Public Conversations:

Popular culture, activism and social change in Mozambique

Report

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Partners

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**Introduction**

When we institutionally conceived this initiative, it was fundamentally to reflect on how conventional knowledge is translated into an artistic dimension, but also, how art is used as scientific reflection inside and outside the incubators of the academy. And, as we commit ourselves to this reflection, we seek possibilities to cast glances on how individuals have expressed themselves and how these forms of expression are signified, especially in a context of social and political struggles from within the structure of the State and social activism movements in postcolonial Mozambique. Far from exhausting the debate, collecting individual, collective, local, global and utopian experiences, we suggest as a starting point the disintegration and reintegration of knowledge silenced in different ways in our research agendas as an institution. Anxious to hear voices, to cross-look in a multidimensional perspective, but also generational, we gather our thoughts in a single initiative, of public conversations called "Popular culture, activism and social change in Mozambique". We would like to thank the Consortium for Humanities Center and Institute for its support and commitment from the outset by providing funds for this initiative to take shape. Our thanks are extended to our local partners, specifically to the Department of Archeology and Anthropology and the Sociology Department of the College of Letters of the Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo, to join the project through its students and researchers. Not here, I would not mention the Núcleo de Arte in Maputo, the artists and other representatives of non-governmental institutions accredited in Mozambique, who opened their windows and doors so that we can replicate this initiative in other forums of wider debate.

Thanks or Kanimambo!

Tirso H. Sitoe

[Researcher Fellow and Executive Director]
Staff of the project

- Tirso Sitoe is the founder, researcher fellow and Executive director of the Bloco4 Foundation. Master and post-graduate in Intercultural Relations from Open University (UAB), Lisbon. The dissertation explored experiences on how the RAP of protest is a space where musicians and the audience exercise their civil rights and citizenship in post-colonial Mozambique. In 2012 he obtained his degree in Social Anthropology from Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM). His research focuses on areas such as youth cultures, sociability’s and processes of youth identification, citizenship, activism and human rights in Mozambique, spatial dynamics and social movements in urban context, Music criticism and social protest in post-colonial Mozambique. In 2016, Tirso Sitoe was one of the young African leaders, selected for their commitment to the development of Africa, to integrate a group of people from all over the world, YALI Civic Leadership Training Program at the Regional Center for African Leadership Austral-Pretoria, offered by YALI- Regional Leadership Center, Mozambique.

- Laurinda Sikota is a researcher at Bloco4 foundation. She holds a Master in Social Anthropology by Eduardo Mondlane University (EMU). Her research interests include Urban Anthropology, with focus on the city, public spaces and identities, and studies of body, Gender and Sexuality. In January 2018 Laurinda attended the Field School: “Tourism and Development in the Southern Ethiopian Rift Valley” held in Arba Minch and organized by the Institute for Anthropological Research in Africa (IARA) of KU Leuven-Belgium. She is also a member of the Mozambican team on the Young Women Leadership Program on Participatory Action Research on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. This program is led by the African Gender Institute (AGI) of the University of Cape Town and includes universities from South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique,
Namibia and Zimbabwe. In Mozambique this group is constituted by students and alumni of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Eduardo Mondlane University.

- Octávio Queface is a co-founder of Bloco4 Foundation, acting as an Administration Officer. He holds a degree in Marketing from Universidade Pedagógica of Mozambique. In 2014, he co-organized a conference in partnership with TED Talks, called TEDxMaputo, on the motto “Ideas for Change”, which was attended by Mozambican activist speakers, artists and social entrepreneurs such as Alice Mabota, Clarice Machanguana, Stewart Sukuma and Frederico Silva. In the year 2015, he debuted as an entrepreneur by co-creating a mobile application called Guia, which had the function of guiding motorists on issues related to the state of the traffic. The same application was the winner of the first StartUp Weekend Maputo. He also founded the digital magazine Entrepreneur in 2016, which aimed to inspire, educate and train entrepreneurs and aspirants in order to create a more robust entrepreneurial ecosystem.

- Alfredo Manjate is a co-founder of Bloco 4 Foundation. He has a degree in Journalism and currently, attends the degree course in Portuguese Teaching at Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM). He has extensive experience in communication consulting. He was a journalist and editor at Charas, Ltd. – Jornal @Verdade – where he was in charge of the “Democracy / Politics” Section and produced news and reports for the printed newspaper and the website. He also has a ticket for the Zambeze newspaper and Diário de Moçambique – Delegation of Maputo. Manjate is also, Blogger in the area of cultural journalism. It is in this context that he became the author and manager of the blog called “Mural Sub-Urbano” with a theme focused on Hip-Hop culture in Mozambique and abroad.

**Biography of panelists**
Panelist: First Section

- Alberto Correia Brown has a degree in Design from the Higher Institute of Arts and Culture (ISARC) and a professor of arts and entrepreneurship since 2013. Surrealist artist, realist neo-Impressionist, created the "action painting" movement instituted by the European Union, Friendrich Ebert Stifung in Maputo, 2016. Alberto currently has developed fashion and art design culminating in the production of his clothing brand known as "Adecoalwear", but also engaging in educational art projects for disadvantaged communities in peri-urban areas of Maputo.

- Francisco Luís has a degree in Information Technology from the Eduardo Mondlane University and chairman of Maputo Skate, a non-profit organization that has imposed children and young people through the practice of skateboarding as a way to occupy them in their free time.

- AfroIvan has a degree in Visual Arts from the National School of Visual Arts in Maputo. He has participated in several projects among which OPOERATION PENDIKA (2018), MOVING AFRICA (2017) in countries like Namibia and Ghana. Currently, he has developed in the city of suburbs of Maputo, workshops of plastic arts, photography and skateboard for different generations.

- Baltazar Muianga is PhD candidate in intercultural relations by the Open University of Lisbon, Master in Analyzing and Managing Economic and Social Development in Africa: Project Planning, Management and Evaluation. Sociologist, Lecture and Researcher in the Department of Sociology of Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo.

Panelist: Second Section

- Maria Paula Meneses has been a member of the honor committee of Bloco4 Foundation since May. Meneses is a Principal Researcher at the
Isabel Casimiro, PhD in Sociology (Coimbra, Portugal), with graduation and post-graduation in History and Development Studies. Researcher at the Centre of African Studies, Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo – Mozambique, since 1980, teaching graduation and post-graduation courses – Gender and Political Power (Graduation on Political Science);
Panelist: Third section

- Celma Costa, writer and educator. She holds a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Pretoria in South Africa and a former fellow of the Young African Mandela Leadership Program in Washington, DC. worked with community engagement, organized events for dialogue, mobilization and advocacy of various social issues (i.e. TEDx MaputoSalon). In 2017 she was a speaker at TEDxMaputo where she spoke about her "Maputo Figure Drawing" initiative, a social experiment that proposes the confrontation between nudity and art. She is currently developing the project "Rude Vagina", whose objective is to open dialogue about the female sexual experience.

- Pedro Julião Mahumbe is an artist, anthropologist and writer. His interests include the creation of facilities, the creation of performative art and issues related to sustainability. He is from Maputo and currently is an associate researcher of Kaleidoscope - Research in Public Policy and Culture.

- Sandra Manuel is an anthropologist. Her career comprises a combination of the academic field and research towards public policy. She is an experienced researcher with a specific focus on sexuality, gender and health themes. Currently Dr. Manuel coordinates the Mozambican team
on the Young Women Leadership Program on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). The program aims at empowering young university students in Southern Africa on SRHR. She belongs to various networks that question and challenge normative notions of feminine and masculine, relations between men and women as well as to understand socio-cultural readings of the body and sexuality, specifically in the African context. She has published a number of articles and book chapters on health, sexuality and social dynamics and she is currently a member of the editorial board of Anthropology Southern Africa journal.
MAPUTO STREET ART: YOUTH, URBAN AND SOCIAL IMAGINARY
Maputo has been the stage, in recent times of artistic interventions, of youth movements of urban art, with emphasis on fashion, sports techniques associated with art, as well as the activation of public spaces. These movements have been evidenced by the different configurations of visual communication that illustrate the development and articulation of individual and collective projects that move diverse actors between political, cultural and social fields in which the performances with activist character contribute and structure different commitments of the artistic production. In this sense, a public conversation was organized that sought to think of the intersections between fashion, identity and activation of public spaces in the first place. In a second, it was sought to cast glances beyond the mobility of Skate, lifestyles in a generational perspective and thirdly, it was reflected as emerging young artists, from a social imaginary, reinventing itself in contexts of austerity in ateliers peripheral or urban areas of Maputo.

Speakers argued that stereotypes about the arts and fashion should be stopped, for example, the idea that often hangs in the minds of many people that painting or the fine arts are for rich people only. To this end, it is necessary to promote arts workshops in the neighborhoods that allow direct interaction with the people who have constructed these stereotypes. These stereotypes, often have been built by
people residing in peripheries, because they have little access to the art galleries that are in the center of the city.

Despite recognizing the immense difficulties in the exercise of artistic activity, it is believed that there are ways to overcome obstacles: "As artists we are guided by these words: determination and imposition", said Alberto Corea Brown, for whom art is a way of breaking free from the standards imposed in the world.
This prism of ideas is shared by AfroIvan who has developed urban art fairs in Maputo, and their pieces always refer to an idea of peripheral urban identity extolling figures linked to poetry and the visual arts of the Mafalala neighborhood.

In the discussion about the practice of skateboarding, as modes of appropriation of urban spaces by youth, the idea of lack of space for this activity stood out. "The best places to build skate-park are turning into business centers," said Francisco Luís, president of Maputo Skate, a non-profit organization that imposed children and youth through the practice of skateboarding as a way to occupy them in their free times.
GENERATIONS IN STRUGGLES FOR UTOPIAS—PROPOSALS FROM MOZAMBIQUE

(Photograph: João Feijó, 2003)
The experiences of the various struggles of organizations and social movements in Mozambique, especially women, feminists, workers and peasants, reveal several lines of action that gradually make visible the contribution of women in the construction of citizenship in Mozambique. Indeed, in official records, in the literature, in the field of the arts or even through oral history, the importance of the participation of Mozambican women in the struggle for fundamental rights, from economic empowerment to political empowerment and representativeness is identified at various moments; by public policies for education and health; challenge and confront the various experiences of violence against women and girls. In this section we have reflected on the one hand, from a generational perspective, what role women have played in contexts of economic crisis or political instability and from which places / scenes are heard. On the other hand, in what ways conventional and digital averages have played in the silencing, visibility, or production of stereotypes of the struggle of the feminist women's movements in Mozambique.

Professor Isabel Casimiro, spoke about movements of feminist women who engaged in different forms of women's rights and spaces in decision-making during
the armed struggle for national liberation and in the early years of independence, but also in the dialogue between these movements and the generations. Casimiro, showed that the movements not only of conquests were formed, but they went through crises, difficulties, lack of spaces to debate, due to the existence of groups or associations that did not want independence, that they did not believe in the feminine power and, if space debate and contributions. In a historical look by the women's rights activist, it was found that before, during and after independence there were several groups or movements of feminist women, history has silenced. But also, often these groups went through self-silencing.

"Before the armed struggle, there were women who fought for social inclusion in accordance with their objectives and conditions, fought against colonialism by pressing the liberation of their people, and also against oppressive policies, mainly for the feminine gender, such as the case of Dr. Joana Simeon. This struggle, subsequently, occurred in the generation of armed struggle, which also saw resistance from women to the Liberation Front as well as movements that resisted separate from the Front. In this generation, women have shown that their role was important in society and that they can contribute to the social, economic and political growth of the country, "said Isabel.

Isabel reiterated that this was because they realized for themselves, their importance and the need to raise their hands for the struggle, resistance against the various forms of oppression. Regarding the generation of independence, she was the most privileged because she had the possibility of attending university without many impasses. It is in this generation that we find more movements formed by teachers, doctors, civil servants, peasants, workers, who have engaged in the struggle for independence. They participated actively in the social and political inclusion of women. The "8 de Março" with its movements and organizations resisted through small associations and promoted changes, bringing new glances.
For Isabel Casimiro, today we have a generation marked by the crisis, by the reduction of space for debate and by the invisibilization, but that finds alternative forms that modernity has offered. And in this respect, he says that universities have the role of promoting social movements, creating spaces for the debate of ideas. However, universities in Mozambique have been relegated to political power and little alternative thinking is produced except through research institutes that have been created outside the university itself.
Visual Experiments: The narrative of female sexuality shared by Men and Women

(Photograph: Celma Costa, 2018)
VISUAL EXPERIMENTS: THE NARRATIVE OF FEMALE SEXUALITY SHARED BY MEN AND WOMEN

This panel set out to look at the narrative of female sexuality, historically saturated with restrictions and mysticism based on the visual experiments of a group of visual/plastic artists in Maputo. This challenge also suggested a critical anthropological analysis of culture and sexuality.

Celma Costa, one of the speakers spoke about the Rude Vagina project, a creative form of art that seeks to create spaces of reflection through nudity, to break stereotypes about female sexuality and to incorporate more inclusive narratives through the experience of several women.
In the light of African rationalities about sexuality, Celma defended the idea that visual art is a pertinent way of encompassing a plurality of logic around sexuality and the female body. In view of this, she elaborated on the mysticism and conceptions of the female body and questioned the idea of passivity related to sexuality of the female figure with examples about narratives of the power dynamics and possibilities of obtaining pleasure that can be experienced by women and men.
On the other hand, Pedro Julião, from his works explores the figure of the woman as muse and challenged to think the "prohibitions" attached to the female body while narratives that although found in cultural aspects, also reproduce hegemonic discourses on the body and the gender.
Pedro, also suggests a questioning of the metaphors commonly used to refer to the body and sexuality on the one hand, and the taboos linked to female sexuality on the other hand.

The discussion prevailed the need for more spaces for reflection on both female and male sexuality as a way of enriching the debate often characterized by the predominance of logics that are more guided by heteronormativity.
THE SHOT DOCUMENTARY: “GENERATIONS IN STRUGGLES FOR UTOPIAS”

The documentary "generations in struggles for utopias" is taken as the last product of this cycle of public conversations taking place in the global south, specifically Mozambique. This documentary proposes to explore fundamentally how conventional knowledge is translated into an artistic dimension, but also how art is used as scientific reflection inside and outside the incubators of the academy in a generational perspective of struggles. In doing so, we seek to discover knowledge often, shared in books in discussions of strictly academic forum for a wider public on the one hand, but also, through this public, we start other consultation processes on which silenced struggles should merit our attention institutionally, in the context of our research schedule. Much of the material in this documentary is a synthesis of what our public talks were about, but also, we establish correlations between the space in which the conversations take place and a wider space, called the “public space”, in which many human actions take place.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OUTPUTS AND ACTIVITIES

Based on this initiative, our institution has been able to plan a wide range of activities and products, including a significant number of publications, artistic interventions and engaging activities in public spaces, specifically for the next years:

HUMANITIES IN RADIO AND TELEVISION STATION: NOTES FOR A PUBLIC CONVERSATION

It is an invitation to reflect on the tense relationship between the humanities and political engagement, in contexts of economic restraint, collisions, persuasion and denomination, offering an alternative, generational and collaborative vision of the human experience, challenging the institutional and non-institutionalized forms of thinking the social, within a field of discursive possibilities and performances, crucial to understand their nuances and contributions overshadowed, inside and outside the incubators of the academy between “yesterday” and “today.”
In this sense, the project is based on a set of contributions from political leaders, artists, the public, representatives of civil society organizations, students and academics, allowing that after the publication of each series there is a space of interaction between the different stakeholders. Note: In Search of funds for setting up a studio of recording and editing images for the project.

ARTIVISM, YOUTH AND DAILY STRUGGLES OUTSIDE FORMAL POLITICAL CHANNELS IN AFRICA

In the words of Alcinda Honwana, "the social sciences in Africa must pay more attention to the silences of the daily struggles of young people outside formal political channels". Different configurations of visual, verbal or poetic speech, performances in public resistance or protest, have illustrated the development and articulation of individual and collective projects that move diverse social actors in African urban contexts, between the political, cultural and political field. Social. They impose on us the challenge of understanding the artistic trajectories as an axis of reflection of the existential forms of the city, of the exercise of citizenship, of the demand for accountability, of ways of sociability, of survival and of undertaking through the arts, in contexts of austerity or democratic crises. In this context, youth has played an important role from artivist arrangements as the experience of dependence and marginalization has given them spaces of resistance against hegemonic. In this panel, we intend to think (1) how young emerging artists from the great African cities, from a sociocultural imaginary, have reinvented themselves in contexts of austerity in peripheral or urban ateliers; (2) Since the process of resistance and co-optation of artists by political parties and political parties in power has been used, the process of resistance to cooptation has been used to legitimate itself discursively before its constituents; (3) As young people from the gender lens has rescued political figures from the past, through artistic expressions, to question the modus operant of political parties in
power and legitimize their struggles; (4) In what way have technological artifacts been used, given the censorship of the poetic discourse of musical narratives of protest, by the channels of social communication controlled by the State. Note: The proposal panel's invitation to the second conference "activisms in Africa" to be held between 25 and 27 February 2019 in Guinea-Bissau.