinda. It lies on a sandy plain dotted with villages, the hills of the interior stopping in a long line overlooking the town from the east. The Congo river is navigable nearly 160 km inland, and Muanda lies on the opposite bank from Kinshasa, so Matadi has always served as the nation's sea port. The naval port at nearby Banana is little more than a fishing village. Muanda exists mainly for oil. Without oil, it would be a village. Since 1963, it has been host to oil wells, and since the 1970s has also been the base for a set of shallow offshore wells, which shine on the edge of

the horizon at night. The refinery, long out of service, now serves as a storage point and unloading point for deep-sea fuel oil vessels.

The coast of the Gulf of Guinea, from Côte d'Ivoire to Angola, is rich with oil deposits. Much of the coast being under relatively shallow seas or in coastal deltas and marshes, these deposits have been accessed since the middle of the 20th century. Although the DRC's coast is miniscule, it was nonetheless soon the subject of oil interest. The Congolese littoral was first explored for oil in the 1940s, and five fields were discovered by 1962. Wells were drilled from 1963 by SOCOREP, the Congolese subsidiary of the Belgian company PetroFina (Kanika 2013: 4). Offshore drilling began in 1970, with seven fields discovered by 1976 (*idem*). From the early 2000s, Perenco took over the fields from Chevron. Perenco specialises in rejuvenating oil fields towards the end of their productive life, and has maintained production at roughly 25,000 barrels a day.

Onshore production is divided into two zones. Zone A is the original production zone, and lies to the north of the town, towards Cabinda. Zone B, in which drilling work began in 2013, covers a smaller area to the south east of the town, towards the small port serving the dilapidated SOCOR oil refinery. Since the 1970s, oil production has oscillated around 25,000 barrels per day (bpd). Gas is also produced as a by-product, but most is burned off at the well.

Muanda as a population centre is economically reliant on oil production. It was merely a village before oil; indeed 'Muanda's expansion into a large town and then an urban area resulted from the discovery of oil' (Carayannis *et al.* 2017). As the manager of the mangroves national park put it: 'This is a phantom town, like in the wild west. The day that Perenco leaves, the town will disappear' (Interview 42: 13 November 2017).

In terms of administrative structures, as elsewhere in DRC, one finds the formal institutions of the local government at provincial and territorial level. Below this one finds further subdivisions, each with a chief: sectors (of which Muanda territory has three), groupings, and villages. The Boma Bungu sector of Muanda territory is less relevant to this discussion than the Assolongo or La Mer sectors, the former being outside of the oil production zone. The city of Muanda is divided into five neighbourhoods (*quartiers*), in turn divided into localities and streets, each level with their respective chiefs. Appointments and elections to positions of chiefs are heavily influenced by and connected to the three ethnic organisations of the area, which are gathered under the roof of COCODEM (Comité de Concertation de Muanda), an organisation founded for liaison and collaboration between Perenco and local communities.

#### 4. Perenco's provision of services

In light of the lack of retrocession of taxes, the state administrations of Kongo-Central province and Muanda territory provide little to no public services. Instead, Perenco offers some local provision, rather than tax money going back to the local government. While being a (very) meagre compensation for the missed tax income, Perenco is seen as the most important service provider in the area. As a civil society individual put it, 'The state does not play its role ... [it] does not fulfil its mission here [...] In the absence of the father, the children of the house turn towards the eldest son' (Interview 38: 10 November 2017). In other words, in light of the complete withdrawal of the state from its responsibilities, Perenco is the main service provider. Firstly, it is by far the most significant single employer and buyer, being the motor at the heart of the local economy, either directly or via a multitude of subcontractors dealing with mechanical tasks, security, or construction. Permanent oil company employees tend to be high skilled. As Muanda's educational system is unable to supply these skills, the largest body of local employment is therefore the temporary labour (*journalier*) system. This employs young men for low- or un-skilled manual work on production sites or as security guards. Individuals are hired by subcontractors such as SOCOGERH (for manual labour) and New EscoKin (for security)<sup>10</sup>, rather than directly by Perenco<sup>11</sup>.

Perenco also plays the role of public goods provider. This is divided into contractual and non-contractual CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) provision. Contractual provision is that which is defined within the *convention* ('contract'), the legal document between producer and state under which Perenco's oil activity is legally governed. Amendments of this document provide some clauses on corporate social responsibility. Non-contractual provision is not defined within this, and therefore the choice of Perenco management. All provision must conform with audit requirements for CSR. Therefore, cash payments are limited, whilst material goods are plentiful.

'Contractual' CSR constitutes \$210,000 annually, to be spent on 'Education, health, and social projects' (COCODEM documents viewed *in situ*). This sum is managed by the Comité de Concertation de Muanda (COCODEM), an organisation of local elites, primarily drawn from ethnic

organisations. It was established with the specific task of managing these sums, though is also intended to serve as liaison and dialogue channel between the local population and Perenco. This contractual CSR has been used in multiple ways in recent years. A few examples are the following:

- Around a third of the contractual CSR is used for scholarships to schools and universities (Interview 41: 13 November 2017). The three ethnic associations hold quotas for receipt of scholarships.
- In most villages within the productive zones, medical dispensaries have been built, are kept stocked, and staff are salaried, largely through contractual CSR.
- Eighteen water wells have been drilled and are maintained, including fifteen in villages and three in Muanda town (Perenco 2018). This appeared on the 2017 contractual CSR list (COCODEM documents viewed *in situ*).
- The central market has been rebuilt with contractual CSR money (COCODEM documents viewed *in situ*).

Perenco's non-contractual CSR provision is used principally for projects that fulfil background needs, which happen generally to also be required by Perenco for operations, such as electrification or roads.

Non-contractual provision has increased over the last six years, though the sums are not published (Interview 47: 16 November 2017). Non-contractual provisions are various.

- Perenco provides electricity to villages within productive areas free of charge. Public lighting is provided for a group of villages. All the gas used for electricity generation is a by-product of oil extraction and is not for exportation.
- Perenco have built tarmac and murram roads in the area.
- Schools have also been funded, built, equipped, and provided with teacher training at several locations across the town. Transport is provided from the villages around production sites to the town (Perenco 2018).
- The offices of most officials in the area are provided by Perenco. The construction of the building containing the territorial administration was completed by Perenco in 2013 (after a measly state contribution). It is since both maintained and stocked with furniture and stationary by Perenco. The offices of COCODEM (and attached offices for the constituent ethnic organisations) are also built, maintained, and upholstered by Perenco. They are among the best offices in the town, with a large conference room, satellite television, full IT provision, and a carefully kept garden.
- The company also provides end of year 'bonuses' to select individuals and groups. These are food parcels distributed by Perenco's external

<sup>10</sup> Many on the New EscoKin payroll are paid informants, rather than security guards (Interview 38: 10 November 2017)

<sup>11</sup> For simplicity, the full set of oil operators, subsidiaries, and subcontractors will be referred to in this paper as 'Perenco', unless the discussion relates only to one component part of the combined operation. In practical terms, and for the purposes of this discussion, these legally separate actors do indeed behave in a united fashion.

relations department under the rubric of actions sociales ('social initiatives'), ranging from sacks of rice, to a few chickens, to the foundations of a substantial festive feast. Elites are prioritised, meaning the largest parcels go to COCODEM and ethnic association leaders, chiefs, and to state institutions, including the police, the intelligence services, the judiciary, and the territorial administration (Interview 38: 10 November 2017).

- The press also receives benevolent attention. Local radio stations are supplied with technological materials. During an exchange dinner at the beginning of every year, gifts of cameras, laptops, and other equipment are given, to the tune of hundreds of dollars per radio station. Further provision occurs sporadically: one radio station was provided with a vast generator, well beyond its capacity requirements. Such provision is a lifeline for these media platforms. As a journalist put it, these local radio stations must 'live by the goods of Perenco' (Interview 48: 17 November 2017).

In other words, Perenco provides a range of material and financial goods to the wider population. In the next section, we explain how these services are provided through a patronage system, managed by Perenco.

## 5. Perenco's patronage pyramid

Crucial to this structure is that there is only one point at the top: even the local state looks to Perenco. Although Perenco is represented on the ground by legally separate entities,<sup>12</sup> and conducts significant amounts of work and hiring via subcontractors,<sup>13</sup> these entities all act under the Perenco umbrella, with a unified senior management in Muanda.<sup>14</sup> The fact of this single central point of ultimate control creates a monopoly on supply for all public and private goods, and jobs.

This is further centralised on individuals. The head of external relations is seen as a crucial gatekeeper to CSR funds. If groups or individuals wish for access to CSR funds, as a civil society individual put it, the head of external relations 'is the baobab. His yes is yes, his no is no. This applies for anyone. The Territorial Administrator knows this very well' (Interview 36: 9 November 2017).

<sup>12</sup> PerencoREP and MIOC act as operators, whilst the ownership structure includes multiple further entities.

<sup>13</sup> Principally SOCOGERH, which provides temporary local labour, and New EscoKin, which provides security guards.

<sup>14</sup> National level management in Kinshasa deals only with government relations.

Below this, senior local elites are tied to Perenco by some direct patronage. More binding is that elites are provided roles as mediators for CSR and job provision. The larger part of benefits from Perenco flows through these elites to others: elite requests are made on behalf of others, such as for temporary labour jobs or for scholarships. This is viewed locally as a patronage pyramid, by which elites distribute advantages to their family, to loyal clients, and to clients in return for recompense, usually financial. Within this pyramid, there are different channels for different goods, local areas, or persons. Nonetheless these channels function in comparable ways.

To elaborate on one example of this structured gatekeeper system, it is useful to look at the jobs market. Employment with Perenco or its subcontractors remains limited. At the highest point of oil prices, Perenco claimed to employ, directly or via subcontractors, 1,000 persons, 90% of which were from Kongo-Central, and a third of that from Muanda (Gaudard 2013: 21). Since oil prices fell in 2014, this figure has fallen due to significant layoffs. Perenco's temporary labour system has been highly effective in distributing employment opportunities widely, and in tying the population tightly to local elites. The way in which jobs are distributed is very much patronage-like: The principal means of filling such temporary labour positions is for specified elites – such as COCODEM senior representatives, including the Territorial Administrator, and local chiefs, or occasionally designated village 'team leaders' – to receive a quota of slots for such temporary labour to be filled (Interview 44: 14 November 2017). These quotas are known, stable, and widely distributed. That is, from a Perenco request for a number of posts to be filled, each elite figure can make appointments to a certain percentage of these posts. In doing so, elites privilege their relations and loyal clients. As a civil society individual noted, 'Almost every authority has someone working for Perenco or the subcontractors whom they recommended' (Interview 38: 10 November 2017). This extends to local chiefs. As the same individual noted, 'The chiefs are supported by Perenco. They are brought close, through a sort of corruption. They are at the mercy of Perenco. They recommend their children for employment, and receive jobs themselves' (Interview 38: 10 November 2017). As a protest organiser noted, 'any jobs that were rewarded to the village, [the chief] sold them' (Interview 40: 12 November 2017).

It is also common practice for young men with no direct connection to bid for work via elite figures. The elite figure then provides them the job in return for a substantial percentage of the worker's salary. Since the jobs are well paid and therefore highly attractive, the elite figures are able to leverage shares even beyond 50%, on the grounds that the willingness to share would affect future prospects of employment via this gatekeeper (Interview 48: 17 November 2017). Elites therefore receive financial gain by selling access, and have their political status bolstered by being able to distribute patronage.

## 6. COCODEM: CSR as patronage

COCODEM's management of 'contractual' CSR is also an instructive example of this patronage pyramid. COCODEM is the Comité de Concertation de Muanda, a body intended to manage Perenco's contractual CSR, to act as the liaison between the wider society and Perenco, and as a discussion space for managing conflicts.

COCODEM is the key gatekeeper for all 'contractual' CSR, by making requests or proposals to Perenco. Perenco discusses the proposals at length with COCODEM officials, and retains the right to deny requests. COCODEM therefore has a key role in determining, but lacks ultimate control over, the particular dissemination of the pre-defined annual budget of \$210,000. According to local accounts, members tend to choose those who are close to them, such as family and friends. Sometimes people write to them to ask for scholarships or development projects, but members have full powers to decide what requests are made to Perenco. As with the labour market, this is often manipulated for political and economic ends by members of the committee.

How did COCODEM come into existence? In earlier times, contractual CSR was a direct handout to local representatives, more particularly to the Association des Woyo (ALIWOYO) in Kinshasa. Since exploitation was only conducted in Zone A – that is, only in Woyo villages – recompense for the negative side-effects of production was only given to national representatives of the Woyo, based in Kinshasa.

In this way, however, funds stayed with elites. Around 2000, this provoked peaceful protests by the local population, which led to the creation of COCODEM (Comité de Concertation de Muanda). COCODEM unites the three local ethnic organisations, ALIWOYO, ABABO (Association des Bakongo) and ASSOL (Association des Assolongo), as well as other local elites such as the Territorial Administrator, within a single structure. Under the new system, the annual sum (of \$210,000) came into practical use in Muanda, and gave the role of mediator to local ethnic elites in COCODEM, rather than giving payouts to their national representatives (Interview 47: 16 November 2017). The money would be paid by Perenco directly to relevant projects, on the recommendations of COCODEM. COCODEM would also serve as primary point of liaison between Perenco and the population, for complaints and dispute resolution as much as for organising non-contractual CSR bids.

It must be emphasised that COCODEM does not touch the CSR budget, and only makes agreements with Perenco as to its use. In doing so, it provides for greater stability by tying these elites to Perenco: the officials of COCODEM cannot afford to make excessive demands on Perenco or cause trouble by protests or conflict, since they risk having their requests denied.

Indeed, they also work actively to calm protest. This lack of control is often lamented by locals. One civil society member described COCODEM as 'a system to dress things up (*maquiller des choses*) [...] in reality they control nothing' (Interview 35: 8 November 2017).

COCODEM's external image is as a structural solution to local grievances, as a dialogue space, a formal liaison with Perenco, and a legitimate body to determine the distribution of public goods. Whilst it does not entirely neglect these types of responsibilities, it does fall short of expectations. COCODEM fails as a popular representative body in relations with Perenco; that is, it does not provide an effective means of legitimate peaceful claim-making and dialogue, particularly about structural issues. It fails as an executive of public goods, being only an advisory body. It is also unaccountable to the wider population, its membership being chosen from among local elites by those same elites.

This shows in popular perceptions. According to an international NGO report, COCODEM 'generates a climate of mistrust, because the relations between local populations and the consultation committee are weak' (Gaudard 2013: 24). This mistrust is widely evident. A protest leader noted 'We don't have confidence in COCODEM. They did nothing in the cases of arrests, though they are the bridge between the community and Perenco. They never even came. The chiefs and presidents of ethnic organisations have sacrificed the community. Everything that Perenco says, they say yes' (Interview 37: 9 November 2017). A journalist noted that 'the villagers often don't have confidence in COCODEM. They think that COCODEM has been corrupted' (Interview 47: 16 November 2017).

Despite these shortcomings, and concomitant dissatisfaction, COCODEM remains the primary point of contact for access to Perenco's CSR and jobs. It is this factor alone that allows COCODEM to contribute to the pacification of the production zone. By providing just enough public goods via a highly restrictive channel of gatekeepers, COCODEM ties the population into 'good behaviour'. The next section will explain how this functions.

## 7. Consequences of patronage: withdrawal of carrots and behaviour change

In sum, Perenco provides a range of goods via a structured provision system. Whilst some of these are public goods, a large portion are restricted to individuals or select groups. These goods have far greater marginal gains for recipients than the public goods. Access to these goods fixes the population into tiers via various gatekeeper elites. Instead of being indiscriminating and all-encompassing, provision of these goods only occurs in a personalised manner, via this pyramidal structure. This provides strong incentives to elites to ensure that lower tiers are peaceful, and requires that lower tiers

demonstrate loyalty to their immediate patron in order to receive goods. Such loyalty includes not jeopardising the elite figure's advantages by activities that might bring the displeasure of Perenco. All of this has an important effect: people fear to act against the interest of Perenco, given its monopoly on job- and service-provision. As a civil society individual noted, more companies 'would balance things. A company competition would bring a bit of freedom. People blacklisted in one place could get a job at another. People seeking something at one could always go to another if denied' (Interview 38: 10 November 2017). This uni-polarity is a vital part of the provision system. Locals must line up at a single tap, afraid to ask for a bigger hose in case they lose their place in line. That is, behaviour that might contribute to structural change is controlled by the implicit threat of losing access to all available sources of immediate material gain.

This patronage structure therefore has rules of 'loyalty' and 'good behaviour'. Public denunciations of Perenco, such as over land dispossession or pollution, or discussions of Perenco-related issues such as absent tax retrocession, are considered beyond the pale. Importantly, the above public provision of goods is not only a carrot, but also a stick: those who transgress these limits can expect to be cut out of provision. This is particularly done through blacklisting individuals for employment and CSR access (in all domains). While these sanctions are not always applied, the deterrent effect is nonetheless powerful. For example, the threat of being on employment blacklists has a strong effect on public life. As a senior local civil society representative put it, 'everyone dreams of working [at Perenco], but you must not provoke the *grand patron*... if you speak ill of Perenco, you are on the blacklist. There are many people on that list' (Interview 38: 10 November 2017). Blacklisting should also be viewed as more effective than violent coercion in suppressing dissent, not having the side effect of inciting further grievances.

The pyramidal structure also defers responsibility for blacklisting to local elites. Transgressions by individuals among the population lead elite gatekeepers to deny them job or CSR recommendations. The implication here is that these elites – correctly or otherwise – feel that Perenco would in turn sanction them if they did not punish the transgressions.

Some interlocutors also noted that Perenco had removed access to privileges for civil society or journalists for such demands or discussions. One example which emerged was that of a civil society organisation who claimed to have Perenco partnership funds withdrawn after pushing the question of pollution affecting bathing and swimming spaces for children (Interview 36: 9 November 2017; Interview 43: 13 November 2017).

In this situation, the monopoly on provision allows Perenco a significant degree of control without direct action. This particularly applies to the information environment, which largely lacks any discussion relating

to the causes behind the core structural issue, the limited impact of oil wealth around Muanda. This is achieved without Perenco actively quelling certain kinds of speech, education or debate. This instead emerges due to an implied or interpreted threat of the removal of advantages leading to widespread self-censorship. In doing so, the provision of CSR patronage has clear behavioural effects, reducing criticism, tempering claim-making, and ensuring elite loyalty to the claim-making structure (and resistance to alternatives). This particularly applies to local elites. As a civil society individual noted with regards COCODEM, 'If you want to preserve your role and preserve your advantages, you must bend in front of anything Perenco does' (Interview 36: 9 November 2017). Locals have a strong sense that chiefs do not represent their community's interest properly; instead they are considered to be taking or waiting for patronage from Perenco: 'Customary chiefs don't say a word. They don't do their job in exchanging with Perenco' (Interview 37: 9 November 2017).

A similar effect can be seen for the media, which also self-censors. Radio editors ensure their staff do not touch questions which might anger Perenco. Electronic equipment provided on an annual basis, as well as the occasional larger donation, is essential for the functioning of these radio stations. The consequence is that, as a journalist argued, 'in the media, on the radios, there is a blackout. Whether right or wrong, we don't speak of Perenco. They give a small quota of equipment to radios, so they don't touch these questions' (Interview 47: 16 November 2017). As another journalist put it, 'they reserve themselves from speaking ill of Perenco', extending to softening interviews with incensed villagers via editing (Interview 48: 17 November 2017). This journalist directly tied this behaviour to CSR provision, citing a 'sort of moral debt' (Interview 48: 17 November 2017). They also noted that radio editors in several stations would instruct their staff with the same phrase, that changes would be made 'to not hurt the partner' (Interview 48: 17 November 2017).

Lastly, a particularly important part of this self-censorship affects the dissemination, discussion, promotion, and awareness of information that might form the basis of claims to structural change. This relies on an implicit recognition by all who hold interests in the status quo – such as national and local elites, Perenco and COCODEM – that such information is harmful. Certainly there is an expertise gulf: local populations, civil society, and administration do to a degree lack the skills and means to conduct such studies themselves. Perenco also avoids transparency. They do not conduct – or at least do not publish the results of – its own studies on local issues such as the effects of CSR or pollution. Concretely, information flows are restricted since information poses a threat to political structure. This limits the ability for bids to be made at broad levels, with conviction or specificity. The fact that the benefits of oil production are not felt strongly at local

level does not require specialist knowledge: a local need only look across the mouth of the Congo river to Angola at night. The town of Soyo shines bright, whilst Muanda's villages are lit by meagre strings of bulbs, and the town sees regular and extensive power cuts. The specific root causes are, however, not in circulation. This is due to self-censorship among journalists, civil society, and other opinion leaders.

Some civil society groups also push grievances with little evidential basis, delegitimising real structural claims. For example, one NGO has been pushing villagers to make wild claims about the results of pollution without providing minimum proof. These same organisations also have tried to campaign that elements of CSR have not been accepted. For example, a major complaint only heard from these NGOs is that village halls constructed by Perenco have been rejected by the population (Gaudard 2013; Interview 37: 9 November 2017). Not only is this a meagre and marginal foundation for complaints against an oil company in a production area, but according to our research, this is not the case. Halls visited were in regular use by villagers.

There has been some improvement of this in recent years: the political structure has already been challenged by changes in the information environment. The public exposition of Perenco's tax figures in documentation published through the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) sparked extensive discussion about the absence of retrocession to provincial and territorial level, and brought protests, which were met by round table discussions in 2010. These were supposedly a comprehensive airing of grievances. However, Perenco led much of the discussion, and recommendations were not followed with action (Gaudard 2013: 28-9). The principal new information at the disposal of locals was the tax receipts and production figures. In this case, the EITI documentation provided knowledge that Perenco was producing oil of enough value that locals felt their demands for CSR and other direct provision should be greater. As a civil society representative put it, EITI 'disembowelled the boa. It helped people say out loud that which was whispered. These things are always said in private without fear, like how are we so poor when there is so much money in the oil, how can our people in the villages suffer like they do from pollution' (Interview 38: 10 November 2017). In other words, new information allows the population to increase their leverage and increase their demands. As we will see in the next section, this mainly happens through protests, and mainly serves to extend the provision of patronage, rather than to provoke structural change.

## 8. Protests as a vehicle for patronage

The above section has shown the way in which the patronage system functions, and the way in which it influences and controls behaviour of the wider population. Yet, the above mechanisms cannot satisfy all expectations,

and control all behaviour. There are some within the local population whose expectations are not satisfied by the official patronage channel, and who often turn to direct action against Perenco. This occurs in two primary forms, both targeting industrial activity: first, blockage of access to work sites, and secondly, sabotage of infrastructure<sup>15</sup>.

The topography of oil production around Muanda provides locals with a very powerful mode of leverage. They live in sparsely populated areas full of highly valuable oil infrastructure. At the least, it is easy for them to block necessary access to wells and other sites. At the worst, there is little barrier to sabotage. It is not cost-effective to place private security on hundreds of wells and installations at all times. As a more effective response, Perenco includes villagers as security guards, employed through the security subcontractor New EscoKin. Some work on active surveillance, others receive salaries for passing information. The indirect effects of this constant threat to infrastructure and access are also clearly visible: CSR projects are focused on villages in which there is production, omitting hundreds of villages across the territory (Interview 47: 16 November 2017).

Overall, protest calls for tangible concessions and provisions, not for the cessation of industrial activity, nor for structural change or abstract rights. Protests are led by lower-tier elites, and are accompanied by clear and formal demands. These focus primarily on employment, but do occasionally touch upon CSR distribution and recompense for tangible economic damage by Perenco. A prominent civil society individual noted 'The people want jobs and to be paid for manual labour. They feel the company doesn't take the young people even for small jobs: even for jobs that don't require skills' (Interview 41: 13 November 2017). A journalist remembered protestors 'demanding football pitches, or schools, or protesting the destruction of fishing nets by seaplane or boat' (Interview 47: 16 November 2017). Perceived employment inequalities are a considerable driver of protest. As the journalist noted, 'They say that we need jobs here, that the workers are taken from Boma or Kinshasa: "You receive a salary, and we don't, we just sit here with our arms crossed"' (Interview 47: 16 November 2017). The dominance of jobs in protest is principally because this is the most tangible gain conceivable to these villagers. The non-retrocession of tax dollars is simultaneously too abstract and too distant, as well as simply not being known.

Protest has a well-established pattern. First letters are written, making demands. When these terms are not met, roads and access points are blocked, peacefully preventing workers from accessing Perenco sites. This second

<sup>15</sup> We found no examples of homicide, bodily harm or kidnap as modes of leverage against Perenco.

step is threatened explicitly in the original letters. Asked how protests are done, a youth organisation president said, 'We write letters. In the case of no response, it says we will protest, by barricading the road etc... If there is no response, as we say in the letters, we would barricade the entrance and exit to oil fields and the Tank Farm' (Interview 40: 12 November 2017). If this does not bring the expected response, secret sabotage is organised on Perenco installations. As a journalist put it, 'Sabotage is then conditioned by the non-satisfaction of demands.' (Interview 47: 16 November 2017) In some villages, organised platforms exist from which bid-making for jobs is performed (for example, the alliance between the villages of Kitombe and Kindofula). In others, it is the committee of the locality chief who formally represents protestors.

In the words of a senior civil society individual, 'There were no deaths or kidnaps. They just do 'sit-ins': blocking the road, for example. There are arrests when the sabotages happen. They might burn an electric box in the forest or cut electric cables. Or break a pipe and say it is pollution' (Interview 41: 13 November 2017). Another civil society individual noted that 'People often sabotage to make claims' (Interview 38: 10 November 2017). This has long been the custom. A prominent journalist remembered 'There were always blockages [preventing Perenco access to production sites] in the old days. They might burst a pipe; that happened a lot around Ndundji [village in Zone A]' (Interview 47: 16 November 2017). A state representative concurred that '[The population] also sabotage. This is all for jobs. It is simple. They do these things then get around the table to negotiate' (Interview 46: 15 November 2017).

The examples of this are many. To take two:

- 'An incident documented in the report took place on December 15, 2009, in the sector of La Mer. Sixteen villagers from Kongo and Tshiende in the grouping of Kongo (about 21 km from the city of Muanda) were arrested during a peaceful sit-in organized by local residents at the entrance to Perenco REP's Mibale oil terminal. The protestors were immediately taken to the Boma central prison the next day' (CSO report quoted in Carayannis et al. 2017: 20).
- *Le Monde* reported another case: 'In 2011 sixteen [young men], demanding employment, were incarcerated after having blocked access to wells and vandalised pipelines. The village chief was taken for questioning by the intelligence services. The tension was reduced after the recruitment by a security company of a few inhabitants, chosen by clan. Since then, the wells have not needed to be watched over' (Benetti 2018).

Letters make the content of protests very clear. A letter of December 2015 from the residents of Kitombe relating to a 'wave of personnel cleansing' put forth a request for the reintegration of two sacked employees:

'being among the oil-producing villages of Zone B, with a destroyed ecological system, and devastated concessions, we do not benefit from the normal quota of our usufructuary rights. Not having the administrative and technical cadres of the company working in our area, while the edges of our village abound with oil in more than fifty wells drilled by your company. The stunning and gravest thing being that, [though they were] dedicated to every offer in the company under your management, we deplore the redundancy of our two colleagues...' (Kitombe 2015)

A letter of April 2016 from 'Alliance of villages Kitombe and Kindofula' laments the 'workforce downsizing and salary reduction for day-labour guards' due to a fall in oil price. It asks that 'enjoyment and advantages' be given to the 'first occupants'. When this was not honoured, the village alliance therefore decided 'to announce our discontent by organising barricades of entries and exits of oil fields and the Tank Farm Muanda II for five days' (Alliance Kitombe-Kindofula 2016).

All of these protests turn around leveraging short-term tangible benefits, which often materialise. As a senior civil society individual noted, 'In the villages, the protest is to get something from Perenco... They would get around the table. Perenco says after protests: "We can give you a few jobs, give us your list." Those on the list get chosen. There are then competitions between groups for jobs' (Interview 41: 13 November 2017). This is understood by the protestors. A prominent protest leader described the process of claim making: 'In 2012 we had a "sit-in". We spoke with Perenco. They asked to negotiate. Twelve posts were given as apprentices in drilling for Zone B and eight posts of guardians for Zone B. That's when [a chief of this leader's village] became a guard' (Interview 37: 9 November 2017). Local protests are used as a way to pressure for more jobs, a strategy which often is successful.

No arrests are made of larger groups of protestors, or made indiscriminately of suspected saboteurs. As a senior community representative put it, 'Perenco will not touch people. Perenco will arrange things to resolve the issues' (Interview 41: 13 November 2017). The only arrests in this arena are of key leaders of protest.<sup>16</sup> These arrests are usually tied to sabotage, rather than

<sup>16</sup> The principal arrests have a discernible logic: they are aimed to stymie protest by targeting leaders, not with much hope of discouraging these individuals, but with the consequence that they be socially marginalised in tight-knit village communities. There are no mass arrests of protestors, and the leaders are not held indefinitely or disappeared. Such actions would provide a tangible sense of injustice that could spark larger-scale protest and

to protest alone. Protests are met with mild police action. A junior protest leader described the police response: 'When we do that, they send policemen to push around and intimidate us' (Interview 40: 12 November 2017). There is also some physical threat to those arrested or caught. The small number of protestors who are arrested are treated very violently in prison, often beaten heavily. Guards on wells – often locals – are very willing to use serious violence against saboteurs or thieves in return for reward (Interview 40: 12 November 2017).

Even Bundu dia Kongo (BDK), a regionally based ethnically-based quasi-religious separatist movement directed against non-autochthonous groups, persons and political institutions, including the DRC state, and otherwise highly willing to stage violent attacks, were bent to the mould of protest described in this paper. From March to April of 2006, BDK barricaded Perenco and SOCIR installations. In February 2005 a 'sit-in' was held 'to demand that the Franco-British group give priority to people from their villages when hiring staff' (AEI 2006). They later organized 'sit-ins near facilities of Perenco in an effort to force [Perenco] to hire more local staff' (AEI 2009). That is, the regional violent group with major structural claims, when acting around Muanda, shaped their action to fit local dynamics of protest, with non-violent means and non-structural claims.

Instead of using large-scale arrests or physical force, we explain in the next section how Perenco relies on blacklists in its attempts to prevent people from protesting.

## 9. Restricting protest by blacklists

A major method of Perenco's control is by the withdrawal of carrots. As a local journalist put it, 'Above all, people are scared because of blacklists. They throw you off the possible employers list if you say something, or they throw you out of employment' (Interview 48: 17 November 2017). This severely limits the number of people willing to engage in protest.

Yet jobs are the object of protests, barricades and sabotage, despite the fact that such activity is discouraged by the threat of blacklisting. This is for two reasons. First, general economic underdevelopment and exclusion – due to, for example, educational barriers, hiring quotas and limits, lack of favour with gatekeepers or large layoffs – means protestors have little to lose. Protests will at worst bring blacklists, but will not be met by force. Indeed, as shown above, it is highly likely that protest will be met by concessions.

sabotage. In 2013 or 2014 several protest organisers were arrested and taken to Boma following road barricades (Interview 15: 3 October 2017). In June 2017, three community protest leaders were arrested in connection with the sabotage of electrical boxes (Sauti ya Congo 2017).

Second, some individuals are already blacklisted, so instead of eliminating protest, blacklisting has made leading protest a semi-professional role. Leaders are blacklisted and negotiate employment access on behalf of others, in return for payment from those persons.

These lower-tier elites then become new gatekeepers through their protest activity, complete with requisite reciprocity. Young men seeking day labour pay to be on the lists that would be presented in post-protest negotiations. As a senior civil society individual put it, 'With the day labour, these boys corrupt [Mr. X] so that they can work. If you want to go and work, you need to give dollars' (Interview 44: 14 November 2017). This is in part a product of Perenco's preference for carrots over sticks. Whilst the organisers will be punished, the young men are not blacklisted – and usually receive jobs in post-protest negotiations.

In sum, limited coercion mixed with concessions is instead the dominant strategy used by Perenco. Excessive force is not used in the villages in cases of sabotage and protest. The risks are limited to arrest (for leaders), the breaking up of protest (so potential minor injuries), and blacklisting (but only for particular actors, primarily leaders).

## 10. Coercive violence limiting demands for structural change: A restrained but ever-looming stick

The form of these protests is restricted by the fact that actions against the state or Perenco that step beyond these limited forms of protest are met by coercion. Concretely, for those who have provable cases of physically damaging infrastructure (that is, those caught in acts of theft or sabotage) the consequences can be very serious: 'People who are arrested suffer, so people are afraid ... I have seen brothers taken for 2-3 years to prison in Boma.' (Interview 40: 12 November 2017). A former guard employed by New EscoKin described their mode of operation: 'We did the rounds, and arrested some thieves who were sawing the pipes to get the oil. We hit them and beat them up' (Interview 40: 12 November 2017). The private security guards doing the beating are often of the same village as those receiving it. This treatment is usually not applied to protestors. As a result, protests usually manifests itself through specific forms such as sit-ins or written demands.

Local protest against the state beyond specifically oil-related issues, however, has been met by widespread and immediate lethal force. This can be seen clearly with the experience of BDK, which was at one point highly active in the Muanda area. When its actions have followed strategies of public protest and violent attacks, whether around Muanda or elsewhere, the group was consistently repressed with heavy-handed violence. Over 200 Bundu dia Kongo militants and sympathizers were killed in 2007 and

2008 around contested elections in Kongo-Central (United Nations 2008; Lezhnev 2016: 34). A confrontation in Muanda included live fire on protestors, and an attack on a place of worship using assault rifles and grenades (Human Rights Watch 2008: 71). In 2017 a BDK march was held in Muanda against Kabila, at which the police killed some protesters with live bullets (Interview 45: 14 November 2017). This experience greatly discourages any protest about tax retrocession or other structural issues. As a prominent civil society individual put it, 'People are afraid. It is fear. If you protest, you will have bullets. [The state says] "You don't have the right to contradict what we say!"' (Interview 41: 13 November 2017).

Two key factors determine whether protests are met with violence: form, and demands. Methods of protesting such as sabotage, thefts, attacks or protests in town are met with violence, whereas demonstrations at locations of oil infrastructure are met with selective arrests at worst. If the demands being made touch structural issues, such as pollution, state organisation, presence of the oil company, or tax retrocession, violence is the response. By contrast, highly specific issues such as jobs or damage to fishing lines are listened to, or discouraged with selective arrests at worst. Consistently across interviews, specific claims such as jobs were viewed as low risk, and structural claims such as tax retrocession and pollution as high risk. In short, in the broader political space, raising structural issues is met with violent repression. This tempers the willingness to make major structural claims in the context of Perenco, even by non-violent means.

There is a broad perception that speaking out will result in physical harm. Many civil society and media members spoke of this sense, and several had received warnings and advice from concerned colleagues and friends to this effect. A journalist said that when he began working on Perenco tax issues, 'people called me to advise me to stop, saying "You know you will die if you continue? Many people have lost their lives in these oil questions"' (Interview 48: 17 November 2017). The journalist still works on such issues, but the perception inherited from broader experience remains strong.

## Conclusions

In this chapter, we have discussed the ways in which the political economy of oil is organised in Muanda. Specifically, we discussed how patronage logics interact with corporate policy regarding local communities, cementing CSR and job provision into a pyramidal patronage structure which restricts contestation.

We have shown how corporate patronage, in combination with the threat of coercion, allows for the uncontested circumstance where oil wealth does not benefit the area of extraction. By providing a range of public services and jobs, the bigger questions, such as tax retrocession and structural

changes, are avoided. While Perenco no doubt provides a wide range of public services, and is a more important provider of public services than the local government, this is extremely limited compared to the level of tax income to which the region has a right.

In doing so, this situation could be seen as what Tandler (2002) described as a 'devil's deal': no structural changes occur. Instead, the relations between the key-actors are primarily characterised by clientelist relations: the system of patronage which has been installed provides a range of advantages to the population, and also the state. The population benefits from public services and jobs which are not provided by the state. At the same time, the state is not obliged to provide these. These clientelist benefits do not provide long-term benefits to the population. They are not able to demand their rights, or know the minimum of information to act for structural change. In this highly unequal power relationship, the actions of the population are limited to short-term benefits (such as a limited number of extra jobs), which further entrench this highly unequal relationship. More structural demands, addressing issues such as pollution, or the redistribution of tax, are considered beyond bounds, and acted against by actors throughout the patronage structure. In this way, the state also mainly receives short-term benefits: a number of its services are provided *ad hoc* by Perenco, but the lack of sufficient tax income prevents the state from taking over responsibility for these services.

The relevance of these findings go beyond this specific case, and have broader relevance for the DRC. While they add to the understanding of how patronage functions in practice in the country, and how it ties clients into compliance, it adds particular understanding to the ways in which international companies are part of these dynamics. Concretely, it gives a better understanding of the ways in which international companies interact with local politics and local forms of contestation. It also helps to further understand the ways in which contestation differs across the country, i.e. why contestation is allowed in some areas, but not in others. In doing so, it also highlights the need for more comparative studies to understand the variation in these dynamics across the DRC.

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