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Special Issue on African Youth and Globalisation
*With selected papers from the 15th CODESRIA General Assembly,
except the one written by Rose Jaji*

Numéro spécial sur jeunesse africaine et mondialisation
*Avec des articles issus de la 15e assemblée générale du CODESRIA,
à l'exception de celui de Rose Jaji*

Guest Editor / Rédacteur invité
Ismail Rashid

AFRICA DEVELOPMENT
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Introduction:
African Youth and Globalisation

Ismail Rashid*

The articles in this special issue of *Africa Development* are mostly the outcome of the panel on African Youth and the experiences of globalisation at the 15th General Assembly of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) held in Dakar, Senegal from 17 to 21 December 2018 under the theme 'Africa and the Crisis of Globalization'.[1] Five of the articles are in English, and one is in Portuguese. These papers are produced by scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds, encompassing history, cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, and linguistics. The articles are anchored in field research conducted in Cape Verde, Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and South Africa, and they tackle issues ranging from youth identity, linguistic practices, marginality, masculinity, gangs, violence, political protests, and youth policies. While the different findings and analyses highlight the specificities of the impact of globalisation on young people in selected African countries, they also reveal certain shared experiences across the continent.

Globalisation is not a new phenomenon. The world has witnessed various processes of globalisation over the last millennium, each generating new movements and networks of people, goods, ideas, and power (Abu-Lughod 1989; Osterhammel and Petersson 2009). The last phase of globalisation, which was characterised by the aggressive expansion of European imperialism and capitalism, produced the trans-Atlantic enslavement of Africans and colonialism of Africa, with profoundly tragic consequences. This current phase of globalisation picked up pace after the collapse of the post-Second World War bipolar world order and the rise of new transportation and communications technology in the 1990s. It promised a more prosperous, freer, flatter, smaller, and integrated world (Freidman 2005). There is no doubt that this wave of globalisation, anchored on a resurgent and neoliberal capitalism, has facilitated faster movement of people, commodities, money, information, and ideas around the world. While it has 'lifted'

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billions of people out of poverty, it also pushed billions down into poverty, precarity and marginality. Given its uneven and contradictory outcomes, it is unsurprising then that the current phase of globalisation has generated extensive scholarly debate on its character, dynamics and overall impact (Lecher and Boli 2014).

Utilising different disciplinary lenses and methodological approaches, the contributors to this issue augment the debate on globalisation by uncovering its complex consequences for the youth, state and societies in some African countries. Fridah Kanana Erastus and Ellen Hurst-Harosh, who focus on African youth linguistic practices, see it as enriching rather impoverishing of African urban youth culture. Ibrahim Abdullah, Jacinta Nwaka, Rose Jaji and Redy Lima, foreground how youth wrestle with different forms of marginality and exclusion, resorting to gangs, crime, violence and protests to express, leverage, and contest the terms of their situation. African governments are very much aware of the needs, demands and aspirations of their youth in a rapidly changing world. In her interrogation of the youth policies of Kenya, Ghana and Tanzania, Olga Bialostocka underscores how these governments mediate notions of 'tradition' and 'modernity' in their planning for youth development in a globalising world.

Urban youth in Africa have long been active interlocutors in global popular culture, utilising images, fashion, music and language to fashion their identities (Barber 2017). There is no doubt that the proliferation of new communications technologies, especially the ubiquitous cellphone and numerous social media platforms, has greatly expanded this African youth engagement with global popular culture. Drawing on theories of hybridity, Fridah Kanana Erastus and Ellen Hurst-Harosh demonstrate the different ways in which African youth engagement with global culture are shaping urban youth language practices such as Sheng in Kenya, Tsotsitaal in South Africa and Nouchi in Côte d'Ivoire. They argue that in invoking, reinterpreting and applying global symbols, cultural artefacts and icons in their lexicon, the creators and utilisers of these African youth languages forge identities in which the global and local intersect and are reconstituted in ways that fit their urban contexts. In their textured analyses of the everyday interactions and vocabulary of urban youth, Kanana Erastus and Hurst-Harosh reveal how the global does not displace the local but complements it. Youth emerge in this study as active creators and contributors to linguistic and cultural change and as agents of Africa's globalisation.

In his article, Ibrahim Abdullah also broaches the question of urban youth agency and dialogue with global popular culture, but from the sociological and political-economic context of exclusion and marginality in a restructured

post-war neoliberal state. Abdullah reminds us that globalisation arrived in many African countries on the back of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), with their fetishisation of market principles, privatisation, and curtailment of state expenditure. While SAPs may have provided some modicum of state functionality, economic growth, and access to new technologies in Sierra Leone, they have not mitigated widespread youth unemployment, marginalisation and exclusion. Abdullah argues that, in this context, marginal urban youths have appropriated global cultural flows and refashioned them into deadly gangs and weapons in furtherance of their survival, rights, justice and citizenship. He emphasises that the quotidian existence of marginalised urban youth in contemporary Africa raises fundamental questions about globalisation and citizenship in the making of subaltern subjectivities.

Jacinta Nwaka similarly focuses on ways in which youth engagement in the 'criminal' and 'traditional' can also be construed as responses to state ineptitude and the convulsions of neoliberal forms of globalisation. Using a historical lens, she traces the rise in the participation of south Nigerian youth in the revival of traditional shrines and deadly fetish and occult practices. Nwaka does not see these 'traditional' religious and spiritual practices as detached from the modernity of globalisation or Nigeria's postcolonial dispensation. Rather than seeing it as a return to past traditional religions, she contends that these trends are subtle forms of youth resistance to the isolation and the financial and social insecurity engendered by the modern state system in Nigeria, and the impact of the money-making ethos of 'prosperity gospel' evangelism over the last two decades.

The interplay between the 'traditional' and 'modern' is also a major strand in Rose Jaji's examination of how young Zimbabwean men perform masculinities in a restrictive postcolonial political space that is heavily impacted by global contexts, and in which the majority of young people are politically and economically marginalised. She contends that young men respond to the domination and monopolisation of politics by the older generation through a variety of strategies, including drawing on global performances of masculinities as well as co-opting and subverting gerontocratic Zimbabwean masculinities. While some of these strategies include navigating the political party terrain, others involve participation in criminal gangs (sometimes tied to political parties) or using new communications and social media technology to foster civic activism and engagement. The strategies also draw from global trends involving the youth's engagement in non-traditional political participation facilitated by their dominance of virtual space.

The push from African youth to be engaged in shaping the political direction of their countries is a common thread in many of the articles in this special issue. Redy Wilson Lima's article contextualises the different types of urban youth protests in Cape Verde in the aftermath of the global financial crisis of 2008 and deepening social and political problems. Cape Verde, which had separated from Guinea Bissau in 1981 and embraced multipartyism in 1991, was hailed as an example of democracy and good governance in Africa. However, Lima contends that, in the last decade, the country has witnessed the smothering of its civil society, urban insecurity, and significant corruption of public and political institutions. He underscores that many youth groups involved in the last waves of protests in Cape Verde call themselves the children and grandchildren of Amílcar Cabral, and they are advocating for a second liberation and (re)Africanisation of the spirits and minds of their compatriots.

Though postcolonial African governments have long wrestled with how to respond to the needs and demands of their burgeoning youth population, the crisis of the last decades has placed the youth question into sharp relief. Since the early 2000s, national youth policies to support the inclusion and development of young people in Africa have been in vogue (ECA 2017). Olga Bialostocka examines the youth policies of Kenya, Ghana and Tanzania to find out how these governments mediate and articulate notions of 'tradition' and 'modernity' in their planning for youth development in diverse socio-cultural settings. She contends that policymakers see the role of culture, both local and global, as important in young people's lives, and try to produce politically desired alternatives to Western modernity. In comparison to the policies of Kenya and Tanzania, Bialostocka considers Ghana's youth policy to be the most decolonial project of the three in its attempt to disentangle the country's process of transformation from the perceived universality of Western culture.

This special issue highlights CODESRIA's ongoing scholarly engagement with the question of youth in Africa and adds to the body of knowledge produced in previous special issues on the subject. Even as some of the articles in this issue revisit familiar themes on the youth question, they all open up new terrains of inquiry grounded in solid field research. They have offered new scholarly insights on the condition of the current generation of African youth, and hinted at possibilities for policy formulation and strategies that effectively respond to the needs and aspirations of youth in a changing and challenging global milieu.

Note

1. Rose Jaji was not part of the original panel. Her article was specifically commissioned for this special issue of *Africa Development.*

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Introduction :
jeunesse africaine et mondialisation

Ismail Rashid*

Les articles de ce numéro spécial *d'Afrique et développement* proviennent principalement du panel sur 'Jeunesse africaine et expériences de la mondialisation', de la 15ᵉ Assemblée générale du Conseil pour le développement de la recherche en sciences sociales en Afrique (CODESRIA), tenue du 17 au 21 décembre 2018 à Dakar (Sénégal) sur le thème 'L'Afrique et la crise de la mondialisation'[1]. Cinq de ces articles sont en langue anglaise et un est en portugais. Ces articles sont d'universitaires de différents horizons disciplinaires englobant l'histoire, les études culturelles, l'anthropologie, la sociologie et la linguistique. Les articles sont basés sur des recherches de terrain menées au Cap-Vert, au Kenya, en Côte d'Ivoire, au Ghana, en Sierra Leone, au Nigéria, au Zimbabwe et en Afrique du Sud. Ils abordent des problématiques traitant de l'identité des jeunes, des pratiques linguistiques, de la marginalité, de la masculinité, des gangs, de la violence, des manifestations politiques et des politiques de jeunesse. Si les différents résultats et analyses mettent en évidence les spécificités de l'impact de la mondialisation sur les jeunes dans certains pays africains, ils révèlent également des expériences partagées à travers le continent.

La mondialisation n'est pas un phénomène nouveau. Au cours du dernier millénaire, le monde a connu plusieurs processus de mondialisation, chacun générant de nouveaux mouvements et réseaux de personnes, de biens, d'idées et de pouvoir (Abu-Lughod 1989; Osterhammel et Petersson 2009). La dernière phase de mondialisation, caractérisée par l'expansion agressive de l'impérialisme et du capitalisme européens, a produit l'asservissement transatlantique d'Africains et la colonisation de l'Afrique, avec des conséquences profondément tragiques. La phase actuelle de mondialisation s'est accélérée après l'effondrement de l'ordre bipolaire mondial de l'après-Seconde guerre mondiale et la montée de nouveaux modes de transport et de la technologie de communications dans les années 1990. Elle promettait un monde plus prospère, plus libre, plus égal, plus petit et plus intégré

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(Freidman 2005). Il ne fait aucun doute que cette vague de mondialisation, ancrée dans un capitalisme renaissant et néolibéral, a facilité la circulation plus rapide des personnes, des biens, de l'argent, de l'information. Si elle a « sorti » des milliards de personnes de la pauvreté, elle en a également poussé des milliards dans la pauvreté, la précarité et la marginalité. Compte tenu de ses résultats inégaux et contradictoires, il n'est donc pas surprenant que la phase actuelle de mondialisation ait généré un vaste débat scientifique sur son caractère, sa dynamique et son impact dans le monde (Lecher et Boli 2014).

Utilisant différentes perspectives disciplinaires et approches méthodologiques, les contributeurs à ce numéro enrichissent le débat sur la mondialisation en mettant à nu ses conséquences complexes pour la jeunesse, l'État et les sociétés de certains pays africains. Fridah Kanana Erastus et Ellen Hurst-Harosh, qui abordent les pratiques linguistiques des jeunes africains, y voient un enrichissement, plutôt qu'un appauvrissement, de la culture de la jeunesse urbaine africaine. Ibrahim Abdullah, Jacinta Nwaka, Rose Jaji et Redy Lima, montrent comment les jeunes luttent contre différentes formes de marginalité et d'exclusion, recourant aux gangs, au crime, à la violence et aux manifestations pour exprimer, exploiter et contester les termes de leur situation. Les gouvernements africains sont très conscients des besoins, des revendications et des aspirations de leur jeunesse dans un monde en rapide mutation. Dans son questionnement sur les politiques de jeunesse au Kenya, au Ghana et en Tanzanie, Olga Bialostocka met en exergue comment ces gouvernements arbitrent les notions de « tradition » et de « modernité » dans leur planification du développement de la jeunesse dans un monde en voie de mondialisation.

Les jeunes dans les villes africaines sont, depuis longtemps, des protagonistes d'actifs dans la culture populaire mondiale, utilisant les images, la mode, la musique et la langue pour façonner leur identité (Barber 2017). Il ne fait aucun doute que la prolifération de nouvelles technologies de communication, en particulier l'omniprésent téléphone portable, et de nombreuses plateformes de médias sociaux, a considérablement élargi cet engagement de la jeunesse africaine avec la culture populaire mondiale. S'appuyant sur les théories de l'hybridité, Fridah Kanana Erastus et Ellen Hurst-Harosh démontrent les différentes manières dont l'engagement des jeunes africains dans la culture mondiale façonne leurs pratiques linguistiques en milieu urbain comme avec le Sheng au Kenya, le Tsotsitaal en Afrique du Sud et le Nouchi en Côte d'Ivoire. Elles soutiennent qu'en invoquant, en réinterprétant et en appliquant des symboles, des artefacts culturels et des icônes universels au lexique, les jeunes créateurs et utilisateurs africains de ces langues forgent des identités dans lesquelles le global et le local se

croisent et se reconstituent de manière à s'adapter à leurs contextes urbains. Dans leurs analyses texturées des interactions quotidiennes et du vocabulaire de la jeunesse urbaine, Kanana Erastus et Hurst-Harosh révèlent comment le global ne remplace pas le local, mais le complète plutôt. Dans cette étude, les jeunes émergent en créateurs et contributeurs actifs du changement linguistique et culturel et en agents de la mondialisation de l'Afrique.

Dans son article, Ibrahim Abdullah aborde également la question de la jeunesse urbaine et du dialogue avec la culture populaire mondiale, mais à partir du contexte sociologique et politico-économique d'exclusion et de marginalité dans un État post conflit, néolibéral et restructuré. Abdullah nous rappelle que la mondialisation est arrivée dans de nombreux pays africains grâce aux programmes d'ajustement structurel (PAS), avec leur fétichisation des principes de marché, de privatisation et de réduction des dépenses publiques. Les PAS ont fourni un peu de fonctionnalité d'État, de croissance économique et d'accès aux nouvelles technologies en Sierra Leone, mais ils n'ont pas réduit le chômage, la marginalisation et l'exclusion généralisés des jeunes. Abdullah soutient que, dans ce contexte, les jeunes urbains marginaux se sont appropriés les flux culturels mondiaux et les ont transformés en armes et en gangs meurtriers au service de leur survie, de leurs droits, de leur justice et de leur citoyenneté. Il souligne que l'existence au jour le jour de la jeunesse urbaine marginalisée en Afrique contemporaine soulève des questions fondamentales sur la mondialisation et la citoyenneté dans la fabrication de subjectivités subalternes.

De la même manière, Jacinta Nwaka aborde les moyens par lesquels l'engagement des jeunes dans le « criminel » et le « traditionnel » peut également être interprété comme des réponses à l'incompétence de l'État et aux convulsions des formes néolibérales de mondialisation. À travers un prisme historique, elle retrace la participation accrue de la jeunesse du sud du Nigéria à la renaissance de sanctuaires traditionnels et de pratiques fétichistes, occultes mortelles. Nwaka ne voit pas ces pratiques religieuses et spirituelles « traditionnelles » comme détachées de la modernité de la mondialisation ou du régime postcolonial du Nigéria. Plutôt que d'y voir un retour aux religions traditionnelles du passé, elle soutient que ces tendances sont des formes subtiles de résistance des jeunes à l'isolement et à l'insécurité financière et sociale engendrées par le système étatique moderne du Nigéria, et à l'impact de l'éthique de l'argent de « l'évangélisme de la prospérité » des deux dernières décennies.

L'interaction entre le « traditionnel » et le « moderne » est également un élément majeur de l'examen par Rose Jaji de la manière dont les jeunes zimbabwéens exécutent les masculinités dans un espace politique

postcolonial restrictif, fortement influencé par les contextes mondiaux, et dans lequel la majorité des jeunes sont politiquement et économiquement marginalisés. Elle soutient que les jeunes hommes répondent à la domination et à la monopolisation de la politique par la génération plus âgée par diverses stratégies, y compris en s'appuyant sur les performances mondiales des masculinités ainsi que la cooptation et la subversion des masculinités gérontocratiques zimbabwéennes. Ces stratégies incluent l'incursion sur le terrain politique ; d'autres impliquent la participation à des gangs criminels (parfois liés à des partis politiques), ou l'utilisation de nouvelles technologies de communication et de réseaux sociaux pour favoriser l'activisme et l'engagement civiques. Les stratégies s'inspirent également des tendances mondiales d'engagement des jeunes dans une participation politique non traditionnelle facilitée par leur domination de l'espace virtuel.

La volonté de la jeunesse africaine de s'engager dans la définition de la direction politique de son pays est le fil conducteur de nombre d'articles de ce numéro spécial. Celui de Redy Wilson Lima contextualise les différents types de manifestations de la jeunesse urbaine du Cap-Vert suite à la crise financière mondiale de 2008 et à l'intensification des problèmes sociaux et politiques. Le Cap-Vert, qui s'est séparé de la Guinée Bissau en 1981 et a embrassé le multipartisme en 1991, était salué comme un exemple de démocratie et de bonne gouvernance en Afrique. Cependant, Lima soutient que, au cours de la dernière décennie, le pays a connu l'asphyxie de sa société civile, l'insécurité urbaine et la corruption importante dans les institutions publiques et politiques. Il souligne que de nombreux groupes de jeunes impliqués dans les dernières vagues de manifestations au Cap-Vert se font appeler les enfants et petits-enfants d'Amílcar Cabral, et plaident pour une seconde libération et une (ré)africanisation des esprits et des consciences de leurs compatriotes.

Les gouvernements postcoloniaux africains se demandent depuis longtemps comment répondre aux besoins et aux exigences de leurs populations croissantes de jeunes, mais la crise des dernières décennies a remis la question des jeunes en évidence. Depuis le début des années 2000, les politiques nationales de jeunesse soutenant l'inclusion et le développement des jeunes en Afrique sont en vogue (CEA 2017). Olga Bialostocka examine les politiques en direction de la jeunesse du Kenya, du Ghana et de la Tanzanie pour découvrir comment ces gouvernements interviennent et articulent les notions de « tradition » et « modernité » dans leur planification du développement de la jeunesse dans divers contextes socioculturels. Elle soutient que les décideurs politiques considèrent le rôle de la culture, à la fois locale et mondiale, comme

important dans la vie des jeunes, et qu'ils tentent de produire des alternatives politiquement souhaitables à la modernité occidentale. En comparaison à celles du Kenya et de la Tanzanie, Bialostocka considère la politique de jeunesse du Ghana comme le projet le plus décolonial des trois dans sa tentative d'éloigner le processus de transformation du pays de l'universalité perçue de la culture occidentale.

Ce numéro spécial met en lumière l'engagement scientifique continu du CODESRIA sur la question de la jeunesse en Afrique et s'ajoute aux connaissances produites dans les numéros spéciaux précédents sur le sujet. Même si certains articles de ce numéro revisitent des thèmes familiers sur la question des jeunes, ils ouvrent tous de nouvelles pistes d'enquête fondées sur de solides recherches de terrain. Ils offrent de nouvelles perspectives savantes sur la condition de l'actuelle génération de jeunes africains, et suggèrent la formulation de politiques et de stratégies qui répondent efficacement aux besoins et aux aspirations des jeunes dans un milieu mondial dynamique et difficile.

Note

1. Rose Jaji ne faisait pas partie du panel initial. Son article a été particulièrement rédigé pour ce numéro spécial d'*Afrique et développement*.

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Global and Local Hybridity in African Youth Language Practices

Fridah Kanana Erastus* & Ellen Hurst-Harosh**

Abstract

This article investigates and describes youth language practices in Africa in the era of globalisation. It opens up debate over the impacts of globalisation on youth linguistic identities in Africa. Further, it suggests some aspects of youth participation in linguistic change in Africa and provides some examples of how youth linguistic cultures are practised in everyday interactions. The authors show the intersection of cultures in everyday discourse and in youth language vocabulary, and the incorporation of global (popular) culture in African youth language practices through bricolage to achieve hybridity. The ways in which the global intersects with the local and how the youth in Africa recontextualise the global and create local traditions of youth culture and identity are discussed and exemplified. The article concludes by arguing that, while global brands impact on youth language and practices, they are interpreted and applied locally; youth culture in Africa is enriched by global symbols and cultural artefacts and figures, not impoverished by them; the global does not displace the local, but rather complements it. The youth in Africa, in their spaces, are therefore active creators and contributors towards linguistic and cultural change and through this change they are agents of Africa's globalisation.

Keywords: Youth language, mobility, technology, globalisation

Résumé

Cet article examine et décrit les pratiques linguistiques des jeunes en Afrique à l'ère de la mondialisation. Il ouvre le débat sur les impacts de la mondialisation sur les identités linguistiques des jeunes en Afrique. En outre, il suggère certains aspects de la participation des jeunes au changement, linguistique en Afrique et fournit quelques exemples de la pratique des cultures

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linguistiques des jeunes dans leurs interactions quotidiennes. Les auteures montrent la rencontre des cultures dans le discours de tous les jours et dans le vocabulaire linguistique des jeunes, et l'incorporation de la culture mondiale (populaire) dans les pratiques linguistiques des jeunes africains, parvenant ainsi à l'hybridité. Les moyens par lesquels le mondial et le local se croisent et la manière dont les jeunes en Afrique recontextualisent le global et créent des traditions locales de culture et d'identité sont discutés et illustrés. L'article conclut que les marques mondiales ont bien un impact sur le langage et les pratiques des jeunes, mais elles sont interprétées et appliquées localement ; la culture des jeunes en Afrique est enrichie, et non appauvrie, par des symboles, objets et figures culturels mondiaux ; au lieu de remplacer le local, le global le complète plutôt. Les jeunes en Afrique, dans leurs espaces, sont donc des créateurs et des contributeurs actifs au changement linguistique et culturel et, à travers ce changement, sont des agents de la mondialisation de l'Afrique.

Mots-clés : langue des jeunes, mobilité, technologie, mondialisation

Introduction

Many African countries are highly multilingual, characterised by intense language contact, especially in major urban centres. The underlying reality of each multilingual context is complex, distinctive and changing (Gadelii 2004). Additionally, twenty-first century technological advancement in Africa, digital media, and the resultant accessibility of global popular culture and music have played a role in creating language contact situations where urban youth language practices thrive. The spread of communication technologies, e.g. personal cell phones and smart phones that provide access to the internet and social media, has provided African youth with access to global culture in unprecedented ways and thus created new and dynamic 'communities of practice' (CoP) (Lave and Wenger 1991).

Community of practice is a term first introduced by Lave and Wenger (1991) and later defined by Eckert (2000) as a group of people who share a common mutual endeavour. This concept replaces the earlier model of speech community, which emphasised localised groups of people with homogeneous language norms. A CoP, on the other hand, is not necessarily a bounded or geographically based community, and the concept is thus useful when considering the mobile and unbounded nature of digital spaces, or far-reaching social groupings such as youth, linked by aspects of popular culture through digital means. The youth who are members of a CoP need not share a locality, ethnic identity or linguistic heritage. What binds them is a common interest or practice which can be supported by a virtual space as easily as a physical one.

The evolving linguistic space as a result of technology and globalisation has led to complex language practices across cities in Africa which are represented by

> linguistic and generational attitudes and ideologies – [amongst] young, modern, urban youth who recognize and incorporate African traditional forms and languages, but blend them with a range of other resources, national, continental and global (Hurst-Harosh and Kanana Erastus 2018:5).

The African urban context has therefore been represented as a 'melting pot' of linguistic creativity influenced by globalisation (Kiessling and Mous 2004:333). This article investigates and describes youth language practices in Africa in the era of globalisation using examples from youth languages such as Sheng (Kenya), Tsotsitaal (South Africa), and Nouchi (Côte d'Ivoire) as well as from a corpus of natural conversation data from South Africa. The article outlines some of the trends of youth participation in linguistic change in Africa, as well as raising questions about the ways in which youth linguistic cultures are emerging in African urban spaces. We show the impact of the intersection of cultures in everyday youth discourse and youth language vocabulary, and the incorporation of global (popular) culture in African youth language practices, involving a process of bricolage to achieve hybridity. Kraidy (2005:148) says hybridity 'entails that traces of other cultures exist in every culture'. We also highlight the recontextualisation of the global, and the emergence of local traditions of youth culture and identity.

The article argues that youth culture in Africa is enriched by global symbols and cultural artefacts and figures, not impoverished by them; and the global does not displace the local, but rather complements it through linguistic enrichment and cultural hybridity. Building on theories of hybridity and globalisation that have emerged in linguistics and cultural studies, the article focuses on understanding not just large-scale cultural and political processes such as globalisation that shape the lives of youth, but also the ways in which youth (linguistic) identities emerge through fine-grained interactional work and local linguistic practice.

African Youth Language Practices

The rapid and often expansive growth of African cities in the twenty-first century has given rise to a multiplicity of innovative and often transformative cultural practices, including the emergence of language varieties and practices which are primarily associated with the youth and urban life. African youth language (AYL) is a term that has commonly

been used to refer to phenomena of language mixing and styling in rapidly urbanising contexts of African cities. Some of the named and often well-researched examples include: Sheng (Kenya), Camfranglais (Cameroon), Nouchi (Côte d'Ivoire) and Tsotsitaal (South Africa). More recently, other varieties have come to the attention of researchers, such as Yabâcrane in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (Nassenstein 2016), Luyaaye in Uganda (Namyalo 2017) and S'ncamtho in Zimbabwe (Ndlovu 2018). There is a great deal of debate over their status, as it is not clear that any of the described AYLs are significantly 'mixed' in terms of syntax. One avenue of recent research has been to make a distinction between urban varieties as described by, e.g., McLaughlin (2009), and specialised youth registers. For example, Mesthrie and Hurst (2013) argue that, linguistically, Tsotsitaal can be seen as a stylised register of the urban varieties of South African languages, taking the most urban form of a vernacular as its base language.

Kiessling and Mous (2004) wrote the first comparative article to consider the similarities of a number of these phenomena – they focused on Nouchi (Côte d'Ivoire), Camfranglais (Cameroon), Indoubil (DRC), Tsotsitaal (South Africa), and Sheng (Kenya). They suggested that these urban codes may represent 'project identities' for young Africans in rapidly modernising cities. According to these authors, AYLs function as an interethnic bridge and 'it is the modernity and urban status of youth languages that dissociate them from ethnic associations' (Kiessling and Mous 2004:316). They argue that AYLs are part of a project of identity-building amongst African youth, and that these identities do not arise from traditional identities (characterised as being confined to rural settings, ethnic and linguistic minority communities, and 'emblematic of a way of life that is felt to be incompatible with modern challenges' (Kiessling and Mous (2004:330)), but rather the 'source material' for these new identities 'is taken from the totality of cultural features to be found in the urban setting of the large African cities' (Kiessling and Mous 2004:330).

This includes the influence of the 'information society' (Castells 1996) – the worldwide spread of information technology enabling access to youth culture such as hip hop and rap along with associated linguistic emblems (Kiessling and Mous 2004:331). These authors posit that the cultural communities of African urban youth are primarily construed as:

> …reactions against the traditional way of life in a rural setting, dominated by patriarchal family structures and networks of obligations towards elders and the community, and as an identity-creating reaction towards globalization, seeking access to and partaking in the possibilities and prospects of globalization (Kiessling and Mous 2004:331–2).

Referring to the supposed rejection of 'mother tongues' in favour of AYLs, Kiessling and Mous (2004:333) suggest that these vernacular languages are representative of traditional ways of life, which is in 'sharp contrast to the urban setting and to these youths' general outlook on modern life'. The identity they wish to project is 'the identity of an urban cosmopolitan, constituting the new identity of urban progressiveness' (Kiessling and Mous 2004:335). At the same time, peri-urban and rural youth appear to be increasingly accessing and adopting these language practices, as borders become more porous and mobility and technology more widespread (Kanana Erastus and Hurst-Harosh 2019).

Whilst the function of youth languages as an inter-ethnic bridge is debatable in contexts where non-ethnically marked linguae francae exist, e.g., the urban varieties described by Mesthrie and Hurst (2013), or the case of Kiswahili in Kenya, it is not contested that the youth language serves a communicative function among the youth, a function that other ethnically marked languages cannot perform. From this perspective, we suggest that youth languages are not only markers of identity, but they also have a unifying function. However, we do not consider them as languages of wider communication, due to their reliance on the linguae francae to provide the morpho-syntactic frame. We suggest they can in fact be considered as a set of language resources and other stylistic resources which form a register or 'stylect' (Hurst 2008) rather than 'languages' per se (Hurst 2015:169).

Global Capitalism and Technology

Globalisation, seen as the increased integration of economic, social and governmental aspects of society worldwide, is not a new phenomenon. However, it has been facilitated by recent rapid advances in transportation and communication technologies. The resulting global economy is based on international trade, the movement of goods and people, as well as digital markets and global capital. Accompanied by liberalisation, globalisation has attracted critiques, including anti-corporatism and anti-consumerism, and particularly in relation to its impacts on the environment. There is also a critique of the uneven benefits for various countries and people globally, and advocacy for global justice and against rising social inequality. Within this framework, 'African countries have benefited relatively less from the positive effects of globalization than other parts of the world in terms of economic growth and development' (Nissanke and Thorbecke 2007). As a corollary to this, some cultural effects of globalisation, sometimes framed as 'Americanisation' are also seen as having negative impacts on African countries.

Kraidy (2005:148) suggests that hybridity is the cultural logic of globalisation because it offers 'foreign media and marketers transcultural wedges for forging affective links between their commodities and local communities'. On the other hand, Pieterse (2004) argues that an understanding of globalisation as hybridity counteracts views which see the process as homogenising, modernising, and westernising. The effects of globalisation are particularly pertinent for African youth in a continent where three-quarters of the population are under 35 years old. Yet, as intersected as they are by the global, to what extent are African youth and their linguistic practices being transformed by globalisation and, in particular, global capitalist consumer culture?

The concept of the network is central to the work of Castells (1996), in which the term 'network society' is used to describe the current technology-based system that enables networked actors to participate in a global economy. This system encompasses media, information systems, international institutions and states, and it is driven by an economic logic based on what is valuable. A side-effect of this logic in Castells is that there are insiders and outsiders to this economy; those who are valuable and those that are not; while urban centres may be networked into the economy, rural areas are often excluded, remaining part of a 'basic, survival economy', yet still impacted by the global economic system, perhaps providing poorly-compensated raw materials or agricultural produce. Under-resourced regions such as large areas of sub-Saharan Africa are among the most excluded. This leads to the 'digital divide' between those with technological capacity, and those without it.

The matter of technological capacity can be extended to linguistic studies. Deumert (2015:562) argues that communication using digital media is only tenable if people have access to the material artefacts such as hardware and software which make virtual interactions possible. While defining digital communication, Deumert 2015:563 says:

> …digital participation is not merely about speaking/writing "in the right way," but about being able to speak/write at all. That is, having access to digital technology in order to communicate with others.

She further describes the digital divide in the world today noting that the number of *have-nots* is dropping significantly. She writes:

> The inequality of access to digital artifacts is commonly referred to as the *digital divide*: some people in the world have ample access to the internet and other digital media (such as the phones, tablets, laptops, the haves), others

have some access (the *have-less*) and even a shrinking proportion of the world's population have none (the *have-nots*) (Deumert 2015:563).

The spread of communications technologies, particularly personal cell phones and smart phones that provide access to the internet and social media, has provided African users with access to global culture in unprecedented ways, as well as providing businesses with new markets and new ways of engaging youth populations in consumer products.

A 2017 Pew Research Center study (Silver and Johnson 2018) found that approximately 91 per cent of South African adults own mobile phones, with 51 per cent of adults owning smartphones, while the corresponding figures for Kenya were 80 per cent and 30 per cent respectively. Companies are competing for a share of a domestic market which has become a basic household expense for the majority of people.

In Kenya today, for example, telecommunication companies are competing to provide cheaper internet bundles which can also be purchased on credit, leading to wider access. They offer a range of tariffs to cater for the needs of all their users. Users can purchase internet bundles for a day, a week, a month, etc. For example, the Safaricom advertising slogan *okoa jahazi* ('save a [capsizing] boat') refers to a service that enables a user to request an airtime 'bailout' without having to pay for it immediately, and the amount is deducted the next time the user purchases airtime. This is a strategy to ensure mobile phone users are not disconnected from the network at any time. Such strategies have been adopted by other service providers as they compete for the available market space. This technological access means that African youth, now more than ever, can be influenced by global trends, businesses and products, as well as global and technologically based forms of communication and language itself.

What does this increased access to technology and global culture mean in terms of linguistic practice, new CoPs, pop culture and consumerist culture amongst African youth? Incorporation of global culture is often explained in the AYL literature as a desire by youth to connect to a 'modern' lifestyle. As Bogopa (1996:113) explains,

> [The urban youth] like to live a life which is modern in orientation, and their thinking as well as their lifestyle is based on modern technology; for example the clothes and the hairstyle they wear and the music they play and so on.

The following analysis seeks to investigate some of the ways in which the global is involved in local youth practices, in interactional discursive practices, and in digital contexts.

Study Data on Global-Local Discourses

The data for this article is drawn from an ongoing African youth language project which involved a network of researchers around the continent collecting data such as audio and video recordings of natural conversations, public data such as music lyrics and advertising, and social media data such as posts from Facebook groups and WhatsApp conversations. A distinction needs to be made between these different types of data – for example, recorded conversations provide evidence of actual practice, while Facebook groups may showcase stylised written forms of youth language.

The specific data used here are, firstly, recordings of a series of conversations between a group of young men in a township called KwaMashu, just outside Durban, in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province of South Africa. The young men were approximately 18 to 20 years old, and the social context was a peer group of six friends who regularly gathered in the evening at various venues to smoke and drink. The first two examples below come from a conversation between three members of this KZN friendship group and took place in one of their houses. The analysis in this case focuses on the discourses and themes which arise during the conversation, highlighting those which incorporate aspects of global popular culture.

The Kenyan Kiswahili data presented in Example 3, which is used to understand the implications of the global digital space and its impact on local youth practices, was collected through a social network approach ('a friend of a friend'). This approach allowed us to gain access to various social media sites and then purposefully select social interactions on various platforms with a bearing on language and identity, language and globalisation, the materiality of digital interactions, the creativity this material enables, and the ways in which the technological medium reshapes interaction and questions of identity.

Lexical data was gathered through various public sources, including previous publications, as well as the corpuses and sources described above.

Example 1: Skinny Jeans and Sneakers (KZN, South Africa)

M3: *Heh mfethu indaba zo skinny.*
   'Eh bra these things about skinny jeans.'
M1: *Ziyabhedha mfethu.*
   'They suck bro.'
M3: *Ukhu bone mase kuvela abo Snoop.*
   'Have you seen people like Snoop and them.'
M1: *Angiy'phakamiseli leyo shandis ke mina. Iskinny. iskinny jean mfethu.*
   'I don't raise that thing bra. Skinnies, skinny jeans bro.'

M3:   *Sek'khone ney'bovu mfethu kodwa hai.*
        'Have you seen they even have red ones bro.'
M2:   *Kodwa mina mfethu. Mhlampe photoshoot Umak'thiwa mhlampe kumele uw'fakuskinny uk'thath' isthombe yinto engingayenza.*
        'But like for me bro. Maybe like for photoshoots and stuff if they say maybe I should wear skinnies to take pictures I could do that.'
M3:   *Yah uy'fake yah.*
        'Yes and wear them yah.'
M2:   *Ngiyfake ng'that' isthombe bese ngiyaw'khipha.*
        'Yes and wear it and take pictures then I can take it off.'
M1:   *Ehe uw'khiphe.*
        'Yes then take them off.'
M3:   *Bakhaphun'oskinny besuzofika uwaqokile uthi hai bafethu.*
        'Like imagine wearing skinnies and then you come here wearing them and say "hey guys".'
M1:   *Yonke lento leyo. Uy'thathe uy'bondelane la eceleni.*
        'All that bro. And take it and wear it here on the sides.'
M3:   *I-sneaker sona ke mfethu ngisaqoka kodwa.*
        'But I could wear sneakers though.'
M2:   *Hai mina ngasfaka. Nfaki-straight leg ne sneaker.*
        'Yes, I'd wear them. And wear like a straight leg with sneakers.'
M3:   *I-sneakers eqaqile. Ngeke ngiyqoke lez ezbhedhayo oSupra nobani bani.*
        'A sneaker that's on point. I won't wear these ones that don't make sense like your Supras and stuff.'
M1:   *O-bhedha bhedha.*
        'The sucky ones.'
M3:   *Ngeke ngisqoke futh eseNike. Ngigaqoke'sendida.*
        'I won't even wear a Nike sneaker. I'd wear an Adidas one.'

In the example above, the speakers are discussing skinny jeans (snugly fitting jeans which taper narrowly at the ankle), and evaluating them in use by international US rap artist Snoop Dogg, who they claim wears red ones. The speakers are not impressed by skinny jeans. One of the speakers (M2) is involved in making music and currently about to submit a demonstration recording, and they are discussing whether he would wear skinny jeans if he were asked to go for a photoshoot. Their evaluation is that skinny jeans *bhedha* 'suck' and would not be acceptable in their local context (M3: *bakhaphun'oskinny besuzofika uwaqokile uthi hai bafethu* 'Like imagine wearing skinnies and then you come here wearing them say "hey guys"').

This excerpt shows how international artists and artefacts from global popular culture permeate youth discourse, and how they are evaluated in interactions that take place within local contexts amongst peers. It is also noteworthy that while some of the consumer items and brands being discussed are given in English (straight-leg, skinny jean, sneaker, Supra and Nike), the most popular brand, and the only brand that these speakers evaluate positively – Adidas – has been relexicalised as *indida* in the youth language. In general, though, both Example 1 and Example 2 are quite light in youth slang, only using a few terms associated with the local Tsotsitaal style (called isiTsotsi in KZN) – *shandis* 'thing'; *mfethu/ bafethu* 'bro/ guys'; *bheda* 'suck/ bad'; and *indida* 'Adidas'. While in other recordings from the corpus these speakers use a much more pronounced slang style, the mild use here is likely due to the topic of discussion, context, and interlocutors (see Hurst-Harosh 2020 for a full discussion of youth stylects and their use in different contexts, topics, and styles).

Later in their discussion, the same speakers evaluate international brands of headphones including Skull (Candy), Bullet, and Dr Dre. The Dr Dre earphones are said to be very expensive and this leads into a discussion about why America has so much money, in Example 2.

Example 2: Natural Resources (KZN, South Africa)

M2:   *Nase America bebenganawo ama-natural resources.*
        'Even in America they didn't have natural resources.'
M3:   *Bas overpowera la yabo.*
        'They just overpowered us, you see.'
M2:   *Sebashaya nango moba ngalena mfethu.*
        'They even have sugar cane that side now bro.'
M1:   *Yizwa nje.*
        'Just hear that.'
M3:   *Yini leyo!*
        'What is that!'
M2:   *Zincungwe lan'izinto.*
        'They were taken from here these things.'
M3:   *Yazi ukuthi lakulokhuzwa khona mhlampe ku… ku kuu… la kuphuma khon'uRonaldinho?*
        'You know where they have things at like perhaps in.. in… where Ronaldinho came from?'
M1:   *Brazil.*
        'Brazil.'
M3:   *Ko Brazil, khona la kh'pethe khona omobhanana.*
        'In Brazil there's a place where they have lots of bananas.'

M2:   *Obhanana bakhona lapho?*
       'They have bananas there?'
M1:   *La kufresh.*
       'Where they are comfortable.'
M3:   *Gcwelobanana lapho.*
       'They have a lot of bananas there.'
M1:   *Into zakhona ey fresh.*
       'Things there that are fresh.'
M3:   *Yabona noArgentina. Kodwa laph' eAmerica, laphaya kuzomele nje.*
       'You see like Argentina and those places. But in America, it's just dry there.'
M1:   *Ak'kho lutho nje.*
       'There's nothing.'
M3:   *Yin'etholakala laphayana?*
       'What do you get there.'
M2:   *Khephi?*
       'Where?'
M3:   *EAmerica nje mfethu. Inteyiresource yakhona.*
       'In America bro. Like something that is their resource.'
M2:   *Hai kuyabhedh eAmerica.*
       'No it sucks in America.'
M3:   *Neynyoni azikho njee. Yinekhona? Is'lwane? Khona kodw'obhubesi bafethu eAmerica? Khona bafethu iy'lwane?*
       'They don't even have birds. What is there? Animals? Do they even have like lions there guys? Do they have animals?'
M1:   *Hai zizwakele for sure zizwakele.*
       'No there are I'm sure there are.'
M3:   *Akuy'faneli ilwane laphayana.*
       'It doesn't look suited for animals there.'

The discussion develops around the topic of natural resources. The speakers accuse other countries, such as America (referring to the USA), of taking African natural resources, and suggest that the USA does not have resources of its own. Their knowledge of the world is framed by local resources such as sugar cane and bananas, which are seen as having been transplanted from Africa to the Americas (sugarcane and bananas are both grown in KZN, although they are native to southeast Asia). Their knowledge of Brazil is framed by a popular Brazilian soccer player, Ronaldinho. Meanwhile, America is seen as dry and barren of resources, not even having animals. They mention lions specifically, an animal historically present in the KZN region, although today confined to wildlife reserves.

We see in these interactions how the global discursively becomes part of everyday conversations through partial knowledges of other places, perhaps gathered through film, television, and the internet. The global, including pop culture and consumer brands, is discursively constituted and simultaneously frames and is framed by local experiences and knowledge.

Meanwhile, Example 3 provides evidence from a WhatsApp group to highlight the affordance of global digital spaces for youth, and the ways in which African youth are 'networked' and able to participate in the global economy through online platforms and digital access.

Example 3: Capital Accumulation (Kenya)

> Mahendeko yakutumia simu kuhenda bye benki yahenda rahisi sana. Ami natumia Facebook kubula ne bank yangu. Hata Safaricom unaipata naino. Eevisanga vyangu naviguza phanopha. Sijo lachwebatini.

> 'Online banking by use of (cell) phones has become very easy. I use Facebook to talk to my bank. Even Safaricom can be reached through this [Facebook or cell phone]. I sell my products here [online]. Don't be left out.'

The WhatsApp group is called *RealPokomo* which encourages its members to preserve their mother tongue by using it in online spaces to communicate their development agenda to their politically elected leaders. (Pokomo is a Kenyan Bantu language in group E71, according to Guthrie's classification (1967–71).) In this particular post, however, the discourse is emphasising to its youthful membership the value of modern technology (cell phones, Facebook, online banking and marketing) for entrepreneurs. The messenger is encouraging other youth to take advantage of the changing trends in business by tapping into the virtual marketplace in order to reap maximum benefits. In this view, technological media are seen as a way of earning revenue, and also a means of being locally and globally connected or 'networked' through virtual means. Global platforms such as Facebook are therefore promoted in discourse and seen to have a positive impact on youth identities and their ability to accumulate capital.

The examples in this section have shown how the global becomes part of youth discourse in peer group talk and digital discussions. The global informs youths' conceptualisations of local style and popular culture, local and national socio-economic standing, economic participation, and local technological practices.

The Relative Influence of Global and Local on Lexicon

Global culture has of course historically influenced youth language. For example, through analysis of the lexicon of South African Tsotsitaal over time, we can see how global terms enter the lexicon. Tsotsitaal lexical items such as *Clark Gable* meaning 'aggression, virility and sex appeal', or *Humphrey Bogarde* meaning 'situations in which young men displayed physical violence and aggression' (Molamu 2003) relate to figures from global rather than local popular culture and were popular in previous peer group generations (stemming from the 1940s and 1950s when Tsotsitaal first emerged in the townships surrounding Johannesburg). There was a strong influence from American movies in the development of Tsotsitaal (Hurst 2009). This kind of influence is also seen in the case of Indoubill, a youth language in the DRC, and a forerunner of Lingala ba Bayankee (Nassenstein forthcoming). Nassenstein (from Gondola 2009) outlines how the youth that spawned Indoubill, the *Bills* (possibly related to Buffalo Bill) were described as 'tropical cowboys' and reappropriated the aesthetic from images in wild west movies of the time. The subsequent term Lingala ya Bayankee is also drawn from American popular culture, meaning 'the Yankees' Lingala' (Nassenstein forthcoming). International brands have also played a role in AYL lexicons, for example *Dobbs* was an old Tsotsitaal lexical item meaning head or brain and was derived from a hat brand. Generationally-linked terms may fall out of use, no longer being relevant for contemporary youth, or they may become conventionalised and enter the urban vernacular. Meanwhile, new terms are innovated relating to contemporary aspects of popular culture, such as the more recent South African slang terms *iPod* – 'a slender girl' and *Johnnie Walker* – 'someone who doesn't have a car' (Hurst-Harosh and Kanana Erastus 2020).

US culture is the most dominant pop cultural export into Kenya. A striking feature is its effect on Kenyan social media urban language practices. Words like *yolo* (acronym for 'you only live once'), *krump* (a kind of street dance characterised by high-energy body movement), *bootylicious* (description of a woman with huge buttocks), *diss* (make fun of someone, usually to belittle them), *twerk* (the vigorous hip movements and squatting stances seen in modern music videos), *bling* (jewellery, e.g., silver or gold chains and earrings worn to attract attention – a culture started by male international pop music celebrities to signify wealth and attractiveness), *bad an bougie* (a show of means and extravagance and usually used to refer to a woman with expensive taste or a man who spends time and money on classy women), *sophistirachet* (a sophisticated and well-educated person mostly eloquent in speech and conversant with modern trends in fashion, music, and slang;

stylish but also shows some ghetto and streetwise mannerisms – originally heard in international music videos) have found their way to Kenyan urban youth lingo via cable television and other digital media. Other semiotic practices are influenced by African American reality stars like Tamar Braxton (Braxton Values), and Tammy Roman (Bonnet Chronicles on YouTube) who have invented their own vocabulary and conversational mannerisms that are characterised by loud mouth smacking, finger snapping and 'stare downs'. Use of expressions like *you are on fleek* in Kenyan urban lingo (originally from US videos) means 'you look good, you are beautiful or well dressed'. Here, we see an intersection of cultures in the vocabulary through the incorporation of global (pop) culture in African youth language practices.

Elsewhere, Boutin and Dodo (2018:63) present the term *liverpool* from Nouchi, which refers to a 1,000 West African CFA franc banknote. The banknote is red, and the allusion is to the red colour of the jersey of the Liverpool Premier League Football team in the UK (see also Waliaula 2018 on European football fandom in Kenya). They also mention the term *gunter* meaning 'wealthy', drawn from the name of the wealthy German art collector Gunter Sachs (Boutin and Dodo 2018:64). Oloruntoba-Oju describes hybridity, glocality and the incorporation of Americanisms, transnationality and continental references in Nigerian hip hop music, and argues that youth language in Nigeria is a hybrid form and 'reflects both local and global (transnational and transcultural) coding' (Oloruntoba-Oju 2018:198).

An alternative description comes from Williams (2017) who describes the ways that youth in Cape Town's hip hop culture 'remix multilingualism' as they combine cultural practices and symbols in new ways, including drawing on local and global language resources. His notion of remixing multilingualism perhaps provides us with an alternative to 'hybridity', which is sometimes critiqued for its assumption of the prior existence of whole cultures, as well as its historical connections to racial theory.

Despite such descriptions, global influences on youth languages nevertheless remain slight – lexical coinages are often very locally contextualised (Hurst 2009). As Oloruntoba-Oju (2018:198) argues, AYL 'expresses a linguistic and rhetorical dominance in favour of indigenous codes'. A number of youth language terms (metaphors) with local derivations from South Africa, Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire are presented in Table 1. See also Hurst-Harosh and Kanana Erastus (2020) for further examples of metaphors as mini-narratives, where we can see a case for how local events have the largest impact on youth language terminology development.

Table 1: Youth language terms from South Africa, Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire derived from local events or figures

Term	Country	Meaning	Derivation
Kelly Khumalo	South Africa	Claiming to be a virgin when you are not one	Kelly Khumalo is an award-winning kwaito star who became famous during the mid-2000s, but who was in the news towards the end of the decade primarily for stories relating to her personal life, including relationships and addiction.
Khanyi Mbau	South Africa	Gold digger	Khanyi Mbau is a South African actress who dated a much older and wealthy businessman.
Niko maji	Kenya	I am wet, (drunk)	Popularised by a rapper in his song KERORO (sour).
Ulijifanya mamba	Kenya	Pretending to be a crocodile	From a rap song. The singer is deriding a woman he is leaving; she pretends to be too tough to be hurt.
M-pigs/ MaMpigs	Kenya	The corrupt Kenyan government	Kenyan activists once painted pigs red and let them loose in the parliament buildings in a symbolic protest. Pigs are thought of as dirty and they were used in the protest to metaphorically refer to the greed and corruption of Kenyan politicians. Other terms for the corrupt government include: *System ya majambazi* (a system of thieves), and the Mafia.
Gbagbo/ Gbagboter	Côte d'Ivoire	'small towel'/ 'walk lengthily'	Laurent Koudou Gbagbo, former Côte d'Ivoire head of state, used to hang a towel around his neck when he was part of the opposition and leading peaceful protest marches (Boutin and Dodo 2018: 63).
Kouamé Adigri	Côte d'Ivoire	'articulated bus'	Named after the Ivoirian accordian player Kouamé Adigri – as the articulated joint of the bus looks like an accordion (Boutin & Dodo 2018: 64).

Hybridity in Youth Linguistic Practices

While a popular term from a current international song or a popular global meme may have an impact, these things are often re-interpreted locally, and a brand may develop its own hybridised meaning in a local context. In South Africa, brands like Converse All Stars sneakers have come to represent township style; while the BMW325iS car is a symbol of township life as young people engage in competitions involving controlled skids in these cars in local informal events. Other terms for this car are *gusheshe* 'panty dropper' (relating to their supposed effect on women) and *Themba la magomusha* 'hope of the township' (relating to their speed) (see Kouassi and Hurst-Harosh 2018).

Another example is Carvela, an Italian shoe that has become central to a number of evolving styles in South Africa from as early as the 1940s. The following post from a Facebook group Ikasi Ringas-School of Tsotsi Taal describes the shoe and asks for comments from other group members regarding what they call it in their local neighbourhood:

Example 4: Carvela Shoes

> **Ikasi Ringas-School of Tsotsi Taal:** *Sho bafwethu! This is a shoe made famous by ama grootman nabo my sister ema kasi la emzansi, way before ama 'Skhothane' nama 'Pex-ara', the name of the shoe is 'Carvela' but tina ema kasi have given this legendary shoe all sorts of names eg. Sporo. What do other kasi's call it?*

> 'Hi friends! This is a shoe made famous by our elders my sister in South African townships, way before the 'Skhothane' or 'Pex-ara' [two subcultural groupings that wear these shoes], the name of the shoe is 'Carvela' but people in the townships have given this legendary shoe all sorts of names eg. *Sporo*. What do other townships call it?'

Responses include derivations of the name such as *caracara*, *cavava*, *caravela* or *vela*, *iskaranova*, *capital C*, *CV*, *kit kat*, *ikati* or *icat*. It is also known as *two-five*, *2-step*, *3-step*, or *4-step*, *nkomo* 'cow' or *nkomo nkomo*, *sporo* (unknown), *ikhokho* 'football shoe', *tweba* 'mouse' or *topo* 'hills'.

Within digital interaction spaces such as Examples 4 and 5, the reappropriation of cultural artefacts leads to hybrid African modernities or identities that cannot be claimed as fully local or fully global. In Example 5, the local context in Kenya is intersected by global brands (iPhone), language (such as the English borrowing 'takes photo eating…with an iPhone no captions'), cultural artefacts (pizza) and the social media platform itself. And yet this event is contextualised to the local in that the image posted with the caption becomes representative of a local event, includes Swahili and is hashtagged #TeamDarkSkin as well as the global #WCW (Women Crush Wednesday).

In this post, the writer of the text is responding to local events and while borrowing from multiculturalism and global fabric shows how youth culture in Kenya is enriched by global symbols and figures.

Example 5: iPhone No Captions

> *Sti [sic] takes photo eating Githeri with an Iphone no captions yaani hatusumbui alafu mbuzi ingine inapelekwa galitos siku moja [h]ata labda mlienda kujua bei ya pizza ama una order pizza yeyote juu haujui majina umetusumbua [h]uku hata hatuwezi pumua =Team DarkSkin =WCW*

> 'STL [a Kenyan-Norwegian celebrity] takes a photo eating *Githeri* [a local dish made of boiled maize and beans] with an iPhone no captions that is [to say] she does not bother [disturb] us, then another goat [person] is taken to Galitos [a South African franchise] one day, even though perhaps you went to find out the cost of pizza or you order any pizza because you do not know the names, you have disturbed us here until we cannot breathe [we cannot get a break from the many posts on social media] =TeamDark Skin =WCW'

The text in Example 5 demonstrates a current trend among youth where every activity is documented on social media through posting photos and status updates. It contrasts what it frames as the simplicity of a global icon (the iPhone) and a local celebrity (STL) with the affected appropriation of affluence by the urban youth. Note the use of the word *mbuzi* 'goat' and the expression *hata hatuwezi pumua* 'we cannot breathe' [we cannot get a break from the many posts on social media] which are used metaphorically and represent mini-narratives that describe how the urban youth attempt to appropriate a certain lifestyle.

Hatuwezi pumua and *mbuzi* are used to describe people who show off on social media for everything new and fancy that they buy, whether it is a car, designer shoes, sunglasses etc. They are described as goats here, perhaps ironically – goats are usually considered witty, curious and independent, as opposed to sheep which tend to be considered aloof and foolish. Yet here the person is mocked for bragging and viewed as foolish because she is affecting affluence through visiting a South African franchise.

What we mean by mini-narratives is that these metaphorical expressions are not just expressive words – there are mini-stories behind these expressions which can only be understood in the local context. The global terms, brands and artefacts such as iPhone, pizza, Galitos, and the social media platform jargon such as #hashtags do not replace the local and contextualised terms such as *mbuzi*, *githeri*, etc., but complement and reinforce the message being communicated. In fact, this hybridity and appropriation leads to linguistic enrichment.

Hurst-Harosh and Kanana Erastus (2018:2) submit:

> The domains of popular culture (music, movies, performance), consumerism (advertising, style and fashions) and social media are currently interacting and cross-influencing in extremely interesting ways in the African context, not least in terms of language.

It therefore is not simply that cultural diversity is being undermined in the sense of 'Americanisation'. Rather, (urban) cultures are being reconfigured, bricolaged, and hybridised in a two-way process as youth draw on all their resources, and as global and local brands seek to attract this demographic.

We must still acknowledge that physical and often social mobility remain curtailed by the economic disempowerment of African youth. However, technology can enable some level of mobility as local youth engage with their peers and gain access to global networks through mobile technologies. This permits an increased dialogue between Africa and elsewhere, although inequalities remain in terms of who can speak and who is heard. Yet African youth are part of the conversation as never before, and certainly bring what they connect with in the wider world into their own local contexts.

Conclusion

This article has surfaced the ways in which the global intersects with the local and is recontextualised for local contexts. While global brands impact on youth language and practices, they are interpreted and applied locally; youth culture in Africa is enriched by global symbols, cultural artefacts and figures, rather than impoverished by them; the global does not displace the local but rather complements it.

In youth practices there is an evident desire for international brands, music etc., as a symbol of cosmopolitanism or a demonstration of being up to date with the latest trends. Yet youth language is often actually very locally contextualised in its lexicon and practices. There is therefore a productive impact from international popular culture as youth adopt new terms and practices, but then innovate and contextualise them locally, both discursively and lexically in generationally relevant slang lexicon.

As a result of growth in communication technology in Africa, globalisation has aided and has had an impact on the use of youth languages. The youth in Africa, who are the main consumers of technology and technologically aided modes of communication, are active innovators in globalised linguistic space, both online and within local peer groups, commonly drawing from the wider linguistic repertoires available through globalised channels. They use language dynamically and build and develop vocabulary and styles through a complex blend of local and popular global culture and trends. Accordingly, the urban

youth in Africa are sophisticated participants; not victims of global change, but agents of globalisation. African youth continue to be active contributors to linguistic change, both locally and globally.

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Marginal Youths or Outlaws?
Youth Street Gangs, Globalisation, and Violence in Contemporary Sierra Leone

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Abstract

Sierra Leoneans were shocked when video clips of the Central Correctional Centre gallows began circulating on social media after the Minister of Internal Affairs instructed the prison authorities to get ready to take life. The Minister's pronouncement came hot on the heels of a series of alleged gang-related murders that rocked Freetown in 2016. What are the complex linkages between street violence and youth marginalisation? How might violence among marginal youth relate to unplanned urbanisation, the retreat of the state, the neoliberal paradigm, and the wider political economy – all trappings of an exclusionary globalisation process that continues to exclude those at the periphery? This article describes the appropriation by marginal actors of global cultural influences and their transcription into deadly weapons of the weak in furtherance of a survivalist objective anchored in citizenship. The research is based on fieldwork conducted in five cities in Sierra Leone – group discussions and in-depth interviews with over 300 participants, all identifying themselves as gangsters belonging to one of the three dominant team/ set federations: *Crip, Blood, and Black (Black Hood or Black Game)*. Problematising their quotidian existence in contemporary Africa raises fundamental questions about globalisation and citizenship in the making of subaltern subjectivities.

Keywords: Gangs, Sierra Leone, subaltern subjectivities, neoliberalism, globalisation, citizenship

Résumé

Les Sierra-Léonais ont été choqués lorsque des clips vidéos de la prison du Centre correctionnel central ont commencé à circuler sur les réseaux sociaux, à la suite de l'ordre donné par le ministre de l'Intérieur aux autorités

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pénitentiaires de se préparer à prendre des vies. La déclaration du Ministre fait suite à une série de meurtres présumés liés à des gangs qui ont secoué Freetown en 2016. Quels sont les liens complexes entre violence dans la rue et marginalisation des jeunes ? La violence chez les jeunes marginalisés pourrait-elle être liée à l'urbanisation sauvage, à la démission de l'État, au paradigme néolibéral et à l'économie politique en général, autant de pièges dans un processus de mondialisation de l'exclusion qui continue d'évincer ceux qui se trouvent à la périphérie ? Cet article décrit l'appropriation par des acteurs marginaux des influences culturelles mondiales et leur transcription en armes mortelles des faibles dans la poursuite d'un objectif survivaliste ancré dans la citoyenneté. Il est basé sur une recherche de terrain mené dans cinq villes au Sierra Leone (discussions de groupe et entretiens approfondis avec plus de 300 participants, tous s'identifiant comme des gangsters appartenant à l'une des trois fédérations d'équipes/ensembles : *Crip, Blood et Black (Black Hood ou Black Game)*. La problématisation de leur existence quotidienne en Afrique contemporaine soulève des questions fondamentales sur la mondialisation et la citoyenneté dans la fabrication de subjectivités subalternes.

Mots-clés : gangs, Sierra Leone, subjectivités subalternes, néolibéralisme, mondialisation, citoyenneté

Introduction

Sierra Leoneans were shocked and completely dumbfounded when a video clip of the Central Correctional Centre gallows began circulating on social media after the Minister of Internal Affairs instructed the prison authorities to get ready to take life.[1] The Minister's pronouncement came hot on the heels of a series of alleged gang-related murders that rocked the city of Freetown during a five-month period in 2016. 'An average of twenty-five murders is recorded in Sierra Leone every month' – was how the Attorney General and Minister of Justice (mis)informed the nation.[2] 'We will kill when the state demands it,' the Minister of Internal Affairs was quoted as saying.[3] 'Cleaning (the gallows) to kill' after more than two decades, amidst much publicity by a government claiming to have implemented a moratorium on the death penalty, got tongues wagging. Why would a spate of youth-related violence prompt state officials to return to a past nobody wants to remember? What does this tell us about marginal youth, justice, and human rights? What might the complex linkages be between street violence and youth marginalisation? And how does violence among marginal youth relate to unplanned urbanisation, the retreat of the state, the neoliberal paradigm, and the wider political economy – all trappings of an exclusionary globalisation that continues to exclude those at the proverbial periphery?

This article describes the appropriation of global cultural flows by marginal youths and their transcription into deadly weapons of the weak in furtherance of a survivalist objective anchored in citizenship. It is based on focus group discussions and in-depth interviews conducted with over 300 gangsters/ clique boys between May and December 2017 in five urban areas including the capital city of Freetown. All the participants identified themselves as gangsters belonging to one of the three dominant 'team' or 'set' federations – Crip, Blood and Black (Black Hood or Black Game) – who now claim to 'govern' specific locations in these areas.[4] Problematising their quotidian existence in contemporary Africa raises fundamental questions about citizenship and globalisation in the making of subaltern subjectivities.

Marginality, Globalisation and Violence

Marginality, globalisation and violence are connected in complex and contradictory ways. Globalisation, a process that excludes as much as it includes, plays out differently in the post-colony as neoliberal packages dished out by the International Monetary Fund/ World Bank in the form of structural adjustment policies and concessionary loans/ grants. The dismantling of state structures in the name of efficiency, cost-effectiveness and productivity, coupled with the enthronement of the market principle as the defining marker of the economy, have ushered in an era of uncertainty about the collective futures of social groups that were dependent on state subsidies and employment. The cutbacks in state expenditure and privatisation – the keynotes of the neoliberal project – had a particularly harsh impact on vulnerable groups in society. In Sierra Leone, these policies were undertaken as part of the post-conflict reconstruction programme. The result was the restoration of a semi-functional state dependent on donor funding and receipts from mining without employment for the increasing population of youths now bunched together in crowded urban areas. The lack of jobs for the youth is a defining feature of post-conflict reconstruction. This externally induced condition was exacerbated by unbridled corruption among state officials at all levels – a debilitating ritual that is clearly visible in every African country.

This article defines marginality as an imagined state of being; a product of structural violence inherent in concrete social relations that are constantly in flux. The marginalised, in this case disadvantaged youths, hold state officials accountable for their collective failure to provide the necessary wherewithal for their daily reproduction. Their painful narrative is replete with trenchant critique of the state in all spheres of life: from education to health to housing and the provision of employment for their daily reproduction.[5] Education

and employment – the two Es – are the key areas that have attracted their individual and collective anger against successive regimes. Education empowers and employment puts food on the table and accords the respect that guarantees independence and an escape from waithood – a prolonged period of unemployment (Honwana 2012). In a post-war context where the state is incapable of functioning as a state, this can neither satisfy the burgeoning demand for quality education nor guarantee the availability of a decent paying job for young citizens (Venkatesh and Kassimir 2007).

Having been denied education and employment opportunities, marginal youth seem to have no alternative but to withdraw from the state and seek self-made pathways to meaningful livelihood. It is in seeking that alternative self-made pathway and a meaningful livelihood that marginal youth stray away from acceptable norms, straddling the thin divide between legality and illegality – a divide that defines them as outlaws. Yet such tags amplified by sensationalised press reporting on youth street gang fails to take into account the conditions under which marginal youths must labour to make a daily living (Honwana 2012).

Occasionally branded as juveniles, marginal youths and street gangs have been part of the Freetown landscape since the turn of the twentieth century. A sustained conversation to make sense of their arrival as a 'dangerous' social category appeared in a series of articles published in the local newspapers from the second decade of the twentieth century right up to the Second World War.

Under the heading 'Gang of Young Hooligans – A Grave Peril', contributors to the popular *Sierra Leone Weekly News* of 10 March 1917 debated the proliferation of juvenile and youth gangs which had literally taken over the area in the city around Susan's Bay and whose members were active as pimps, pickpockets and tricksters. One of these gangs was identified as Foot-A-Backers, a branch of *A-Burn-Am*, whose leader was a certain Generalissimo Yonkon. The increase in property crime during this period was attributed to those who had allegedly 'come to town' as a consequence of the war (*Sierra Leone Weekly News*, 22 September 1945). The tone in which the article described the 'crime wave' had all the hallmarks of a Victorian mindset alerting the nation to consequences of a dangerous class invading the abode of the civilised.

Youth marginality and gangsters were therefore not new phenomena in Freetown – their history dates back to the early twentieth century (Abdullah 2005). They were loosely organised and could be found in peri-urban areas far away from the prying eyes of officialdom. But these original groups of '*rarray* boys' were dying out in the 1980s; they were quietly displaced during

the decades preceding the 1991–2002 war. By the end of the war and the beginning of the twenty-first century, gangsters had replaced *rarray* boys as the dominant marginal group.

Overwhelmingly concentrated in the informal sector/ underground economy, these young men who now identify themselves as gangsters (they are referred to as 'clique boys' in official discourse) survive by their wits: as dope pushers, pick pockets, petty thieves, commercial bike riders, hairdressers, tricksters, manicurists, and occasional musclemen. Put differently, they hustle, like the *rarray* boys before them, to make ends meet. And such hustling, or 'survival' tactics, to use a tired formulation, are unarguably anti-social and unacceptable because they infringe on the rights of others. The link between marginality and criminality constitutes the stuff of street knowledge/ sociology – a defining characteristic of street gang culture. As our informants continually reminded us in the field, the street is their home; their home is the street. The researcher's responsibility then, is to quietly listen to their individual and collective voices and reflect deeply on what they mean when they proclaim as of 'right' that they 'govern' particular 'hoods (local geographical communities) in the nation's sprawling urban spaces.

Their claim to 'govern' presses home a language of rights, from the bottom up, implying a new kind of (dis)order and a newfound power that is in itself a clue to their collective consciousness as a group with defined interests laying claim to particular space/ territory they call their 'own'. This space, which I refer to as gangdom, is arguably under their control – it is simply their own! And it is in privileging this projected group interest as against that of others – an us versus them divide – that puts gangsters in the realm of a rebellious group, outlaws on the fringe of mainstream society. This rebellious consciousness challenges established norms and practices by affirming their own alternative bottom-up norm in the name of the game – a coded word for hustling and illegally getting by.

Kicking the Game: From Social Clubs to Cliques/ Gangs

What do young people, mostly men, do after school or work in their respective 'hoods? They hang out on streets, street corners and intersections to shoot the breeze. They talk about everything: from football to politics, from fashion to women, and all the everyday happenings in their 'hood. The use of public space – the street – as a meeting place for the young is central to understanding the evolution of social clubs and cliques in the late 1990s and early 2000s when these emerged as the key expression of recreation and leisure for young boys/ men and some girls.[6]

The collapse of the big cinema houses in the late 1970s and the demise of weekend discos in the city and schools in the 1980s turned attention to soccer as the pre-eminent form of leisure. In the late 1980s and 1990s, a proliferation of social clubs and cliques emerged in the context of structural adjustment and a major economic meltdown in the years preceding the civil war.

Young men and women wanting to have fun organised 'hood-based social clubs and cliques, and rented public spaces to do what they called 'shows'. These shows were a throwback to the discotheque culture dominant in the 1970s and early 1980s, but without live bands. Social clubs were in fierce competition to organise the best shows. Fierce rivalries occasionally led to shows being disrupted or cancelled.

Before long, every 'hood had its social club, and later clique, that organised periodic shows and dancing competitions, especially on weekends and public holidays. The movement of young men and women across the country led to these shows and dancing competitions quickly emerging in urban areas outside Freetown, the nerve centre of youth culture, particularly in Bo, Kenema, Makeni, and Koidu. Freetown culture was being reproduced and repackaged by youngsters who straddle the city and the hinterland, turning youth culture shows and dancing competitions into a national pastime and a central pillar in the evolution of youth culture. Some local inflections of what was originally Freetown culture appeared outside the capital, reflecting the communities within which they evolved.

Social clubs and cliques were friendly environments crafted by the young to simply 'chill' and 'enjoy'. A small group of five or eight individuals might decide to form a club after a long talk at their street corner, and then elect/ select officers to serve as executive members. They could also emerge from friendships formed in high school. The first agenda item would be to organise a show for an approaching public holiday at a public space they could afford to hire. When it was successful, such a show brought in money to be shared among members. Members used their share of the proceeds to purchase trendy and expensive sneakers, together with matching fashionable jeans and polo shirts to announce themselves as the guys to watch and look out for in the 'hood. Fashion and 'swag' were integral aspect of this new youth culture (fieldwork notes, May to December 2017).

Being fashionable and having 'swag' makes an individual popular among his cohort; girls get attracted to such individual; and fame (but not fortune) comes with a trendy outfit. This aspect of the new culture attracted youth from all socio-economic groups. Because social clubs were 'hood-specific or associated with particular high schools, these clubs/ cliques tended to cut across the class divide – drawing in youth both from the urban poor and

from the middle and upper middle classes. What brought them together in school and the 'hood was, first of all, street-corner bonding; camaraderie and friendship; fun and play. This bonding transcended class, ethnicity, and religion. Strictly speaking, this was friendship, and friendship alone.

But this invented masculine space, occupied and dominated by young men and boys, quickly began to morph into something different when youth became exposed to American music videos and gang culture – the cultural flows made possible by rampant and uncensored globalisation. All the research study informants were quick to single out the influence of global cultural flows in the form of electronic images of what young people did elsewhere (fieldwork notes, May to December 2017). This not-so-subtle evolution could be inferred from the names of social clubs and cliques that were popular during this era of shows. Some of these cliques still continue to use the names they had adopted when all they did was just music, rap, and dancing competitions. Others were completely transformed to reflect the new influences on popular youth culture.

Club names like Noble Squad, Comis Clique, Jambo Graduation, Amonic Billionaires, Scorpio Crew, Cash Mill, Self Made, and Friends and Fun Social Club do not really tell us what social clubs did, or were capable of doing. At one remove they appear innocent and faraway from any form of 'criminality' or social transgression. These names give away nothing about their clandestine or potentially 'criminal' activities. Yet the widespread use of the words 'crew' and 'squad' does suggest influence from the global 'gangsta' culture that was beginning to invade the local world of social club and cliques. Rap Homies, a neighbourhood rap group, existed side-by-side with May Park Gang, a school-based rap group. Both participated in the evolving hip-hop rap contest in Freetown that was the in-thing for youth at the time. These seemingly innocent nomenclatures soon gave way to new and fearsome invented names symbolising the valorisation of violence and the dawn of USA-style gangster culture.

Silver Bullet, Gun Clique, Terror Squad, Gun Killers, Crack Squad, Hard Row Squad, and Republic of Gangsta (ROG) entered the world of Sierra Leone youth culture as names for sets/ teams of youth in specific neighbourhoods and high schools. The change in nomenclature underlined a change in the modus operandi of youth social clubs. Initiation now became a singular feature of clubs in transition to gangs, and graphic tattoos, together with the adoption by members of fearsome monikers, became the norm –it was just the hip thing to do. Ice, Capone, Tupac, TI, Movado, Gaza, Wanted, Kill or be Killed are some examples of the monikers appropriated by the new 'governors' in town. These changes arguably came

with the proliferation of drug use, not marijuana, previously the drug of choice, but hard drugs like cocaine, and assorted alcoholic beverages. Drugs and alcohol came to feature prominently in initiation rituals marking the rite of passage into gangdom (fieldwork notes, May to December 2017).

It would be completely misleading to assume that social clubs and cliques did not engage in violence. The intense competition that came to characterise these shows – hip-hop rap contests, miming and dancing competitions – did lead to some inter-club/ clique violence. But this violence was localised, and situation-specific, mostly fist-fights among youth who knew each other. They would later degenerate into the use of weapons (knives and bottles) as the rivalry and competition extended to women, fashion, and turf wars in pursuit of superiority and claims over territory. That change came with the 'flagging' of the game; that is, the use of bandanas – first blue, then red, and eventually black. This 'ragging' of the game, to use a formulation out of Los Angeles, symbolised the arrival of 'made in USA' gangster culture.

These are the ways that 'hood and school-based social clubs and cliques constructed across religious, ethnic and class divide gradually morphed into territorially based youth gangs, each 'repping' (representing) a particular USA gangster-style colour. This transformation into territoriality marked another unreferenced but fundamental change – the majority of those who now call themselves gangsters came from the lower classes and the urban poor. Why would a movement that originally cut across class lines come to assume a clear-cut class character with membership predominantly from the lower classes and the urban poor?

There is no universally accepted definition of gangs/ youth street gangs in the extant literature on the subject. The definition proffered by the pioneering Chicago School revolves around adaptation to immigration/ urbanisation in an industrial setting. Gangsters are certainly a product of modern cities, but they are not what the Chicago School claimed they were: transitory interstitial adolescent peer groups rebelling against weak institutions (Hagedorn 2007; 2008). Frederick Thrasher's classical definition – an 'interstitial group originally formed spontaneously, and then integrated through conflict' (Thrasher 1927:57) speaks to the reality of contemporary Sierra Leone. Gangs are:

> characterized by the following types of behavior: meeting face to face, milling, movement through space as a unit, conflict, and planning. The result of this collective behavior is the development of tradition, unreflective internal structure, espirit de corps, solidarity, morale, group awareness, and attachment to a local territory" (Thrasher 1927:57).

Contemporary gangsters are overwhelmingly young men between the ages of 16 and 30 who have mostly transitioned from being members of social

clubs/ cliques. This two-stage process of transition into a gangster seems to be at an end now. The social clubs of yore do not exist anymore or are dying; they are also no longer popular as an organising mechanism in high school or in the 'hood.

Teenagers and pre-teens now get recruited straight into gangster teams where they graduate into full-fledged gangsters. The fieldwork informants revealed that most gangs have team sets for young boys in schools who may later graduate or be promoted into the real team based on their 'performance'. These youngsters are allegedly attracted to the game because it is the only game in town. Even so, these gangs still carry with them some aspects of social club/ clique culture: they continue to organise carnivals, shows, and block parties, and invite other gangsters not repping their colours to attend.

'Repping' the Game: Gangster Culture, Territoriality and Violence

The now dominant visible gang colours – blue (signifying the Crips), red (Bloods), and black (Black Hood/ Black Game) – hitherto innocent colours a young individual might choose to wear – are not so innocent after the arrival of youth gangs and gangsterism in contemporary Sierra Leone. When black sneakers, a red t-shirt, or even a pair of black jeans become a signifier, a badge of belonging to a group that is emblematic of group identity, boundaries inevitably emerge as warning signs that one should tread carefully and avoid particular 'hoods.

The gangs which claim to 'govern' the city through their individual and collective actions have left some residents feeling helpless against the imposition of gang rules and norms. The major cities, particularly Freetown, have been partitioned into blue, red and black 'hoods. These not-so-visible 'governors' can be found in every locality with the most visible physical sign being the wearing of a blue, red or black bandana ('muffler', in local parlance).

Young, unemployed, tattooed, with jeans sagging below the waistline, and not infrequently high on marijuana or hard drugs, topped with assorted cheap local spirit, they patrol their territory/ turf from sunup to sundown in the name of 'governing'. Their style of governance could be read as an importation of American gangster culture – a dubious dividend of globalisation? However, a closer reading reveals a homegrown movement that is frighteningly local as it is global. And gangsters, the central actors in this game, are always quick to remind anyone who cares to listen to them that they are different from the *rarray* boys before them. When pushed to say what those differences are, the response is always the same: 'we are by far smarter and intelligent; and we are conscious of what we are about' (fieldwork notes, May to December 2017).

The 'beefing' culture in gangdom, that is, the space they claim to govern or control, which gets sensationalised in the media to evoke public panic, is mostly inter/intra-gang violence. The knifing of a team member by Blood 'niggers' is sure to call forth 'revenge' from the other team. 'Invading' an enemy territory, dating another gang member's girlfriend; and 'dissing' (disrespecting) a gangster either by 'desecrating' the colour he reps or stepping on his expensive sneakers in a night club, are serious transgressions that could lead to instant knifing followed by subsequent reprisals. Gangster culture is rough and tough. The indiscriminate use of drugs and alcohol; inter/intra-gang violence; the possession of dangerous weapons; and territoriality and imagined boundaries mark the seminal transition from social clubs and school-centred cliques to gangster culture and gangdom proper.

This transition to gangster culture has been accompanied by a silent, and not always so silent, battle for control. In the words of Goldscore, team leader of local team Blue Black Clique (BBC) and an emergent rapper:

> No King-No Kingdom/ No head – No Wisdom/ Prove Yourself/ If you Know you are a big Don/ Call me the Hardest King/ Far from Fake and Fear/ Black and Blue the Team/ Never Second or Third/ Always First Indeed/ Rapping Strikes the Enemy like a Sword/ Show Yourself in the Street/ If you know you're Hard.[7]

This artist and gangster's open challenge to anyone and his claim to superiority captures the beefing culture – a do-or-die contest to assert superiority over others. Dissing and the quest for superiority are the central characteristic of the beefing culture of contemporary gangster culture as a global trope (Hagedorn 2007; 2008; Hazen and Rodgers 2007).

In the 'governance imaginary' of Freetown gangsters, the Crips team, gangsters with the blue bandanas, 'govern' parts of central Freetown and east end, their 'territory' extending from Mountain Cut in the east to some pockets in the west around Wilkinson Road, parts of Lumley, with some visible presence in Aberdeen and the Peninsula area – spaces hitherto considered to be outside their 'jurisdiction'. The Blood team, gangsters with the red bandanas, 'govern' the west coast, defined broadly as the West End of the city with pockets of red in the central area and the east. The Black team, unarguably the largest federation, otherwise known as Black Hood or Black Game (BG), gather in the traditionally rough east end; in gang parlance – they 'govern' the east 'hood from Mount Aureol to Fourah Bay to Waterloo in the far east.[8]

This 'governance imaginary' division of the city from below into three 'hoods evoke the ugly American that is at the heart of gangster culture in contemporary Freetown. The notion of east versus west coast is undoubtedly

a borrowed script from USA-style gangdom (Covey 2015). Similarly, referring to the hills overlooking Freetown and its coastline as Gaza and Gully is appropriated from the Jamaican gangster experience in Kingston.

If gangsters in the UK have repurposed the postal code to hawk their drugs in a divided and violent market, gangsters in Sierra Leone have imaginatively appropriated the numbered electoral constituency delimitations to assert their claim to specific areas. Thus, a particular Crip or Blood team might be designated as Crip 201 or Blood 109 indicating the area it 'governs'. And the boundaries of these two national electoral constituencies will be clearly marked by Crip and Blood graffiti indicating both who the 'governors' are, and to act as a warning sign – 'trespassers will be prosecuted'!

Some local sets and teams within the three main gangs use specific names to reflect their preference or locality, for example, the Foulah Town Crips (FTC); Murray Town Blood (MTB) and Thug Life Hood (THL) – a Black Hood team in Makeni. As former member of the Eight Tray Gangster Crips Sanyika Shakur also known as Monster Kody Scott remarked in his captivating autobiography about his own gangdom experience in Los Angeles, local teams could use individual colours 'outside the universally worn red and blue, to denote their particular chapters' (Shakur 1993:79). As was the case in Los Angeles, the important thing is that local chapters of the blue, red or black armies can be summoned any time to act as part of a single 'military' unit.

The sociological conditions that are conducive to gangsterism in Sierra Leone come from the specific lived experience of participants in response to the social reality; these have not been imported from the USA. Key characteristics of Sierra Leone's gangsters are similar to those of gangsters everywhere: illiterate or semi-literate; dropped out of school; unemployed; from broken homes and poor families; addicted to drugs; and suffering from chronic alcoholism. They drift in and out of prisons/ correctional centres; they are occasionally homeless, they subsist on the margins of society, and they operate with one foot inside the law, and one foot out.

USA-style gangsterism can be found practically everywhere: from Shanghai to New Delhi; from Accra to Cape Town; from Cairo to Lagos. If local sociological conditions produce gangsterism, the local political economy ensures its survival and continued reproduction. That political economy, constantly being shaped and re-shaped by neoliberalism, is at the centre of the evolving gangster culture that is now a dominant sub-culture amongst marginal youths globally (Hagedorn 2008).

Specific expressions of gangsterism may be drawn from the 'hoods in inner city America, but members of gangs are not necessarily Americans. Such gangsters may dream and act American, but they have been born and

raised in their own specific 'hoods. The 'game', that is, what they do and how they do what they do – hustling; drugs; petty theft; acting as hired hands – is all about surviving in the streets, the place they know and claim as home, and the space they claim to 'govern'. The game and governing are inseparable because life in the streets for them is about territoriality and violence.[9] The game of the street (hustling and surviving on the margins) and the governing of space vacated by an errant state is what define gangster existence not only in contemporary Sierra Leone, but elsewhere in the world too (Short and Hughes 2006).

The territorialisation of space and the creation of hoods belonging to different teams is not a Sierra Leonean thing. *Rarray* boys, the original marginal street youths that gangsters have completely displaced, did lay claim to turfs but in a very loose fashion precisely because what held them together was not brotherhood or youthful bonding but their occasional masquerades. Whereas *rarray* boys were concentrated in peri-urban enclaves far away from the prying eyes of the law, gangsters are firmly ensconced in public spaces and the inner city. Every street in contemporary Freetown has a team or set representing one of the three gang federations. Territorialisation in the current phase appears to be an expected development in the institutionalisation of youth gangs; it can be found in every country where gangs have become institutionalised. The blue (Crip) red (Blood), and Black (East Hood) represent the three autonomous federations of gangs that currently 'govern' the cities in which this research was conducted. The rest of this section presents an outline of the history and the forces that have shaped the evolution and continued existence of the Black (East Hood) – the largest and most populous of the three teams.

East Hood came into being in 2008. It was specifically established to foster unity amongst the different cliques and gangs in the evolving gangdom of the East End of Freetown. It is the closest Sierra Leone has to a coalition of gangs and cliques; a federation and regulating body, specifically for those who rep the black bandana (Black Game). The sets/teams involved in the making of Black Hood or Black Game, as they are now nationally known, were Terror Squad, 88 Crackers, and Even Squad Hustlers. This merger gave birth to Kossoh Town (K Town) 104.

They choose black as their colour to distinguish themselves as separate from Blood and Crips who claim to govern the west end, portions of the mountainous east, and central Freetown. East Hood/Black Game claims to govern the east end of Freetown from the historic clock tower to Waterloo in the far east. There are also pockets of East Hood/Black Game in the west end; they are by far the biggest team in the five urban areas where

this research was conducted. One gangster reported how he dropped out of school because he foolishly spent his school fees to fund his 'chilling' propensity (fieldwork, May to December 2017).

All the Black Hood gangsters interviewed gave protection and brotherhood as the principal reasons why they were 'kicking' the game the East Hood way. They singled out the black flag; the quest for superiority, women, and territorial dominance as the drivers of the now deadly inter/intra-gang brawls. East Hood gangsters were confident enough to proclaim that they no longer recruit members; prospective members stream in precisely because kicking the game the Black Hood way is the only game in town for young men. They vehemently denied any wrongdoing in their communities but accepted the charge that they normally go west to cause havoc, snatching phones and purses en route to their territory whenever they are out attending any public events. Needless to say, such anti-social acts intensify the beefing culture and amplify the desire for revenge and reprisal from competing gangs.

While gangs are often portrayed by the media as dangerous and violent organisations, Black Hood gangsters were quick to point out that they serve as custodians of peace and act as vigilantes in their communities (fieldwork, May to December 2017). There is an Executive Committee which functions as a cabinet headed by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The other positions are Father; Chair; Adviser; Five Star (5 0); Four Star; and Beef King. Black Hood members claimed to have connections with other gangs and cliques in the hinterland; and a special alliance with the Crip federation.[10] They said they were sworn enemies of the Blood. All officials were prison 'graduates', having served time for offences ranging from possession of hard drugs to robbery with violence, wounding with intent, and even murder. Doing time and having 'heart' were identified as central promotion criteria in gangdom. The majority of these gangsters were unemployed or chronically unemployed with no skills to get them into the formal labour market. Some claimed to be drivers, others claimed to be electricians, but said nobody would contract their services.

In the other areas in which this research was conducted, Black Game gangsters could be found making a living as manicurists and pedicurists; others were roadside hairdressers. They vehemently denied the charge that they had petty thieves or robbers who prey on their community in their midst. Yet they claimed to live by their wits and to prey on peaceful citizens outside their own community. Gangsters label such acts outside their abode as 'disorder'; and they plead guilty to the charge. The establishment of the East Hood federation aimed to foster unity and end the intra-gang/ clique

violence in their 'hood – the in-fighting that took place mostly at nightclubs and soccer pitches had become endemic and intolerable.

They cited instances of the positive role they continued to play in defence of their community by referencing the attack on East Enders in the west end, particularly from the K912 and the Black Street team (West Coast). The establishment of East Hood had allegedly put a stop to such victimisation of East Enders outside their 'hood because they now provide protection in the form of armed escorts to members in their 'hood venturing westwards. Even so, East Hood continued to beef the Blood team, and occasionally the Crip. They were of the view that only employment will end the game. 'You can't be hanging out in the ghetto when you have a job to do', a prominent member of the team casually proclaimed (fieldwork, May to December 2017).

Profiling Gangsters

The profiles of gangsters in contemporary Sierra Leone are similar to the profiles of gangsters in the USA and other western industrialised countries. Most are school dropouts and truants, heavily into hard drugs, marijuana and cheap locally manufactured beverages with high alcohol content. They are able to get high on less than a dollar. A stick of hash sells for SLL5,000 (US$0.50) and a bottle of cheap vodka with 25 per cent alcohol goes for SLL2,000. The money to fund this habit comes from hustling, including working as dope pushers, hired muscle, manicurists/ pedicurists, bike riders, and day labourers. Gangsters share their earnings, however little, with members of their team/set. Their individual and collective existence is truly shaped by the proverbial and biblical 'brother's keeper' philosophy. Brotherhood is what unites the team.

Table 1: Profile of 80 gangsters based on in-depth interviews conducted in 2017[11]

Profile categories	Number	Percentage
Participated in theft	13	16.7
Poor family background/ broken home	30	38.5
Participated in violent criminal act	58	74.3
Used drugs and alcohol	76	97.4
Has been in prison	30	38.5
Dropped out of school	57	73
Born in the 1990s	44	56.4
Born in the 1980s	34	43.6
Completed West African Senior School Certificate Examination	19	24.4
No work experience or skill	34	43.6

An empirical reading of Table 1 might lend itself to a reductionist interpretation about gang participation that highlights the role of deviance and delinquency. Yet these categories, found in gangdom globally, can be read in multiple ways. In fact, they are global indicators referencing the lived reality of gangsters. However, the issue gets complicated as soon as the context within which deviants and delinquents are made/ remade is raised. We obviously need an explanation for the preponderance of gangsterism among those born in the 1990s. They never experienced the brutal civil war and their lifestyle cannot be reduced to post-war trauma. Even so, it might be useful to explore any linkages there might be between the war context within which they were born and their current lifestyle as gangsters.

A contextual reading of the above categories within the framework of political economy tells a different story. The narrative could then be reframed from the deviant/ delinquent prism of blaming the victim to a political economy perspective privileging agency and structure. The economic meltdown in the late 1980s continued throughout the war years, and arguably beyond those years. Even as the broken economy stabilised after the war, the modest growth generated under the post-war regimes did not produce jobs for the teeming youth population. Consequently, the informal economy ballooned, and became the place where marginal and mainstream youth unable to access formal employment became concentrated.

The Ernest Koroma administration's Agenda for Change and Agenda for Prosperity, two successive neoliberal packages anchored on a mining boom it had no control over, turned out to be anything but successful.[12] Whatever gains were made were quickly wiped out by the Ebola epidemic and the drastic fall in prices of iron ore (Abdullah and Rashid 2017). This is the context in which those who got drawn into gangster culture grew up in the period 2001 to 2017, and it is to those conditions that we must turn to make sense of their individual and collective experiences.

They did not choose to become gangsters; the prevailing economic conditions arguably presented gangsterism as a possible alternative to mass unemployment. It is therefore not coincidental that our data reveals that a sizeable number of the study sample came from poor family backgrounds. And even though children from the middle and upper classes were also players in the game of social clubs and cliques, they did not become fully-fledged gangsters. In fact, they opted out of the game! Extreme poverty and the structural violence that accompanies it limits individual choices. Here, structure tends to shape and condition agency in complex ways. Individuals and social groups do make their own history, but they always do so in complex and contradictory ways inherited from a past over which they had no control.

Continuous beefing and eventual death underscore the Moses law in gangster culture, Ice Gbombo, a gangster celebrity revealed in an interview. 'You can injure a gangster today and it will take a year or more for him to "develop" and "build" a team for you', he explained. 'Gangsters don't easily let go and that is why the beefing culture is like a pendulum – moving this way and that way.' He truly believes he is a star but his family, especially his mother, is unhappy with his gangster lifestyle. Conscious of his fame and celebrity status and as a voice of the street, he wanted the government to know that:

> we are the people; and opportunities for development is what we need… if job nor dae violence nor go don [violence will only end when we are gainfully employed]. Ghetto youths have conscious minds but they don't make the moves. The drug and alcohol culture divert them from thinking positively (fieldwork notes, May to November 2017).[13]

By Way of Conclusion: Gangsters and Gangdom in Comparative Perspective

The evolution of gangdom in contemporary Sierra Leone has reached a stage where it has unarguably dwarfed and surpassed the preceding marginal youth culture – *rarray* boy culture. And this has happened within a generation, in post-war Sierra Leone between 2002 and 2017. Indeed, it would not be far off the mark to postulate that the emergence of gangster culture has put paid to whatever was left of the original marginal youth culture, that is to say, *rarray* boy culture.

Unlike *rarray* boy culture that had no central organisation or norms binding members to each other, gangsters are organised with a clear central command and control structure. *Rarray* boy culture was held together not by any sense of brotherhood or oath to defend turf or flag. Rather, it simply hung together because of the commonality of their individual and collective experiences of marginality.[14] Later some form of bonding did emerge within the framework of masquerade societies, but these were hardly durable structures within which a lasting brotherhood could be constructed.

While *rarray* boy culture imitated hunting societies and fashioned their masquerade along modernist lines, gangster culture was constructed to mimic mainstream youth social clubs that existed in the 1960s and 1970s, but to do so in their own image.

While *rarray* boy culture staked a claim to territory and space as a defined marker of their arrival as a distinct group with defined cultural norms, gangster culture turned that space, that territory, into a no-go area controlled by specific sets/ crews/ cliques who owe allegiance only to themselves and their federation.

While *rarray* boys infused the evolving Creole language with idiomatic expressions taken from their culture, gangsters have now appropriated that role by substituting themselves as the current maker of the national lingua franca. Essentially a product of post-war Sierra Leone, it is as if the new 'governors' in the gangdom are saying to the nation '*rarray* boys were here before us but it's now time for them to go!'

This displacement/ replacement of one group of marginal youth by another in the transition to gangsterism is a familiar script in gangdom globally. In Cape Town, South Africa, skollies were displaced by the emergent gangsters in the 1960s. Similarly in Kingston, Jamaica, the rude boys were pushed aside by the rankings and the posse – the enforcers of the People's National Party and the Jamaica Labour Party who became druglords in the deadly marijuana-cocaine trade that was subsequently exported to the USA (Pinnock 1984; Gunst 2003; Jensen 2014).

In Sierra Leone, gangsters hang together because members of sets/ crews/ cliques/ are conceived of as soldiers ('*sojas*') belonging to an army with a specific territory to defend! It is part of gangster argot to hear them say in reference to another '*you nah me soja bo*' you are my soldier! Their dead comrades are referred to as 'fallen heroes'; when a rival gang member is knifed in a gang brawl he is celebrated as having 'fallen'. This military idiom and military gang modes of organisation are now normative and therefore accepted as the rules defining the game. And the oath/ initiation rituals bind every member to the unwritten rules of the game and the dangers of snitching. The act of snitching, real or imagined, is treasonable.

Yet this universal bonding that can be found everywhere amongst gangsters and gangsterism patterned on the USA model has not led to the construction of an alternative imaginary/ discourse independent of elite patronage politics. Perhaps, it is too early for that. Unlike Guinea-Conakry where youth street gangs control and even 'own' the streets in their respective neighbourhoods and every political event and demonstration must have their support for it to be successful, this has not being the case in Sierra Leone (Philipps 2013).

In Sierra Leone, politicians have long perfected the art of mobilising youth gangs as muscle men to intimidate opponents and steal ballot boxes during elections. Consequently, they have not been able to stand outside party politics to defend their own collective marginal group interests qua *rarray* boys or even gangsters. Even when many of them claim to be neutral; or teams refuse to support any given party or politician, individual members take part in political rallies as members of their team/set.

What contemporary gangsters in Sierra Leone have succeeded in doing in less than a generation is to capture large swathes of territory where they sell all kinds of drugs and stolen goods in a not-so clandestine fashion. The demise of the large ghettoes of the 1970s and 1980s – spaces where youth and older men would congregate to smoke marijuana – has opened the drug business to gangsters who have been able to muster the necessary capital to purchase in bulk and do brisk retail trade in the streets. There are thousands of young men who hawk drugs of all kinds in these enclaves and in public spaces in all the major cities.

This research reveals that gangsters make their living hawking drugs in public spaces they control/ 'govern'. This development mirrors the situation in South Central Los Angeles and Chicago. What is palpably missing here is an expanding, profitable and captive market for drugs. The limited market has limited the potential for deadly turf wars and reduced competition for control of markets as is the case in other countries.

If and when it gets to that stage, violence, or which groups can muster the muscle power to exclude others from selling in the territory they claim to 'govern', will be the deciding factor. If enough is at stake, it is likely that firearms will be procured to defend illegal markets, with clandestine godfather figures lurking in the background.

Gangsters in Sierra Leone are not as local as most people would like to imagine; they could also be deadly global in their thinking and experience. The country's gangsters are already beginning to advertise by placing photographs of themselves on websites. As gangs become more institutionalised and determined to defend their turf and livelihoods, they could potentially become a part of trans-national, even continent-wide networks.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. CGTV Africa, 2016, Sierra Leone to re-introduce death penalty due to increased crimes', 18 September.
2. Sierra Leone Telegraph, 2016, 'Death penalty will not reform disenfranchised youths in Sierra Leone', 25 September. Twenty-five murders every month was an exaggeration.
3. CGTV Africa, 2016, 'Sierra Leone to re-introduce death penalty due to increased crimes'.

4. State officials – from law enforcement to politicians – refer to them as cliques or clique boys.

5. This came out clearly in our connversations with youths who identified themselves as gangsters, and in popular lyrics put out by struggling musicians, some of whom are gangsters.

6. The street has always been the abode of marginal youth, but its meaning keeps changing with every social group that enters the historical stage to claim that space as of right. The original marginal youth who occupied that space, the *rarray* boys, are now dying out.

7. These lyrics are unedited and unpublished – from the rapper and BBC team leader Goldscore.

8 See Monster Cody for similar divisions in Los Angeles where the gang name Crip came from.

9. There are at least four poignant poems about the street in a recent collection of poetry by marginal youth in transition (Harding and Chandler 2018).

10. There are some local sets/teams who refer to themselves as Black and Blue; they owe allegiance to both the Crip and Black game.

11. The ethnographic survey on which this article is based was conducted in 2017. Since then more work has been done, and the incidence of theft and number of brushes with the law has increased.

12. There were two poverty reduction papers during President Koroma's tenure – in 2007 and in 2012.

13. David Kolleh Kamara, also known as Ice Gbombo, sadly passed away on November 2019. The funeral procession from Brookfields to the Kingtom Cemetery shut down business on the main road and brought vehicular traffic to a halt. The procession was a who's who of gangsters in Freetown.

14. For a discussion of *rarray* boy culture, see Abdullah 2005.

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The Return of the Gods?
Trends and Implications of the Rising Popularity of Fetish Rituals and Occult Practices Among Nigerian Youth

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Abstract

In his seminal 1993 work *The Embattled Gods: Christianization of Igboland 1841–1991*, Ogbu Kalu argued that the gods of African traditional religion were dislodged from their stronghold but not completely defeated. Could the rising popularity of fetish rituals and occult practices among the Nigerian youth over the last two decades mean the return of these gods? Using historical analytical methodology, this article examines the rising influence of fetish rituals and occult practices among youth in southern Nigeria. It recognises the current attraction of the occult world as a subtle form of youth resistance to financial and social insecurity engendered by the modern state system in Nigeria, as well as youth resistance to the money-making ethos of 'prosperity gospel' evangelism. The article argues that, while the surge in youth engagement in ritual and occult practices may appear to be a form of re-traditionalisation, such cultural revisionism can better be described as an instrument of youth resistance.

Keywords: Nigeria, youth, fetish rituals, occult practices, African traditional religion, missionary Christianity

Résumé

Dans son ouvrage fondateur de 1993, *The Embattled Gods: Christianization of Igboland* 1841–1991, Ogbu Kalu soutenait que les dieux de la religion traditionnelle africaine avaient été déchus de leur piédestal mais pas complètement vaincus. La popularité croissante des rituels fétichistes et des pratiques occultes dans la jeunesse nigériane au cours des deux dernières décennies pourrait-elle signifier le retour de ces dieux ? Par une méthodologie

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analytique historique, cet article examine l'influence croissante des rituels fétichistes et des pratiques occultes chez les jeunes du sud du Nigéria. Elle reconnaît l'actuel attrait du monde occulte comme une forme subtile de résistance des jeunes à l'insécurité financière et sociale engendrée par le système étatique nigérian moderne, et à l'éthique lucrative d'« évangile de la prospérité ». L'article soutient que, si l'engagement croissant des jeunes dans les pratiques rituelles et occultes peut sembler comme une forme de re-traditionalisation, un tel révisionnisme culturel devrait se décrire comme un instrument de résistance des jeunes.

Mots-clés : Nigéria, jeunesse, rituels fétichistes, pratiques occultes, religion traditionnelle africaine, christianisme missionnaire

Introduction

The forces of modernity – industrialisation, capitalism, evangelisation and imperialism – had a deep impact on Africa. As the shores of the continent were inundated with the 'civilising mission' of European agents of modernisation, African socio-cultural norms, values and systems were not seen as constructs and structures that needed to be modified by the new winds of change, but rather as an inferior and valueless heritage that had to be discarded because it held little or no value for its owners or the world at large.

Christian missionary work was a powerful force of change that had a deep impact on African traditional religion. By the second half of the twentieth century, Christianity had penetrated virtually all parts of the continent dislodging, piecemeal, the strongholds of African traditional religion. Indeed, practices associated with traditional forms of worship such as ritual sacrifice, cultism, divination, dedication of oneself to shrines retreated as Christianity swept through the continent with its churches and Western modes and concepts of worship.

The decline of traditional practices was more of a retreat than a permanent disappearance since some adherents of the new Christian religion continued to engage in these practices, albeit in a clandestine way. Christianity had become fashionable and successful, entrenching a culture and structures that openly discouraged traditional beliefs. In more recent times, however, there appears to be a resurgence of traditional religious practices in most parts of Africa.

Over the last two decades, southern Nigerian society has clearly manifested this trend with an increasing number of communities, groups, families, and individuals openly engaging in what were previously referred in the Christian milieu as fetish and occult practices. A particularly interesting

aspect of this development is the popularity of these practices among youth in the region, especially in aberrant forms. What explains this recent trend among the Nigerian youth in the study area? What are its implications for Nigeria and the rest of Africa in this era of globalisation?

This article is based on a study conducted in the three geopolitical zones of southern Nigeria within a qualitative and historical framework and using a data collection method that combined and triangulated three field-based primary sources – in-depth in-person interviews, focus group discussions, print media (newspapers), and secondary source materials.

Ritual and Ritual Practices in Traditional African Religious Cosmology

While African traditional religion is diverse and has no single coherent body of belief or practices, there are several fundamental coherent similarities in the structures of indigenous belief systems which make up what can be called traditional African religious cosmology. As Idowu (1973:13) aptly observed, 'there is a common African-ness about the total culture and religious beliefs and practices of Africa'. One of the common characteristics of African indigenous belief systems is the idea of 'diffused monotheism' in which a supreme god relates to humans through lesser or subordinate deities (Idowu 1973; Mbiti 1975). The colonial anthropologist Talbot (1969) refused to characterise African traditional religion with any single word, noting that Africans combine belief in the existence of an omnipotent and omnipresent supreme god with multitudes of subordinate deities. Earlier European missionaries and anthropologists misconstrued this description of African religion as irrational and incompatible with monotheism. However, as demonstrated in Evans-Pritchard's (1976) study of occult beliefs amongst the Azande, African traditional religious systems are anything but 'irrational'.

In general, African traditional belief systems regard the supreme god as the controller of the universe who is beyond the reach of humans, hence the need for accessible intermediaries that render subsidiary services. Such subordinate spirits maintain the link between god and humans through several means, of which ritual sacrifice is the most prominent. Ritual sacrifice is another phenomenon that is common to indigenous African belief systems. Shujaa (2009) defines ritual as a prescribed procedure or a set pattern for conducting religious action or ceremony. It is a viable means of communication between god and humans. A fundamental element of ritual is sacrifice, which involves giving up something of value in exchange for something of more value (Ayegboyin 2009).

In their study of the biblical concept of sacrifice and the Ghanaian world view, Wafe *et al.* (2016) identify six categories of sacrifice in Ghanaian tradition which are equally common in other traditional African settings – propitiatory, substitutory, mediatory, communion, gift, and atonement. According to these authors, the more severe the offence or graver the situation, the larger the sacrifice must be. It is in this context that human sacrifice stands out as the highest and most costly form of sacrifice in most religions, including African traditional religions.[1]

Ritual sacrifice, including human sacrifice, was part of the African past from before the colonial era. However, such ritual sacrifice was only used to constitute a collective statement of community, continuity and unity through group participation (Shujaa 2009). In other words, in the traditional African setting, human sacrifice was not a general disregard for the sanctity of human life but, rather, based on an understanding that sacrificing the life of one person is acceptable if it is done in exchange for the well-being of the entire community. Pre-colonial and colonial human sacrifices were largely carried out using slaves and victims of war, as depicted in Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*.

Ashanti (2009) has argued that there has never been a general acceptance of human sacrifice in Africa. Human sacrifice was never allowed outside the strict confines of a communally sanctioned ritual. Bell (2002) refers to sacrifice outside a communally accepted ritual as a defile ritual which stands against the sanctity of life and communal values of society, and most often earns the offender banishment from the community. It was against such abuse that some mechanisms were established in pre-colonial societies in Africa such as the anti-witchcraft masquerade cult among the Igbos, the Ogboni cult among the Yoruba and Sakradbundi, and the Aberewa (witchcraft movement) among the Akan (Idowu 2005; Parker 2004).

Something that African traditional societies have in common is magic, sorcery and witchcraft functionaries: priests, priestesses, prophets, prophetesses, and diviners. These functionaries exercise forms of ritualised power through which they maintain harmony, balance and order in the society. However, this does not preclude the possibility that such powers could sometimes be misappropriated and rechannelled negatively in a way that nullifies their communally beneficial purpose. As Ekpo and Omeweh (2001) observe, the desire for fame, wealth, special protection and revenge nourished the 'privatisation' of such ritual powers in pre-colonial Africa.

Modernity and the Decline of African Traditional Religion

The African continent opened to a larger European influence following its exploration by European explorers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Exploration brought evangelism and later colonisation into Africa with its concomitant integration of the continent into the global capitalist economy. Missionary evangelisation flourished in the nineteenth century. By the second half of the twentieth century, magnificent church edifices, luxurious liturgical celebrations, and most importantly, teeming populations of Christians of various denominations were apparently some of the markers of its growing success. (Nwaka 2011, 2012; Kalu 1993, 2007). The success of the evangelising mission was anchored on denigrating African traditional religious practices by pejoratively describing these as 'pagan' religion infested with fetish practices (Njoku 2007). African traditional religion was also denied recognition as a monotheistic religion.

Efforts to bring Africans to the new religion did not initially yield the desired result of mass conversion. School education was used as an alternative strategy in the service of evangelisation in most parts of the continent. As Omenka (1989) argues, the school system worked the miracle of mass conversion so well that, by the end of the colonial period, large populations of Africans had turned to Christian churches. Those who remained unconverted were disparagingly taunted as people living in darkness and backwardness – an isolation many of them could not stand for long.

Although Christianity appeared to have won the upper hand in Africa, rituals and other practices associated with African traditional religion thrived clandestinely (Ntombana 2015; Kalu 1993). Religious syncretism, which obviously accompanied mass conversion, did not escape the attention of African writers who decried the missionaries' lack of studied attention to primal spirituality. The evangelisers were accused of failing to weave the primal world view into their message, even though some ritual practices found in both the Old and the New Testament – e.g., human sacrifice, rites of initiation and absolution – have traditional African parallels.

Bediako (1995) argued that, by emphasising the superiority of Christian religion over traditional religion, the evangelisers discouraged dialogue between Christian theology and the theology of traditional religion; between Christian modes of worship and those of traditional religion. In the absence of channels for interaction, Christianity became a foreign religion to its adherents, what Nwoga (1984) refers to in *The Supreme God as a Stranger in Igbo Religious Thought*. Kalu (2007) says this explains why the spirits that guard the gates of African communities have remained unconquered. Arguably, the success of

the Christian faith did not end African traditional religious beliefs and their associated ritual practices and symbols, but rather facilitated their privatisation at the expense of their communal and public expressions.

Colonial rule, another supposed agent of modernisation, had further negative impacts on African traditional religious systems. With its tight grip on the economy through monetary policy, colonialism undermined the communality which underpins African traditional society and established a capitalist system that provided firm control of the economy for the privileged few at the expense of the larger population. This system has survived beyond the period of colonial rule in Africa and continues to have staggering consequences for most of the continent's people. Colonialism promoted the ethnocentric view that the morals and values of the colonised were inferior to those of the colonisers. African traditional values, cultures and practices were systematically eroded through the implementation of colonial plans. For example, between 1900 and 1930s, so-called 'pacification expeditions' carried out by the colonial military forces were used to dismantle some of the symbols and sanctuaries of traditional African deities in locations across the continent.

As the continent was subjugated by imperial powers, missionary evangelisation gained further ground. With financial and policy support from colonial governments, the missionary school system created a framework for systematic Christian proselytisation. By strategically reaching out to the children, the missionaries made a huge investment in the future generation that would take over the control of local affairs. Success in converting the children became a critical success factor in making future generations of Africans adherents of the Christian faith. In their role as instruments of the 'civilising mission', schools inculcated and sustained the view of the local culture as inferior. As Afigbo (1972:67) observes, the mission education promoted by colonial governments was 'a loaded mix of religious, cultural and secular knowledge principally aimed at comprehensive conversion of the pupils, religiously, culturally and socially'.

Traditional ritual practices such as human sacrifice, witchcraft, initiation rituals, juju and magic were outlawed across Africa under colonial rule.[2] Kohner (2003) argues that there was an assumption that, when these practices, states and legal systems were criminalised in Africa, they ceased to exist. Because colonialism maintained a social construct that promoted individualism instead of the communalism of the traditional African setting, these outlawed practices survived in the private realm, especially among the upper class who sought power, wealth and fame in their individual capacities.

In their efforts to maintain an effective hold on inherited positions and powers from the colonial mater, African elites clandestinely delved into ritual and occult practices (Geschiere 1997). One significant development from this privatisation was the blurring of the boundary between rituals for common good, as was the case in pre-colonial African society, and engagement in the occult world for self-aggrandisement. The secrecy with which private rituals was previously shrouded seems to be giving way to a brazen display of wealth accumulated from ritual engagements, especially among the youth.[3] It is against this background that the recent wave of youth experimentation in the occult world has become a subject of interest among academics (Oyewole 2016; Akinpelu 2015). This article presents findings from fieldwork research in order to describe the dynamics in this recent trend among youth in southern Nigeria and to explore its implications.

Framing Occult Economies

As offshoots of modernity, neoliberalism and democracy were thought to possess the potential for transforming human conditions for the general good (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999). The expectation of socio-economic, political and technological upliftment was most visible following the collapse of the Cold War and the concomitant global enchantment with global integration, mobility, flexibility and economic freedom (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999). However, as the sense of new possibilities in free trade, expansion and circulation of knowledge, capital, and goods pervades the globe, especially in the so-called transitional societies, a new form of 'uncertainty and precarity' reared its head (Comaroff and Comaroff 2018: 2). In what Berman (2006) titled *The Ordeal of Modernity in an Age of Terror*, the ascendancy of capital produced the accrual of wealth in some parts of society, leaving the bulk of the population in poverty and want. In response to the existence of affluence alongside the slums and shanty towns, many people turned to non-conversional means of accumulation known as occult economies (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; 2018; Ifeka 2006). This phenomenon cuts across generation, gender and race lines and forms the background against which the recent wave of youth engagement in ritual and occult practices in southern Nigeria can be understood.

Occult economies can be perceived as a form of resistance to new realities that pose certain challenges to both corporate and individual existence. As Anugwom (2011) shows in the case of the Niger Delta, the perception of injustice and marginalisation at the hands of both transnational corporations and the government provided fertile ground for occult practices, and also facilitated the rediscovery of deities that were previously associated with

justice and fairness. Similarly, Ashforth (2005) shows that, in South Africa, occult discourse, especially witchcraft, is commonly associated with both personal and group inadequacies, grievances, and a rejection of asymmetries. Emphasising the relationship between socio-economic deprivation and occult practices, Comaroff and Comaroff (1999) note that witch-hunting is most severe in constrained conditions and where there is severe inequality. Geschiere (1997) emphasises that witchcraft has both emancipatory and repressive functions. Traditions invented in the past to legitimise suppression can be reinvented in the struggle against oppression.

Scott (1985, 1990) divides resistance into hidden and public resistance in relation to three forms of domination – material conditions, status and ideology. While public resistance takes the forms of petition, demonstration, open revolt, desecration of status symbols and so on, disguised or hidden resistance, which Scott calls 'infra politics', entails resistance by disguised resisters, hidden transcripts of anger, and dissident sub-cultures. 'Infra-politics' is quiet and subtle, but remains a powerful tool both for survival and in order to undermine repressive domination, especially where open resistance is deemed dangerous (Bayat 2000; Scott 1990). Johansson and Lalander (2012) argue that power relations determine the form of resistance that is used.

Where organised or 'real' resistance appears risky due to an asymmetry in power, subtle, or what Scott calls 'everyday resistance', is expressed. Thus, in a society characterised by inequality and repression, everyday acts of resistance that cut across various strata of the society are often the norm, and can take various forms. Depending on the resources available to counter resistance, everyday resistance could become transformed into large-scale and organised resistance (Lilja *et al.* 2017). This framework is the background for analysing the link between youth in southern Nigeria and the proliferation of ritual and occult practices in the region. As the existing literature reflects, everyday acts of resistance constitute one of the four broadly defined ways in which resistance in general, and youth resistance in particular, occur.[4]

In addition to being seen as an expression of resistance, occult activities can also be seen as a response to an undue emphasis among prosperity gospel pastors of the present time on getting rich quickly, which blurs the distinction between what is genuinely extraordinary divine intervention and the mundane (Stoll 2013; West and Sanders 2001). This provides a context for understanding the rise of satanic scares, witch-hunts, and the 'spiritualisation' of uncomfortable conditions of life in the study area. In a bid to climb the ladder of affluence and success in the new way of the world,

according to (Dardot and Laval 2014), the challenges of life are invested with spiritual significance, leading to youth engaging with all forms of mysterious possibilities.

Trends in Rituals and Occult Practices among the Youth in Southern Nigeria

Five common patterns of youth engagement in fetish rituals and occult practices in the study area have been identified over the last two decades. The first is ritual killing of human beings. This is not a recent phenomenon in the region. Various groups in southern Nigeria used human beings for sacrifice before, during and after the colonial period (Ayegboyin 2009). As has already been said above, pre-colonial and colonial human sacrifices were largely carried out using slaves and victims of war as depicted in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart.*

From the beginning of the post-colonial period, victims of ritual killings were mainly small children kidnapped and sold to ritualists. A social welfare staff member in Enugu, John Udeabasi, has confirmed this, noting that the 1970s and 1980s were remarkable for the number cases of missing children regularly reported in the media.[5] From the1990s, a noticeable change in the pattern of ritual killings became apparent. There was a shift to killing parents, children, wives, siblings and, in recent times, mad women. While there was no clear gender preference in the past, it seems that a belief in the ritual power of female body parts, especially the genitals, has led to more killings of women in recent times.

In 2014, the Nigerian police apprehended a 42-year-old man who killed Ngozi Eze in Enugu for a sponsor who was willing to buy female private parts for 600,000 Naira (Ozor 2014). In 2017, the lifeless bodies of two female Imo State University students were discovered in Owerri with their private parts removed (Oluwole 2017). Among the items found in the apartment of 34-year-old Ifeanyichukwu Dike, who allegedly killed young Miss Chikamso in Port Harcourt, were vaginal parts, a mutilated human breast, and a human tongue (Madike 2017).

There are also instances where mothers, wives and daughters were slaughtered for the same purpose. Usman (2017), for example, reported the case of 50-year-old Jafainu, who killed his wife, Roselyn, for ritual sacrifice in Ondo. There have been other changes as well. Previously, swallowing concoctions and making incantations were common modes of ritual performance. Over the last two decades there have been many reports of ritualists eating the flesh of their victims, cooked or raw. In 2016, 31-year-

old Samuel Okpara was caught by the Nigerian police eating pepper soup and plantain porridge made from the intestine of his victim (Usman and Ake 2016). Between 2013 and 2017, the *New Telegraph* alone reported 14 cases of young men involved in such cannibalism. The brazen display of human body parts for sale in various markets as well as the apparent dumping of the bodies of victims of ritual killings on the streets in full view of everyone displays severe callousness towards the sanctity of human life. This is different to the pattern of the 1960s and 1970s when ritual killers carefully disposed of the bodies of their victims by burying them in shallow graves or taking them into thick forests.

Whereas ritualists and body-part harvesters used to kidnap their victims, they are now attacking their victims at home. There are reported cases of heavy objects being used to kill people after which machetes are used to remove specific body parts. This is common among some cult groups in the study area, particularly in Rivers, Edo, Lagos and Abia states where rival cult activities have been on the increase in the recent past. The Badoo cult group that terrorised the Ikorodu and Lagos areas between 2016 and 2018 were notorious for using this method to kill their victims and for collecting their blood on handkerchiefs for ritual purposes (*Punch* Editorial 2018).

Beyond ritual killings, youth engagement in bizarre acts for money has been on the increase over the last two decades. These acts include having sexual intercourse with a mad woman, a corpse, one's mother, or one's siblings; sleeping in cemeteries; eating human faeces in a sandwich (commonly known as a Ghana burger); searching refuse dumps for used tissue paper and sanitary pads; acting like a mad man for some months, and barking like a dog occasionally.[6] They are found to be most common among internet fraudsters commonly known as 'yahoo boys' who operate mostly within and around university areas (Olutande 2013). While internet fraud may be viewed as an advanced form of the '419' scam that has been associated with Nigeria since the 1980s, its entanglement with spiritualism in what has recently been referred to as 'yahoo plus' is a totally new development that has spread among the youth in southern Nigeria.[7]

Though not as common as the other acts mentioned above, donating a kidney for money has become trendy among the youth in the study area. Some key informants were of the view that ritual acts involving organ donation is associated with young men who suddenly disappear from the scene and return after few months with unexplained wealth.[8] Malaysia and Ghana were identified as two countries where kidney harvesting for money rituals takes place. Referring to kidney harvesting, when a young

man starts handing out US dollar notes to dancers and other performers in a public place in Nigeria, the audience often applauds and shouts 'Malaysia!, Malaysia!'

The revival of traditional shrines in the study area has been noticeable over the last two decades. Interestingly, available evidence points to young men in the region and beyond as the most visible clients of these shrines. For example, when the popular Okija Shrine was raided in 2004 by the Nigerian police, they found many letters from young apprentices asking the deity to compel their masters to set them free. While some of these young men openly initiate the revival of abandoned shrines, others introduce new deities.

For example, five young men between the ages of 22 and 46 in one of the villages in Awka Etiti in Anambra State publicly renounced Christianity in 2013 after establishing the shrine of *Agadi Nwanyi* (old woman) 2015.[9] The research revealed that 14 of the 19 shrines visited in Idemili North Local Government Area of Anambra State have young men between the ages of 26 and 50 as their custodians. The point is not that there is something wrong with reinventing the old to address the challenges of the new, but rather that there is a noticeable shift back to what appears to have been generally accepted in the past, following the advent of modernity (Christianity), as evil and backward. Affirming this point, Magesa (1997) postulates that African traditional religion contains both the elements that proffer abundant life as well as those that threaten it. However, the manner in which these youth are currently engaging with the past leaves no doubt about their hostility to aspects of the present.

Explaining the Rising Popularity of Rituals and Occult Practice

Rising interest in the ritual and occult world among the youth is arguably closely associated with the persistent rise in youth unemployment and poverty. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with enormous potential for development. It is Africa's largest producer of oil, the world's tenth largest oil-producing country, and it has huge reserves of natural gas and minerals. In 2014, when it was recognised to be Africa's largest economy, Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) stood at US$545 billion (*The Economist* 2014; World Bank 2014). However, despite the vast resources at its disposal, Nigeria is among the most unequal countries in the world. Between 1985 and 2004, inequality worsened from a Gini coefficient of 0.43 to one of 0.49, placing it among the countries with the highest inequality levels in the world (UNDP 2005). In 2009, the

National Human Development Report noted that 20 per cent of Nigeria's population controls 65 per cent of national assets.[10] The former Nigerian Finance Minister, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iwuala (cited in Asu 2013) noted that, despite the growth in Nigeria's economy, which was driven by the non-oil sector at the time, only 10 per cent of its population enjoys the benefits of Nigeria's economic growth. Country Director of the World Bank for Nigeria Marie-Francoise Marie-Nelly further stated that one hundred million of the world's 1.2 billion destitute people were Nigerians (Adoyi 2013). The worst hit group in the sea of poverty and want is apparently the youth who constitute more than 60 per cent of Nigeria's unemployed people. Between 2005 and 2009, available data points to what seems like a continual rise in youth unemployment – 11.9 per cent (2005); 13.3 per cent (2006); 14.6 per cent (2007); 14.9 per cent (2008); and 19.4 per cent (2009) (NBS 2009). In 2010, there were over 64 million unemployed youth and 1.6 million underemployed young people (Awogbenle and Iwuamadi 2010).

As unemployment worsens, various strategies of survival that include theories of spiritual warfare with invisible agents of regression have surfaced. Harnischfeger (2006) observed that there was a rising fear of uncontrollable spirits in the 1980s and 1990s in many parts of Africa. The application of spiritual solutions to problems associated with material hardship revived interest in the occult and ritual world. Human and drug traffickers, migrants, fraudsters and others sought spiritual protection and success in their 'businesses' through occult covenants, and possession of charms and other items associated with occult engagement. It is against this background that the power and influence of the Okija Shrine as well as the popularity of Prophet Edward Okeke of Nawgu in the 1980s and 1990 can be understood.

However, what appears on the surface to be a quest for survival is underpinned by a tone of frustration and subtle resistance to the status quo. In my interaction with a cross-section of final year students of the History Department at the University of Benin, 97 per cent were of the opinion that Nigeria holds no future for them.[11] They summed up the best approach as follows: 'go out there, use whatever works to claim your destiny'. The reference to 'destiny' as something that needs to be retrieved or claimed suggests that someone or something is engaged in an act of usurpation and must be resisted or dealt with. In another context, one of my informants (name withheld) said,

> …if these politicians will use at least half of the resources entrusted to them to work, Nigeria will be fine. But as it is, they swallow the whole money leaving us with nothing. It is a case of "monkey dey work, baboon dey chop". Who want to be baboon?

Overcoming the status of a baboon demands an intense struggle for wealth using every workable means, and the world of occultism seems to offer much to those who are well disposed towards it. The attitudes of some Nigerian youth towards the recent wave of hostage-taking (kidnapping) for ransom and internet fraud show this resistant mood. While a good number of those engaged with during the research do not approve of such criminal acts, they were not slow in their outright condemnation of certain people, particularly politicians. According to Osahon,

> The Nigerian resources belong to all and not to the government and politicians only. If they think they can take it all as usual, the kidnappers and "yahoo boys" are saying no. My only worry is the indiscriminate nature of these acts. Innocent Nigerians sometimes fall victim.[12]

In 2018, a recorded conversation between an internet fraudster and his would-be victim who appeared to be smarter went viral on social media in Nigeria. The fraudster is recorded as saying, 'Idiot, you think you will go free after emptying the public fund into your account? Thunder fire your head', to which the other person replied, 'your juju has failed! your juju has failed!'

For a long time, internet fraud relied on the ingenuity of fraudsters. However, most respondents in the fieldwork research said incorporating a spiritual dimension into this form of crime is largely responsible for the recent wave of fetish rituals among the youth, has taken fraud to another level, and further demonstrates the determination of frustrated youth to fight for success by any means.[13]

Tade and Aliyu (2012) affirm that the emergence of the 'yahoo boys' subculture in Nigeria can be traced back to the failure of political leadership and endemic corruption which has created the wide gap between the rich and the poor. In other words, as a small segment of the Nigerian population – politicians, transnational corporations and their favoured cronies with access to government contracts and revenues – grow wealthy and powerful, leaving the bulk of Nigerians poor. The youths look beyond the physical world in their rejection of the abnormality that seems normal in Nigeria.

As the brave delve successfully into the occult world, their success becomes a source of enticement to their peers, leading to more people becoming involved. From the study findings, most of the boys who engage in 'yahoo business' as students before their graduation are introduced to the practice by their friends. Some cultists apprehended by security officers at the University of Benin confirmed that they were introduced to cultism by their friends.[14] Rivalries between old and new participants contribute to the expanding participation in cultism. Since patronage appears to be the

most common source of recruitment and initiation, both the newcomer and the patron adopt a spiritual approach to forestall threats from one another, strengthen their position, and make more money.

The link between youth resistance culture and the proliferation of occult acts in southern Nigeria is also evident at the group level. Southern Nigeria has for some time been the home of political agitation, especially against marginalisation, and for self-determination. With the obvious failure of government security measures, groups and communities in the region have responded by establishing local self-defence initiatives. More often than not, the youths who normally form the bulk of these local security outfits combine their mandate with activities that include contesting and negotiating for their respective communities or ethnic groups. The search of these localised security outfits for both lethal and non-lethal weapons includes using protective and revelatory charms, and other traditional forms of protection. As communities and other pressure groups increasingly rely on these traditional forms of protection, they seek other forms of spiritual powers. While some opt for reinventing deities who were known in the past to be effective and powerful, as Anugwom (2011) shows in the case of the Niger Delta, others explore what is new and potent in the spiritual world.

The degree of trust in spiritual powers in the struggle for Biafra is crystal clear in this statement of one of the leaders of a vigilante group in Isiokpo who is also a staunch Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) member:

> The struggle for Biafra is not for women, neither is it meant for men without hair on their chest…. We have prepared for the Nigerian Government. They have machine gun; we have more than machine gun. I can give you this cutlass to try my hand. I bet you, there will be no single cut… Gone is the era of hiding.[15]

Reliance on spiritual powers to bolster courage and receive spiritual protection tends to be emphasised more than conventional weapons of war. The confidence with which ethnic militia and other pressure groups confront armed state security agents for ethnic and communal space in the region also shows a high level of trust in the efficacy of spiritual powers.

In addition to resistance, youth engagement in the ritual and occult world is a response to the Pentecostalist prosperity gospel of the present era. The rise of Pentecostalism brought about a change in the way certain Christian principles and doctrines were seen. In a cultural setting characterised by a long history of scarcity and want, the emphasis on prosperity found in Pentecostal evangelism is certainly more appealing than the mainline churches' expectation that authentic Christians should have hope, accept and endure their suffering, pain and poverty.

Mainline churches could not sustain their emphasis on the value of hope and endurance and lost members to Pentecostal churches which saw prosperity as a sign of being blessed from above, and poverty as a curse, a satanic omen that must be abhorred, rejected and resisted. This led to a culture of seeking wealth at all costs, regardless of how the wealth was accumulated. Ministers of the prosperity gospel encouraged members to donate to expand the ministry. In a situation where wealth acquired in any way can make a 'triumphant entry into Jerusalem', to use the biblical expression, an explosion of interest in the occult world in search of wealth is no surprise.

The field research showed that the prosperity gospel emphasis on gaining wealth at all costs has led youth to express less interest in participating in religious activities. Expressing his feelings about participation in church activities, Chuks remarked 'I will still go to church, but let me hammer first'[16]. Another informant observed that people without money at religious gatherings appear foolish: 'how can you remain seated when others are going to the altar to announce their donation; you have to look for money for seed sowing; otherwise, you will be a nonentity'.[17]

Furthermore, the ease with which some acclaimed 'ministers of God' get involved in occult and ritual killings has created disillusionment among the youth. Newspapers regularly report cases of ministers associated with occultism and occult items with which they purportedly manipulate their congregations.[18] Young people are easily given to generalisation, and there is indisputable evidence of the involvement of some high-profile church leaders in occult practices. Such generalisation often creates disregard for societal norms, including Christian values, and triggers a search for alternatives. This could help explain the revival of traditional shrines by young people and their relatively high patronage in recent times.

Implications

Youth engagement in the occult world is certainly associated with the current proliferation of cybercrime in Nigeria and beyond. The introduction of spiritualism into cybercrime and its purported efficacy has made cyber-fraud a lucrative and engaging business for the teeming population of Nigerian youth. The Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation says that there was a 183 per cent increase in e-payment fraud between 2013 and 2014 (NDIC 2014). According to the UK Centre for Strategic and International Studies, the annual cost of cybercrime in Nigeria is estimated at 0.08 per cent of the country's GDP, about 127 billion Naira (Iroegbu 2016).

Nigeria and Nigerians are losing huge sums of money through internet fraud, and the country's image on the international stage is being battered by young Nigerians operating as internet fraudsters. Of the 67 foreigners arrested for internet fraud in Hyderabad, India in 2015, 60 were from Nigeria (Lasania 2016). Nigeria has become so synonymous with cyber-fraud that some non-Nigerians caught in the act claim to be Nigerian before their country of origin is established (Adesina 2017). Today, paper-based Nigerian financial instruments are not valued highly by international financial institutions. Many Nigerian internet service providers and email providers are blacklisted across the internet (Adesina 2017). Also, some companies block internet traffic that is traceable to Nigeria. The implication is that Nigeria is gradually facing global isolation in the digital world.

As already noted, the Christian evangelising mission failed to separate Africans completely from their traditions, instead of a mutually enriching interaction between African and colonial culture, Africa was launched into a cultural crisis in which it could neither hold on to the past, nor embrace the new in its entirety. The recent explosion of interest in the occult and ritual world has further complicated the situation in Nigeria and in Africa more broadly. As the African youths who have been raised and trained in a context of modernity have become disenchanted, they have tended to go back to the past. However, they have not gone back to a healthy African traditional society past which has been modified by its interaction with the forces of modernity. Rather they have reverted to an unhealthy version of the past that is failing to contain them; one that endangers Nigerian society through the invocation of spiritual elements to gain wealth.

When attempts to gain wealth through occult practices fail, the unintended consequences include madness, untimely death, deformation, and susceptibility to becoming engaged in crime. There is an increasing incidence of madness among young men and women who were previously involved in ritual killings and occult practices. Case files in Uselu Psychiatric Hospital in Benin City reveal an increase in the number of psychiatric cases associated with cultism and other allied practices. Cultists and ritualists formed the second largest group of patients in the hospital after drug addicts in 2016.[19] There is also increasing number of mad young men and women roaming the streets in urban and rural areas of southern Nigeria. Field research respondents in various localities affirmed that while some of these mad young people were known to be drug addicts, there is an obvious increase in cases of unexplainable, sudden madness. The latter are largely attributed to rituals, cultism, and yahoo plus[20] (FGD 2018b). The loss of Nigerian youth to insanity and other psychological illnesses is a dangerous future development for the country.

Politicians' desperation for power certainly contributes to the proliferation of fetish rituals. Hired as political thugs, young men and, in some cases, women are ready to carry out any assignment that will give their master victory. An informant's story about his involvement as a political thug is revealing:

> Before I surrendered my life to Christ, I was a reliable political thug for Senator (name withheld). We were in Calabar for three days in 2007 where we were baked for fortification. Every six months, I travel to Ijebu Ode to see Baba and to collect some materials for the boys. We were made to be invisible before our enemies.[21]

The group of young men and women used by the Nigerian politicians to secure their position today represents the future leaders of the country. As they become part of the political process, they are likely to bring along their experiences from the spiritual world. As Ukoji and Okolie-Oseme (2016) argue, if politicians of today rely on occult powers to maintain their positions, destroy their enemies, and silence the masses, the youth, who are the politicians of the future, are unlikely to be different. In the words of Bolade: 'Nigerian youth are not just learning from politicians of today, they are making their own explorations, the outcome of which will be brought to bear on the future Nigerian politics'.[22]

Obvious reliance on occult powers for security and protection by both community vigilante and militia groups portrays the fragility of the Nigerian state. The failure of the state to protect and provide for its citizens implies a loss of trust in the state structure and gravitation towards militia and other extra-legal groups. As Ellis and Ter Haar (2004) argue, since liberal democracy cannot formally encompass spiritual powers, in exploring such terrain, non-state armed groups tend to acquire spiritual powers that further delegitimise the state. The asymmetry in physical power between the government security forces and these groups often propel the non-state groups to galvanise the deployment of all forces in their confrontations, especially spiritual forces. In their demonstration of power, more insecurity is engendered in the society with further relegation of state institutions. Indeed, the activities of IPOB in south eastern Nigeria and the formation of Amotekun (a Yoruba ethnic vigilante group) are among the topical issues that constitute obvious threat to the survival of the Nigerian state today.

Finally, the recourse of Nigerian youth to spiritualism for a better life is a dangerous development for the country and the African continent as a whole. It is both a departure from obvious steps that led to development in industrialised economies of the world, and an abandonment of the science of technology and innovation on which development depends.

Development is first conceived as idea in the mind which is then transmitted to the physical world through concrete action. Unfortunately, despite abundant natural and human resources, the leaders of Nigeria, and indeed, most African states, have failed to effectively execute policy for promoting the scientific innovation needed for development. Consequently, spiritual solutions have for a long time become a palliative for the masses. The way in which the youth have recently taken to this alternative is a dangerous awakening. Certainly, the crisis of development will deepen further when the populations of Nigeria and other African states abandon development in their search for spiritual succour.

Conclusion

The socio-economic and cultural disruption engendered by the forces of modernity provided the setting for post-colonial African society. As the euphoric wind of independence disappeared, critical challenges of nation-building became evident, creating an air of uncertainty and disillusionment that necessitated a search for alternatives at all levels. It was in this context that private rituals, particularly among the elites, became common in most African societies. The current wave of youth engagement in ritual and occult practices in southern Nigeria may be located within the privatisation of such practices during and after colonialism. However, the extent of engagement in these practices, regardless of their social and health implications, suggests something more than private rituals for protection, fame and power which characterised the first two decades of the post-colonial era.

Re-traditionalisation appears to be a more appropriate definition of the new development, even though a reversion to tradition may no longer be feasible because of the deep impact of modernity on traditional African society. The field research respondents indicated that the youth do not patronise traditional African deities as some sort of enchantment in their revival. Patronage of deities, mostly in aberrant forms, represents a rejection of the socio-economic order in Nigeria with little or no regard for their impact on practitioners and the larger society.

Notes

1. Sacrifice is found in all the Abrahamic religions. In Judaism, Abraham earned great reward after he demonstrated his faith in Yahweh's command by showing his willingness to sacrifice his only son Isaac. In the Christian religion, Jesus paid the highest price with his life as propitiation to God for the sins of the world. The Muslims celebrate Eid al-Adha during which they sacrifice a ram in remembrance of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac.

2. The Witchcraft Act was adopted in Zambia in 1914, and in South Africa in 1957. The Nigerian Penal Code of 1916 criminalised all these practices as well. See, for example, Orde-Browne (1935).
3. The earlier secrecy suggests that practitioners were afraid of the implications of being publicly exposed.
4. The other three types of youth resistance referred to in the literature are cultural resistance, youth development as resistance, and the social justice framework of resistance – see Ginwright *et al.* (2006) and Tuck and Yang (2011).
5. John Udeabasi, personal communication, 9 May 2018.
6. These were the most common ones identified by some students from three universities in southern Nigeria – University of Benin, University of Ibadan, and Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Used women's underwear, used sanitary pads, and used toilet paper have recently become some of Nigerian ritualists' most sought-after items.
7. Section 419 of the Nigerian Criminal Code Act criminalises the obtainment of another's property by false pretence. The expression '419' is therefore used in Nigeria to refer to the act of fraudulently obtaining another person's property or intending to fraudulently obtain such property within or outside Nigeria.
8. Five of the six people who responded to questions on donation of human organ for rituals were young men and women aged twenty-five to forty years. They all affirmed the common nature of the practice among young boys, especially the yahoo boys.
9   Personal communication with Ejiofor, 6 July 2018. He was one of the young men who was instrumental in the establishment of this shrine. He said the failure of foreign religion to address some of the challenges facing his community was one of the key reasons for establishing the shrine. The shrine of Agadi Nwayi became popular in Igboland in the first decade of the twenty-first century after news of its purported potency was spread in the south-eastern part of Nigeria by the Bakassi Boys, a group of local security operatives.
10. This was noted in a report on 7 December 2009 by Prof. Ode Ojowu, former economic adviser and Minister of National Planning who was also a member of the advisory council on the National Human Development Report (NHDR).
11. Focus group discussion with a group of final year students at the University of Benin, October 2018.
12. Personal communication with Osahon Erabor, 17 March 2019.
13. In a focus group discussion with some students of the University of Benin and Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, I was made to understand that 'yahoo business', as they called it, is only lucrative when there is a spiritual angle. The students were unanimous in noting that using spiritual means has no adverse consequences for those who know how to do it well.
14. The security personnel from the university who supplied this information preferred to remain anonymous.
15. Personal communication with the Anochie, 14 August 2019.

16. 'Hammer' is a popular slang term used by Nigerian youth to refer to a sudden influx of wealth. Most of the young people interviewed blamed religious leaders and religious institutions for societal decadence, including the proliferation of human sacrifice. They said these leaders and institutions are after wealth instead of winning souls for God. Personal communication with Chuks, 7 July 2018.

17. Personal communication with Ndibe, 7 July 2018.

18. *The Guardian* of 17 August 2017 reported on the arrest of a pastor at Ota in Ogun State for burying human body parts in his church (Gyamfi 2017). A pastor who was arrested with the fresh human heart of a one-year-old girl in a church in Calabar was also found in possession of a dead chicken, the head of a goat, and male and female effigies (see Jannah 2017).

19. Personal communication with Sr. Osuji, 4 October 2018. In addition to this, the increase in the number of mental cases is becoming apparent on the streets of Benin City and other cities in southern Nigeria.

20. Focus group discussion with members of Idowina Community in Edo State, 17th December 2018.

21. Phone conversation with a key informant who preferred to remain anonymous, 28 July 2018.

22. Personal communication with Mrs Bolade, 14 September 2018.

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Youth Masculinities in Zimbabwe's Congested Gerontocratic Political Space

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Abstract

This article situates its discussion of young Zimbabwean men's performance of masculinity in a restrictive political space in a broader continental context in which the majority of young people are politically and economically marginalised. It addresses how the older generation's domination and monopolisation of political space presents obstacles to the youth's aspiration to perform normative masculinity. The article also discusses various strategies the youth in Zimbabwe are devising to claim space in a political arena that can be characterised as a gerontocracy. The youth seek relevance in Zimbabwe's congested and gerontocratic political space through strategies that range from co-opting gerontocratic masculinities to subverting them. Notwithstanding the divergence in these strategies, young people who adopt them to create and occupy space in Zimbabwe's political terrain legitimise their choices by appealing to culture, thus showing how culture can be harnessed for contradictory objectives in the performance of masculinities. The strategies also draw from global trends involving the youth's engagement in non-traditional political participation facilitated by their dominance of virtual, social media space.

Keywords: youth, gerontocracy, masculinities, political space, marginalisation, Zimbabwe

Résumé

Cet article discute des performances masculines des jeunes zimbabwéens dans un espace politique restrictif et un contexte continental général dans lequel la majorité des jeunes sont politiquement et économiquement marginalisés. L'article aborde la manière dont la domination et la monopolisation de l'espace politique par la vieille génération font obstacle à l'aspiration des

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jeunes à exercer une masculinité normative. L'article aborde également diverses stratégies élaborées par les jeunes du Zimbabwe dans leur revendication d'espace dans une arène politique qui peut être caractérisée de gérontocratie. Les jeunes recherchent la pertinence dans l'espace politique congestionné et gérontocratique du Zimbabwe par des stratégies allant de la cooptation des masculinités gérontocratiques à leur subversion. Malgré la divergence de ces stratégies, les jeunes qui les adoptent pour créer et occuper un espace sur le terrain politique du Zimbabwe légitiment leurs choix en faisant appel à la culture, démontrant ainsi comment la culture peut être exploitée pour des objectifs contradictoires dans l'exécution de masculinités. Les stratégies s'inspirent également des tendances mondiales impliquant l'engagement des jeunes dans une participation politique non traditionnelle facilitée par leur domination de l'espace virtuel des réseaux sociaux.

Mots-clés : jeunesse, gérontocratie, masculinités, espace politique, marginalisation, Zimbabwe

Introduction

Compared to other parts of the world, the youth constitute the largest percentage of Africa's population (de Bruijn and Both 2017; Dzimiri 2014; Sommers 2007). In Zimbabwe, in 2014, young people aged between 18 and 35 years constituted 53.74 per cent of the country's adult voting population (Hodzi 2014). Yet, scholarly literature and policy documents indicate that the youth (and women) are among the most marginalised populations in terms of occupying political office and having access to economic opportunities (de Bruijn and Both 2017; Sommers 2007). This is also the case in Zimbabwe whose present political organisation around gerontocracy can be traced back to precolonial cultures. The main difference is that precolonial cultures were structured in ways that legitimised gerontocracy, while modern political organisation renders gerontocracy anomalous and problematic. The post-colonial political configuration in Zimbabwe continues to be gerontocratic, and this has left the youth with few avenues for performing a normative form of masculinity built around leadership, self-sufficiency, and self-determination. In post-independence Zimbabwe, the toxic and restrictive political environment has left many young people apathetic, hopeless, and resigned. In spite of this environment, many young people in Zimbabwe, and indeed, in many other African countries, still wiggle into the political field monopolised by older men locally referred to as 'old *madhala*'. Young men assert their presence in Zimbabwe's political terrain by devising strategies of performing masculinities that range from co-opting gerontocratic masculinities to subverting them.

On the one hand, the agency of youths in political parties is constrained by structural dynamics (Hodzi 2014). Political parties, especially the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF), are organised around gerontocracy, and perceived legitimacy deriving from having participated in the war of liberation which ushered in the country's independence on 18 April 1980. The youth in the ruling party narrow the generational gap and seek relevance by subordinating and aligning their interests with those of the old generation. In short, they exercise a masculinity that enjoys the patronage of gerontocracy in return for their deference and loyalty. Older politicians in charge of political parties reward the loyalty of the youth mostly with material rewards, small-scale projects, and government jobs. This dynamic has created a situation of mutual exploitation, dependence, and cooperation between the youth and older men on the one hand, and the punishment of youths who are deemed to be insubordinate, disrespectful, and non-conformist on the other hand.

The gerontocracy's strategy of co-option through incentives and coercion creates a situation in which young people ironically perpetuate their own subordination and exclusion through their submission to older men. Youth participation in this strategy sustains the very gerontocratic system that marginalises them from leadership positions beyond the political party youth wing. Some segments of the youth, however, have sought alternative routes to participation in Zimbabwe's politics by performing a masculinity that challenges and subverts gerontocracy. These youths have critiqued and represented the current Zimbabwean gerontocracy as devoid of the wisdom, foresight, and relevance from which gerontocracy derived its legitimacy in precolonial cultures. This contestation for legitimacy pits young men against the older generation in the performance of masculinity in Zimbabwe's fractious political field.

Masculinity in Historical and Global Context

Masculinity as an acquired rather than intrinsic trait means that culture rather than biology transforms boys into men. In Zimbabwe, where male and female circumcision is not practised by the main cultures, masculinity was traditionally achieved through socialisation in a male space known as *dare* in the Shona language (Shire 1994). In this space, the respect for age hierarchy or gerontocracy was reinforced in boys and young men. Gerontocracy was not simply about older men occupying a higher social status and wielding authority and influence over younger men. Rather, it had a patriarchal and reciprocal logic based on a *quid pro quo* relationship, which made it socially and culturally sustainable. Elders earned young men's respect and loyalty

by providing them with land and bride-wealth as well as passing down to them cultural norms, values, leadership qualities, wisdom, and various skills integral to normative masculinity. Boys and young men thus grew up understanding that the same deference they had for elders would be given to them when they became the elders. In terms of political organisation, a king or chief earned his subjects' respect through reproduction of the *dare* (male space) concept at his traditional court (also called *dare*) where he upheld the principles of equity, fairness and justice (Chimuka 2001; Gwaravanda 2011; Masitera 2019). These principles and mutual dependence among men occupying various ranks provided a system of checks and balances by which the king or chief's hereditary and ascriptive status was held in check by the loyalty and goodwill of those he governed.

Older men's exercise of power did not exclude younger men outright. Indeed, as boys matured into men, fathers and grandfathers would gradually cede control over family matters to them as part of preparing them to become elders. This cycle in the reproduction of masculinity, repeated generation after generation, became deeply embedded within Zimbabwe's cultures and norms in respect of manhood. This process of the reproduction of masculinity would face its stiffest competition during colonialism, when the British sought to dismantle indigenous Zimbabwean political structures and cultural norms. Though the colonisers were not able to completely dismantle these structures and norms, they eroded them by introducing new political and social structures. The current system of government, which is partly a product of the country's colonial experience, embodies contradictory attitudes towards gerontocracy. Although it is at odds with the idea that leadership and authority should be premised on royal birth, it has inherited the gerontocracy that is an integral part of the traditional political system.

During colonialism, new versions of masculinities emerged, creating a spectrum of masculinities. Normative masculinity is the apex of this spectrum, while other versions occupy lower rungs of the ladder. These versions are subject to varied forms of subordination, marginalisation, and even ridicule. Normativity derives from conformity to culture-specific expectations of adult male or manhood as opposed to boyhood and femininity (Jaji 2009). Normative or socially approved masculinity in many African countries is a blend of precolonial masculinities and those stemming from the continent's encounters mainly with Islam and Christianity, as well as the colonisation process (Barker and Ricardo 2006; Odhiambo 2007). In Zimbabwe, then a British settler colony known first as Southern Rhodesia and then Rhodesia (1890–1980), gerontocratic

masculinities faced their strongest challenge from Western education, Christianisation, and labour migration.

Across Africa, European colonisation supplanted the elders and eroded their authority over young men by creating new avenues for young men to acquire economic independence outside the traditional gerontocratic system (see Gilmore 1990; Lindsay 2003; McKittrick 2003; Miescher and Lindsay 2003). Young men were able to earn incomes in the monetised economy, wean themselves off economic dependency on the elders, and transfer their loyalty from the traditional to the new political economy. This was the case with regard to access to land and bride-wealth. The socio-economic legacy of this cultural dislocation is observable in contemporary Zimbabwe where young men who have successfully integrated into the modern economic system have turned the pre-colonial gerontocratic system on its head. They wield more power than the elders through financial resources that place them in a position where they provide for the elders and make important decisions.

Despite the dislocations and transformations of African masculinities brought about by colonialism, pre-colonial masculinities have proved to be tenacious. They still persist and even dominate contemporary spaces such as modern systems of government. The power that economic independence bestowed on the youth at family level did not necessarily translate into occupation of important positions in national politics, which is intertwined with economic opportunities in post-independence Zimbabwe. Changes effected by the colonial economy in age relations between young and old men were not transferred to the post-colonial political dispensation as much as this dispensation was modelled along the modern system of governance responsible for upsetting the pre-colonial gerontocratic political and economic order. Rather, gerontocracy has turned out to be a force to reckon with in Zimbabwe's fractious politics due to its influence on who has access to which political positions and economic opportunities. It has become the cornerstone of Zimbabwe's post-independence political and economic configuration on which the 'old *madhala*' exercise a firm grip. The irony is that the old men who are reluctant to relinquish power became leaders when they were young but appear to have very little trust in the capacity of the youth to lead.

African masculinities are not immune to contemporary forces of globalisation in which masculinities are no longer rooted in cultural containers fixed in specific geographical locations. Masculinities have become deterritorialised and globalised with improvements in communication technology and the media providing diverse options on how to be a man

(Jackson and Balaji 2011). Despite assumptions that situate Africa on the periphery of globalisation, the youth have not escaped simulation, in postmodern terminology, of masculinities originating outside the continent (Barratt and Straus 1994; Phillips 2006). African men have become adept at blending, juggling, and adapting masculinities embedded in both indigenous and external sources to respond to the situation. In Zimbabwe, young men have become adroit at performing varied masculinities in the country's bellicose political field. They appropriate globalised masculinities accessible through contemporary information technologies and deploy them as an additional resource for them to critique and subvert gerontocratic masculinities that are detrimental to their interests in Zimbabwe's political economy.

Youth Masculinities, Gerontocracy, and Politics

Although colonisation dismantled cultural structures that had perpetuated gerontocracy and imposed a new system of governance, this does not mean that gerontocracy died a natural death. Gerontocracy survived the colonial onslaught and was transplanted to the post-colonial era and blended with the Western political system premised on the governed choosing their leaders through elections. However, gerontocracy as it is practised in the modern political system in Zimbabwe does not prepare young men to become future leaders as was the case in the country's pre-colonial cultures. Instead, it thrives on a culture of silencing young men in the political space without tangible prospects for older men reaching the twilight of their lives ceding power to younger men. Decades of this age-based exclusion have left the majority of youth passive and apathetic in many parts of Africa (see Adebayo 2018). In Zimbabwe, youth apathy is exacerbated by the restrictions imposed by gerontocratic political structures and a lack of information and funds (Musarurwa 2018). Their lack of resources makes it difficult for young people to take the initiative and chart their own political path outside the patronage of older men who assign themselves the role of distributing political goods among the youth.

Conflation of the traditional and the modern in Zimbabwean politics has created a situation in which older politicians become fathers and mothers to the youth. In Zimbabwe, the now deceased former President Robert Mugabe[1] and leader of ZANU PF, who ruled the country from independence in 1980 until 2017 when he was forced to resign by the military, was known as *baba* (the Shona word for father). Mugabe's first and, later, his second wife were referred to as *amai* (the Shona word for mother). Young people in ZANU PF saw their role as defending Mugabe from his

political opponents and reining in disobedient 'children' who challenged his authority. In the early years of independence when the government enjoyed widespread support, the political activism of university students was focused on defending the government.

Modern politics and election systems are ideally about ideas, but the reality is that their entanglement with traditional gerontocratic understandings of leadership and authority has enabled older generations to treat the youth as people who run political errands for them rather than adults with the capacity to run the country or mature people who should be groomed to take over leadership positions in future. Hodzi (2014:56) notes, 'In almost all major political parties in Zimbabwe the low-level workers and volunteers tend to be the youth, while the leadership is dominated by older people.' Even in the youth wing, some of the leaders are well outside the youth age group. Absolom Sikhosana and Pupurai Togarepi led ZANU PF's Youth League at the ages of sixty-eight and fifty-four in 2017 and 2019 respectively (*Daily News* 2019). Youth, it is evident, is more a question of political positioning than age.

While young people occupy leadership positions in the youth wings of the different political parties, they are excluded from these parties' national executives (see Hodzi 2014). This has resulted in members of the ZANU PF youth wing performing stunted masculinities as they continue to play the role of social and political 'children' even after they have become full-grown adults. Party restrictions of their aspirations to lead the country mean that they occupy a liminal space as men-boys or men-children *vis-á-vis* older men in the party. It is not surprising that ZANU PF enjoys less support among urban youths than the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) whose founding leadership was much younger than that of ZANU PF. The party's current leader, Nelson Chamisa, is forty-three years old. Even so, the MDC is not immune to the problem of youth subordination or party youths running political errands for the older leadership. Thokozani Khupe, a senior female party member who launched a legal challenge against Chamisa's takeover of the leadership of MDC following the death of founding president Morgan Tsvangirai in February 2018, was subjected to harassment by the party's youths for challenging Chamisa's attempt to succeed Tsvangirai. The MDC has split a number of times, indicating major dissent among those who feel disenfranchised. Being an opposition party, it lacks the state resources that ZANU PF has at its disposal to punish errant youths. In addition, the presence of young people in the party's leadership suggests it is a more conducive environment for young men to graduate from political errand boys to leaders.

The way traditional and modern structures and institutions are intertwined has also brought about a paradoxical situation in Zimbabwean politics. Political leaders rule with the absolute power of ancient monarchies and attribute this power to anointment by God, while at the same time claiming to have been chosen by the people through elections. Election results in Zimbabwe since the beginning of the twenty-first century have been contested. Although gerontocracy plays a key role in Zimbabwe's post-colonial political configuration, it has been stripped of the economic, social, and political relevance which sustained it in pre-colonial times. Young men outside political parties rely more on employment in the modern economy than on the benevolence and patronage of their elders. The 'divine right to rule' rhetoric closes party political opportunities for the youth, yet some of them ironically play an active role in sustaining this attribution of legitimacy to the supernatural. The ZANU PF youth wing unquestioningly accepted the views of the Politburo, the party's decision-making body, and went along with its endorsement of President Mugabe (Hodzi 2014). This continued to be the case even when it became clear that he had become incapacitated due to his advanced age and his apparently poor health after numerous trips to Singapore for medical treatment.

Members of ZANU PF's Youth League declared numerous times that President Mugabe was ordained by God to rule Zimbabwe and the youth were 'prepared to die' defending his rule. One of these youths, Kudzai Chipanga, made this pronouncement during a press statement as clouds for the 'soft coup' that dislodged Robert Mugabe from power in November 2017 gathered. A few days later, military tanks rolled into the streets of Harare and forced Mugabe to resign. Chipanga beat a hasty retreat from this pronouncement and apologised to the army. It appears that older politicians manipulate the youth in the party by leveraging their hubris, but abandon them in the face of the military that has kept Zimbabwean citizens in check for the greater part of the country's post-independence life.

Over the years, the most conspicuous errands that youth have run for older politicians known as 'boss' or 'chefs' have been intimidation, surveillance, and violence. The National Youth Service (2000–2008), colloquially referred to as Border Gezi, the name of a youthful and charismatic ZANU PF politician who died in 2001, became synonymous with youth mobilisation for violence against opposition politicians and supporters (see Oosterom and Gukurume 2019). The growing youth violence in Zimbabwe is a product of political ideology, the scarcity of available resources, and the inequitable distribution of resources (Dodo, Mateko and Mpofu 2019). Youth wings of both dominant political parties – ZANU PF and the MDC-

Alliance – have been implicated in perpetrating acts of violence against their political opponents. In particular, the ZANU PF Youth League was accused of perpetrating violence in rural areas in the run-up to the run-off election in 2008. Like other voluntary associations such as labour unions in Zimbabwe, youth associations have split along lines of political affiliation. For example, through political party interference, the student body split into the Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) perceived to be aligned with the MDC, and the Zimbabwe Congress of Students Union (ZICOSU), which is pro-ZANU PF (Oosterom and Gukurume 2019; see also Hodzi 2014).

Young people who are active in politics usually support the leaders of the political parties to which they are affiliated to such an extent that the leaders are treated as deities who are beyond reproach, at least publicly. As such, it was only after the military made its intentions clear in 2017 that youths affiliated to ZANU PF finally abandoned Robert Mugabe. Even so, this shift was not a youth initiative. The youth only did this when it became clear that older people in the party wanted Mugabe to leave office. Subordinated youth are expected to play a cheer-leading role for older masculinities and run errands such as intimidating and perpetrating violence on their opponents in return for feeding on the crumbs that fall from the table of gerontocratic political power. This *status quo* is perpetuated by the fact that youths who are co-opted by gerontocratic masculinities see the relationship as a *quid pro quo*, even though the scale of power is tilted in favour of older masculinities. This kind of exploitation and manipulation of the youth in party politics has been noted in a number of other African countries (e.g., David and Manu (2015) and Umar (2003) on the situation in Nigeria; Kang'ethe (2014) on South Africa, Botswana, Rwanda, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Kenya; and Reuss and Titeca (2017) on Uganda).

Young people's sustenance of gerontocracy particularly in the ruling party continues in the post-Mugabe era. More young people have publicly declared their loyalty to President Emmerson Mnangagwa who is seventy-six years old. At the end of February 2020, youths affiliated to a group called Concerned Citizens Forum announced that they intended to camp at the homes of three of the opposition MDC-Alliance leaders who they accuse of calling for sanctions imposed by the West on Zimbabwe in 2002 and 2003. Group leader Taurai Kundishaya declared, 'We want to take over [sic] power from these people in the MDC and hand it over to the President [Mnangagwa], so we want to take power to the President and not to these people' (*Bulawayo 24 News*, 2020). Youths in ZANU PF understand that

the older masculinities in their party do not hesitate to jerk the leash when young men threaten to veer off track.

The grip of older men on party youths has been illustrated on numerous occasions when youths who failed to toe the party line by expressing views that were either critical of the leadership or against its interests were punished by suspension from the party, demotion from leadership positions, or outright expulsion. Indeed, the 2017 coup which forced Robert Mugabe out of power was a result of the 'old guard' in ZANU PF's quest to wrestle power from younger members of the party referred to as G40 (Generation 40). The fact that seventy-six-year-old Emmerson Mnangagwa is now the party and country's leader is a sign of victory for gerontocracy (Southall 2019). In February 2020, Pupurai Togerepi, one of the leaders in ZANU PF Youth League was expelled while two other leaders in the League, Lewis Matutu and Godfrey Tsenengamu, were suspended after they denounced some businesspeople who they labelled as 'cartels' and accused them of corruption and being responsible for the economic misery in the country. While Matutu obeyed the party's recommendation requiring him to attend its school of political ideology, Tsenengamu refused to obey and said he would only be willing to go to this school as a teacher, not as a student. He was expelled from the party when he criticised President Mnangagwa for failing to fulfil his election promises.

Marginalised young people can easily be manipulated by people who see them as an asset in their criminal activities (Sommers 2007). Zimbabwe is currently grappling with the problem of machete-wielding youths terrorising residents and villagers in mining districts and towns where they are forcibly taking gold from small-scale miners. While at face value this youth violence is attributable to the high youth unemployment rate in the country, allegations have been thrown around in Zimbabwe's public political discourse that the youths are engaging in this violence at the behest of powerful politicians in the country who are after the gold stolen from small-scale miners and who also use these youths to intimidate opposition supporters (Tinhu 2020). It is argued in the same discourse that involvement of powerful people in the country is the reason why it has taken so long for law enforcement to tackle the violence.

Media coverage of the machete gangs indicates that their violence has been extended to the general populace with women and girls being raped and murdered in some cases (Chibamu 2020; Tinhu 2020). It remains to be seen whether the police crackdown on the violent youth criminals at the beginning of 2020 will contain the problem. Youths who are co-opted into committing crime and political violence when political tensions

in Zimbabwe rise are subjugated by the older men who direct them and benefit from their illegal activities. In view of the hierarchical and exploitative nature of relations between old and young men's masculinities in Zimbabwean politics, young men who perpetrate violence are vulnerable and need protection (Dzimiri 2014). They are vulnerable to manipulation and threats by 'old *madhala*' to the extent that they can be referred to as 'victim perpetrators', a subject which the author of the current paper addresses in a forthcoming publication.

Although many youths who participate in Zimbabwe's politics do so as subordinates to older men in the political field, there has been resistance to older men, mostly at the country's universities. While university students supported the ZANU PF government in the first few years of independence, this changed in 1988 when the students proclaimed themselves to be representatives of the downtrodden, resisted structural adjustment programmes in the 1990s, and made common cause with the urban revolt over worsening economic and political problems that followed (Zeilig 2008). University students became the first civic organisation to challenge the gerontocratic social order in Zimbabwean politics through a political masculinity constituted of 'hardcore' activism (Hodgkinson 2013).

This political masculinity was the antithesis of the subordinate masculinity performed by political party youths because it was independent of patronage from older male politicians. As a result, the political space available on university campuses became restricted when the government unleashed anti-riot police to quell student demonstrations in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The youth movement was also infiltrated by state security agents and weakened by interference by political parties (Gukurume 2019; Hodzi 2014). Student demonstrations have become rare on the country's university campuses with students splitting into ruling and opposition party-affiliated unions as already mentioned above. This is happening at the same time that the government is clamping down on youth political activism in opposition parties. Examples include the murder of Tonderai Ndira, an MDC youth activist in Mabvuku-Tafara, a residential area in Harare East (see Wilkins 2013), and continual arrests of opposition party youths.

Apart from the repression, youth activism on university campuses has also fizzled out because of a realisation that attempting to dislodge the old people, locally referred to as the 'old guard', was a futile exercise. The 'old guard' in ZANU PF has never missed the opportunity presented by election cycles to declare that the country will never be ruled by people who 'did not fight in the war'. The liberation war narrative continues to

be used by liberation movements that morphed into political parties after independence to legitimise their continued stay in power in countries such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Uganda (Oosterom and Gukurume 2019). Naturally, a time will come when 'people who fought in the war' will die out and it seems many people have become resigned to waiting for nature to take its course. Invocation of the liberation war narrative has its greatest exclusionary impact on the current generation of youths, all of whom were born after independence. It has created a situation in which young people do not get what they want, they simply accept what is given to them. Protests and subdued murmurs of dissent clearly indicate that the youths are dissatisfied with this situation. For instance, there has been a steady growth in the number of well-educated but unemployed youths in a continually shrinking economy. Because they are unable to put their qualifications into practice and lack work experience, their skills become degraded, and this political exclusion of young people leads directly into their economic marginalisation. The irony is that young people are unemployed in a country where older people who are politically connected or work for the ruling party remain employees in various offices beyond the retirement age.

Alternative Pathways to Masculinity and Reclamation of Space

There is a growing trend of young people directing their energies to civic engagement and activism outside traditional forms of political participation such as membership in political parties, canvassing, and voting (Quintelier 2007). In Zimbabwe, many disaffected people see political processes such as elections as futile. Many people who have yearned for political and economic change for decades have lost hope that they can influence the country's trajectory through traditional party politics. In Mali and Chad, youths are redefining themselves as global citizens in their quest for structures that offer them legitimate representation (de Bruijn and Both 2017). They are directing their attention to activities that have global resonance, for example, environmental activism, advocacy for gender equality, human rights, good governance, and peacebuilding, among other globally relevant causes.

The United Nations has taken a clear stance and encouraged young people to actively participate in these activities. This has enabled the youth to redirect the energy they could have expended on party politics towards areas where they can challenge older politicians whom they perceive as out of touch and, by reason of their advanced age, irrelevant for the future. Focusing on the future enables the youth to create space for civic and political engagement and legitimise their activism through the argument

that the older generations will not be part of the future. Civic activities enable the youth to shift the meaning of masculinity from emphasising dominance to emphasising empathy, the common good, global citizenship, and taking responsibility. The youth accuse older politicians of lacking these constructive qualities, particularly in African countries where politics is principally dominated by men advanced in age and widely criticised for marginalising their predominantly young populations.

Many young people around the world have created civic space through information and communication technology (see de Bruijn and Both 2017; Pathak-Shelat and Bhatia 2019). In Zimbabwe, urban youths who appear to be apathetic are much more active on social media platforms where they criticise the national leadership under their real names or using pseudonyms. Social media platforms have proved to be a more reliable alternative in a country where student activism has been curbed through the deployment of state security agents to engage in surveillance of students and lecturers alike, leading to 'self-censorship' reminiscent of Michel Foucault's study of biopolitics (Gukurume 2019). Young people in Zimbabwe utilise social media platforms as spaces where they congregate regardless of physical or geographical location to express dissent and strategise on how to protest the excesses of a repressive government (Gukurume 2017). For example, #ThisFlag, Tajamuka, and #ThisGown movements have utilised the internet extensively to spread their messages. #ThisFlag successfully mobilised citizens to engage in a stayaway in July 2016 in protest against repression, high unemployment, and corruption, among other grievances against the Mugabe government (Oosterom and Gukurume 2019).

#ThisFlag also mobilised Zimbabweans in November 2017 to protest together with war veterans and political parties against Mugabe, and the citizens' march increased the pressure that led to his resignation a few days later. However, #ThisFlag leader, Pastor Evan Mawarire, was arrested several times for calling for protests, most recently in January 2019 when protests against fuel price increases resulted in a brutal crackdown by the police and the army. Platforms such as Facebook became important in the run-up to the 2013 elections. In a country where free speech is restricted, the platform acted as a counterweight to state-controlled media and reached a wide audience through its transnational character (Karekwaivanane 2019; see also Matingwina 2018). Some young Zimbabwean men, some of whom are part of the diaspora, also post videos containing political satire on YouTube, and share political messages on WhatsApp. The importance of social media was illustrated by the government blocking internet access in Zimbabwe during the fuel protests and the crackdown that ensued in January 2019.

Instead of completely shunning politics, the youth have found the internet to be an important alternative space where they engage in political discussions with limited disruption and control by older politicians, most of whom are not as technologically savvy as they are. Online platforms enable the youth to engage in traditional politics outside political parties and on platforms that give issues global resonance. The internet provides an ideal platform for individual pursuits. For example, during the 2013 elections, Zimbabwean youths were driven by 'individual interests rather than collective grievances or political identity' (Hodzi 2014:48). Instead of forming political parties, they form movements and civil society organisations that challenge older political leaders using platforms that are not political parties. Civil society groups and citizens' movements enable young people to address issues relating to human rights, peacebuilding, gender equality, and other civic issues. This enables them to occupy the high moral ground and chide gerontocratic masculinities whose leadership in Zimbabwe's post-independence history is marred by human rights violations and violence.

As they raise awareness on the repressive politics of the older generation, the youth in civil society disrupt the cultural configuration in which the elders are seen as repositories of wisdom and morality, which they customarily deploy to guide and contain youth masculinities. Conversations between older men in politics and the youth in civil society on various social media platforms subvert the usual situation where the old reprimand the young; rather the young rebuke the old. This is a clear case of the youth appropriating the moral dimension of normative masculinity. For instance, Pastor Evan Mawarire who started #This Flag critiqued President Mugabe's government in a way that was well-thought through, issue-based, respectful, and clearly articulated. He was able to draw citizens' attention so strongly that many people heeded his call for a stayaway in 2016. Situated within Zimbabwe's gerontocratic traditional cultures and the ZANU PF political ethos, this was a curious case of a young man in his thirties rebuking a president in his nineties.

Even as they dominate virtual spaces, young men realise that their ideas cannot really change the political and economic situation in the country unless they find themselves in positions of power. 'Generational consensus', which calls for youth inclusion in politics, business, and society, has become the rallying cry for young people opposed to gerontocratic masculinities' monopolisation of the political field in Zimbabwe. This has resulted in activism in some instances turning full circle into traditional politics when young men stand for election to political office. For example, Nelson Chamisa started as a student leader, joined the MDC, and became one

of its youngest Members of Parliament in his early twenties. Pastor Evan Mawarire of #ThisFlag stood for election as a Harare councillor, but lost to a youthful MDC-Alliance candidate whom he congratulated on Twitter.

Thus, alternative spaces are found not only in civic organisations and virtual space, but also in opposition politics as shown by the growing trend of young opposition leaders exemplified by Nelson Chamisa in Zimbabwe, Julius Malema in South Africa, and Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu (popularly known as Bobi Wine) in Uganda. These young leaders represent an unambiguous challenge from the youth to rigid gerontocratic political structures as illustrated by their unequivocal insistence that the youth are the future. For instance, Godfrey Tsenengamu, who was expelled from ZANU PF, stated in a press conference on 3 January 2020 that he was speaking out on corruption because young people would not have a country to inherit if the current levels of the scourge continued unchecked. He also stated that he was fighting for 'our children and grandchildren' (*Nehanda TV*, 2020).

Young men in Zimbabwe appear to be realising that if they do not take the initiative, the country will continue in its current trajectory characterised by gerontocratic politics in which older men rule until they die. This creates a situation in which young people can only have their turn to rule when they are themselves old. However, considering the heterogeneity that characterises the youth in Zimbabwe, there are varied opinions on the best way to tackle the current gerontocratic politics stifling young people's aspirations and creativity. This is illustrated by the fact that while some people encouraged Pastor Evan Mawarire to participate in the council election and even in the parliamentary election, some of his followers were of the view that he should remain in his citizen movement instead of joining politics and they expressed this sentiment after he lost the council election. This seems to point to the mistrust that young Zimbabweans now have for politics and wariness due to the old adage that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Conclusion

Although post-independence Zimbabwe adopted the modern political system brought to the country through British colonial rule, the country's leadership adapted aspects of traditional political organisation such as gerontocracy to the new system. This did not appear to be the case in the early years of independence when the new black leadership was made up of relatively young men, most of whom had participated in the war of liberation. As most of the men who assumed positions in government at independence continue to occupy the same positions or to be shuffled

around in the system, young people are not left with much space to assume leadership positions in government and in the ruling party, which, unlike the main opposition party, the MDC-Alliance, is dominated by older men. Many young people interested in active politics within the framework of political parties who join ZANU PF are relegated to positions where they exercise a form of power which is deferential to older men in the party on pain of suspension and expulsion for challenging or defying these older men. In urban Zimbabwe, youths who choose to participate in political parties mostly join the MDC-Alliance, which they perceive to be more in touch with their generation and their needs and aspirations. Over the years, as politics has proved to be unreliable for young people yearning for change and space, many have lost interest in active politics.

There has been a growing trend of young people joining civil society and engaging issues that have global resonance. These new spaces have coincided with availability of virtual platforms that are dominated by young people in Zimbabwe and around the world. These two factors have coalesced to provide alternative spaces where youth masculinities can pursue their aspirations outside the carrot-and-stick approach to politics exercised by older men in Zimbabwean politics. At the same time, there is growing realisation that Zimbabwe and Africa at large cannot be changed through activism outside political office. For this reason, young people are forming their own political parties or taking over leadership in existing parties, especially in opposition parties seeking to dislodge deeply entrenched ruling parties led by 'old *madhala*'. Zimbabwe awaits the time when leadership will be transferred from older men to the youth. Meanwhile, the contest between gerontocratic and youth masculinities is growing. Calls for 'generational consensus' are becoming more strident. It remains to be seen whether the older generation will genuinely accommodate the youth's interests and allow them into leadership positions, or whether 'generational consensus' will carry the day by catapulting the youth into leadership positions without the blessing of the 'old *madhala*'.

Note

1. Former president, Mugabe, died on 6 September 2019 in Singapore at the age of ninety-five. His remains were repatriated to Zimbabwe where he was buried at his rural home instead of the 'prestigious' Heroes' Acre in Harare where the remains of the majority of the people he and his party declared national heroes are interred.

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Jovens, processos identitários e sociedades em movimento: um olhar sócio-antropológico sobre a emergência dos movimentos juvenis identitários na cidade da Praia, Cabo Verde

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Resumo

A República de Cabo Verde conquistou a independência em 1975 e abraçou a democracia liberal em 1991, o que foi considerado considerado como um exemplo em África em matéria de democracia e de boa governação. Ainda assim, aproveitando os ventos de contestação mundial pós-2008, começaram a surgir na capital do país vários tipos de protestos públicos, tendo como protagonistas jovens urbanos. Estes protestos coincidiram com um conjunto de situações denunciadas por vários relatórios e estudos académicos: situações de estrangulamento da sociedade civil fruto da bi-partidarização da vida social; perceção de insegurança urbana e de uma onda generalizada de corrupção; desconfiança dos cidadãos em relação às instituições públicas e políticas; mercantilização do voto; relação ambígua entre ativistas político-partidários e grupos de jovens armados em período eleitoral; denúncias de financiamentos de facões nacionais do narcotráfico a partidos políticos, etc. Com o presente artigo, com base num conjunto de trabalhos etnográficos desenvolvidos desde 2008 no contexto juvenil urbano da Praia, tenciono analisar o contexto do surgimento destes novos tipos de protestos sociais e políticos organizados em coletivos de jovens que se autointitulam filhos e netos de Amílcar Cabral, em que suportados por discursos contra-coloniais, apelam a uma segunda libertação e (re)africanização do espírito e das mentes.

Palavras-chave: movimentos sociais, juventude, políticas identitárias, Cabo Verde

Abstract

Cape Verde gained independence in 1975, to go on to embrace liberal democracy in 1991, being considered an example in Africa, in terms of democracy and good governance. However, following the post-2008 world

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demonstrations, several types of public protests took place in the country's capital, led by young urban protagonists. These protests overlapped with a set of situations denounced by various academic studies and reports: situations of strangulation of the civil society resulting from the bi-partisanization of social life; rising awareness of urban insecurity and a generalized wave of corruption; mistrust of citizens in relation to public and political institutions; commodification of the vote; ambiguous relationship between political party activists and youth armed groups in the electoral period; denunciations of financing of national drug trafficking factions to political parties, etc. This article is based on a set of ethnographic research carried out since 2008 among urban youth in Cidade da Praia. My goal is to analyze the context of the emergence of these new types of social and political protests organized in youth groups who call themselves the children and grandchildren of Amílcar Cabral. Supported by counter-colonial discourses, they groups call for a second liberation and (re)Africanization of [capeverdians] spirits and minds.

Keywords: Social movements, youth, identity policies, Cape Verde

Résumé

Considéré comme un exemple de démocratie et de bonne gouvernance en Afrique, le Cap-Vert a obtenu son indépendance en 1975, et en 1991, est devenue une démocratie libérale. Cependant, à la suite des soulèvements mondiaux d'après-2008, plusieurs types de manifestations publiques ont eu lieu dans la capitale du pays, menées par de jeunes acteurs urbains. Ces manifestations coïncidaient avec un ensemble de situations dénoncées par diverses études et rapports académiques : obstruction de la société civile, résultat de la bi-partisanisation de la vie sociale; prise de conscience croissante de l'insécurité urbaine et d'une vague généralisée de corruption; méfiance des citoyens vis-à-vis des institutions publiques et politiques; marchandisation du vote ; relation ambiguë entre militants de partis politiques et bandes armées de jeunes pendant les périodes électorales ; dénonciations du financement des partis politiques par des organisations locales de trafic de drogue, etc. Cet article est basé sur un ensemble de recherches ethnographiques menées depuis 2008 auprès de la jeunesse urbaine de Cidade da Praia. Mon objectif est d'analyser le contexte de l'émergence de ces nouveaux types de manifestations sociales et politiques organisées par des groupes de jeunes qui se font appeler les enfants et petits-enfants d'Amílcar Cabral. Avec des discours contre-coloniaux, ces groupes appellent à une seconde libération et à une (ré)africanisation des esprits et des mentalités [capverdiens].

Mots-clés : mouvements sociaux, jeunesse, politiques identitaires, Cap-Vert

Notas iniciais

No ano de 2015 Cabo Verde celebrou os 40 anos como república independente, efeméride aproveitada por José Maria Neves, então Primeiro-Ministro, para o lançamento do seu segundo livro intitulado *Cabo Verde: gestão de impossibilidades*. Ao se autoproclamar como a continuidade de Cabral, Neves (2015) elenca os ganhos do partido-Estado na gestão da ajuda pública ao desenvolvimento (1975-1991) e salienta a implementação da nova Agenda de Transformação a partir de 2003, cujo objetivo será tornar o arquipélago num centro internacional de prestações de serviços e base de apoio logístico na sub-região oeste africana[1].

No entanto, mesmo reconhecendo os enormes ganhos de Cabo Verde após a celebração da independência nacional e a reconquista da confiança no país dos parceiros para o desenvolvimento, nos anos de 2000, após os escândalos protagonizados pelo governo sustentado pelo Movimento para a Democracia (MpD) na viragem do milénio (Rosário 2013), a visão triunfante deste político é de certa forma contrariada por vários estudos e pesquisas (OHCHR 2013; Évora e Ramos 2013; Costa 2013; Varela & Lima 2014; Lima 2015b, 2012; Afrobarometer 2015) que têm apontado aspetos menos positivos da democracia e governação em Cabo Verde, expressados na intensificação dos protestos políticos, principalmente a partir de 2010, no rescaldo do cenário contestatário a nível mundial no pós-2008.

Derivado da crise económica mundial iniciada no biénio 2007/2008, o país declara-se em situação de crise "por falta de uma política estruturada, de meios financeiros e de uma orientação clara para os investidores nacionais e estrangeiros em domínios estratégicos tais como o setor económico e produtivo" (Rosário 2013: 28), na medida em que as possibilidades de financiamento e de cooperação por parte dos países parceiros tornaram-se mais raras. Não obstante, o Partido Africano da Independência de Cabo Verde (PAICV) consegue um terceiro mandato em 2011 sob a liderança de José Maria Neves.

Contudo, o feito não travou os protestos que atingiram o seu ponto mais alto no dia 30 de Março de 2015, liderado pela recém-criada *MAC#114*[2], quando cerca de cinco mil pessoas saíram simultaneamente às ruas, nos principais centros urbanos do país, em manifestação contra a aprovação por unanimidade na Assembleia Nacional da República (ANR), do Estatuto dos Titulares dos Cargos Públicos (ETCP), que previa, entre outras regalias, aumentos salariais para os políticos em função, numa conjuntura em que a maioria das reivindicações salariais exigidas pelos sindicatos tinha sido rejeitadas com o argumento do país se encontrar em uma situação económica precária.

Com o presente artigo, que tem por base um conjunto de trabalhos etnográficos desenvolvidos a partir de 2008 no contexto juvenil urbano da Praia, tenciono analisar o ambiente do surgimento destes novos tipos de protestos sociais e políticos protagonizados por jovens, em que suportados por discursos contra-coloniais apelam a uma segunda libertação e (re) africanização do espírito e das mentes.

Movimentos sociais e jovens

Os protestos políticos pós-2008 marcaram uma nova era de manifestação a nível mundial, uma vez que criaram movimentos de contestação que ocuparam espaços não consolidados das estruturas e organizações sociais contemporâneas, por um lado, e propuseram novas formas de organização política, por outro. Com um carácter global, anti-sistémico e tendo as organizações financeiras internacionais como adversárias, esses movimentos fizeram do ciberespaço um *locus* estratégico de mobilizações e articulações dos protestos de rua. Segundo Fontes (2016), o surgimento de novas formas de opressão e o isolamento político do movimento operário potenciaram condições para a emergência de novos sujeitos sociais e novas práticas de ação coletiva. O conjunto de protestos iniciados em 2011, em que se destacaram a *Primavera Árabe* no Norte da África, o movimento *Occupy Wall Street* nos Estados Unidos, o movimento dos *Indignados* na Europa e o movimento *Passe Livre* no Brasil, são expressões dessa nova forma de se fazer política de rua que comunga muitos princípios daquilo que ficou conhecido, em 1999, como o movimento da "alterglobalização" (Filho & Carvalho 2013).

Uma análise histórica dos movimentos sociais evidencia que se os primeiros, hoje denominados de velhos movimentos sociais, surgiram no século XIX associados ao desenvolvimento da sociedade industrial, cujas lutas são baseadas na ideia de classe, nos anos de 1960, procedeu-se a uma reconceptualização do fenómeno, que passou a ser designado de novos movimentos sociais, associados ao surgimento de novos modos de ação coletiva na era dos meios de comunicação de massas e das contraculturas juvenis. O Maio parisiense de 1968 é apresentado por Horn (2017) como o evento que na altura mudou o paradigma dos movimentos sociais, visto ter tomado proporções internacionais, originando tanto o surgimento de movimentos pacifistas e ambientalistas como de movimentos terroristas europeus ligados à extrema esquerda.

O critério de classe foi parcialmente afastado, na medida em que se colocou ênfase noutros critérios com base no reconhecimento identitário (Fontes 2016). Devido à deslocalização da base territorial deste tipo de movimento do contexto local para um contexto regional e transnacional,

e a partir dos primeiros anos do século XXI, a consolidação da era de redes globais e de ciberculturas juvenis, o fenómeno passa a ser designado de movimentos globais e, mais recentemente, de novíssimos movimentos sociais (Pereira 2013).

São normalmente liderados por jovens qualificados e politizados (Robinson 2005), que partindo de uma base nacional buscam alcançar uma plataforma de contestação transnacional, aproximando-se do modelo da teoria gramsciana, que defende que a disputa da hegemonia deve ter origem nacional e daí difundir-se para uma conquista internacional (McNally 2009). São jovens que, não obstante a sua forte qualificação, se encontram inseridos em contextos profissionais precarizados ou então fazem parte do elevado contingente de desempregados (Castells 2012), constituídos pela classe dominante como uma nova classe perigosa (Standing 2014). Se, por um lado, muitos destes jovens se encontravam associados a movimentos de esquerda, por outro, sobretudo na Europa e nas Américas, a situação de precarização revigorou os movimentos populistas de direita que também invadiram as praças e sobretudo as plataformas *online*, propondo um novo tipo de ativismo identitário.

A crise económica e financeira norte-americana e a sua expansão inicialmente à Europa e, posteriormente, a outras regiões do globo, é apontada como o principal responsável da assunção do carácter transnacional desses protestos. Entretanto, no caso árabe, embora as circunstâncias económicas tenham constituído um pano de fundo essencial na sua ocorrência, outros fatores são apontados como sendo os principais causadores das revoltas: a ausência de um modelo de desenvolvimento capaz de gerar oportunidades de trabalho para uma das populações mais jovens e desempregadas do mundo e a crise social que dela advém (Ferabolli 2012); a incoerência entre as afirmações feitas pelos respetivos regimes nas suas tentativas de autolegitimação, contrariado pela realidade do desprezo e da repressão praticada ao longo dos anos (Joffé 2011).

O surgimento e a afirmação deste novo ciclo de ação coletiva, marcada por novas lutas e gramáticas de resistência, por diferentes espaços de participação e por novas formas de organização, segundo Morin (1999), teve início em Seattle, em 1999, protagonizada por uma geração juvenil globalizada que sucede a geração realista e pragmática dos anos de 1990. É de salientar que desde os anos de 1960, a sociologia da juventude tem tomado como referência os jovens da classe média e, segundo Muxel (1997), estes eram representados como uma geração engajada e politizada cujos questionamentos culturais e políticos lhes concedeu relevância como ator social, ao contrário da geração de jovens dos anos anteriores, considerada

como desviante nos Estados Unidos e provida de uma rebeldia sem causa na Europa (Quiroga 1997).

Essa forma de olhar a juventude permaneceu como modelo de análise da sociologia, com consequência na desqualificação, em muitas análises posteriores, das várias manifestações juvenis surgidas, compreendidas então como expressões de alienação. A geração juvenil dos anos de 1970 e 1980 foi analisada segundo esse modelo e, por conseguinte, foi percebida como apática e despolitizada (Muxel 1997), uma vez que nessas duas décadas os jovens organizaram-se em torno de movimentos culturais que se apresentavam socialmente com um estilo de vida que tinha na música, no lazer e no consumo de determinados itens a sua marca identitária (Quiroga 1997). A juventude subalternizada[3] e o seu envolvimento com os movimentos de protestos, no entender de Quiroga (1997), apenas começou a surgir na literatura sociológica com a expansão mundial dos movimentos e estilos musicais ligados à cultura *hip-hop*, apesar da sua forte presença nos movimentos negros norte-americanos dos anos de 1970.

Em África, os estudos sobre a juventude são relativamente recentes, assim como a sua relação com os movimentos sociais ou com a cultura. Das designações de jovens em risco ou desviantes patenteados em diversos estudos sobre jovens africanos, a perspetiva pós-colonial da juventude tem evidenciado o seu envolvimento no ativismo e movimentos sociais, destacando o seu papel na política de resistência contra o colonialismo, o *apartheid* e outras formas de dominação (Honwana 2012). Contudo, Segundo Aidi (2018), os estudiosos dos movimentos sociais têm negligenciado os movimentos sociais africanos com o argumento de que as sociedades africanas são rurais, muito ligadas à tradição e à questão étnica ou então porque têm uma classe proletária atrasada.

Os protestos de rua em Moçambique contra a subida do preço dos transportes públicos informais e do pão, em 2008 e 2010 respetivamente (Bussotti 2010; Cravo 2014; Brito 2015), os protestos na África do Norte contra os regimes autoritários, em 2010, e o protesto no Senegal contra a corrupção governamental, o desemprego em massa e falta de perspetiva futura dos jovens, em 2011, e os demais protestos impulsionados por jovens um pouco por todo o continente africano entre 2011 e 2012, expressões de um novo acordar africano (Honwana 2013), demonstraram que existe uma ligação entre ativismo juvenil, cultura urbana (especificamente a cultura *hip-hop*) e protestos de rua, na medida em que tiveram na figura dos *rappers* El General e Azagaia, na Tunísia e Moçambique respetivamente, e no movimento *Y'en a Marre*, liderado por *rappers* e jornalistas senegaleses, os principais incitadores.

Contudo, ao contrário da ideia reproduzida pela literatura de matriz eurocêntrica de que este suposto acordar africano tenha sido desencadeado pela chamada *Primavera Árabe*, Mandani (2011) demonstra que a revolta de Soweto, nos anos de 1970, liderado por Steve Biko e o movimento de consciência negra, deve ser encarada como o antecedente político dos acontecimentos da Praça Tahrir[4]. Isto porque, ela representou uma viragem histórica nos movimentos sociais africanos, por ter sido o primeiro em que se usou uma imaginação alternativa de confronto focado em lutas populares nas pós-independências. Por outro lado, assim como os eventos do Soweto, o do Cairo tiveram como desencadeador as políticas de segregação, mais concretamente a religiosa e ambos tiveram como a sua principal força a unidade entre grupos com identidades culturais diferenciadas, bem como a opção pela não violência da multidão, o que tornou possível novas políticas de inclusão.

Nessa mesma linha, Aidi (2018) toma este suposto acordar africano como uma terceira vaga de ações de movimentos sociais da África subsariana, iniciados com os protestos anticoloniais, entre os anos de 1940 e 1950 e ressurgidos entre os finais de 1980 e 1990, como reação às políticas de ajustamento estrutural. Portanto, segundo o autor, os protestos dos anos de 2000, com mais de 90 ocorrências que, entre os anos de 2005 e 2014, marcaram a realidade urbana e política de cerca de 40 países africanos – sem contar com as greves locais e laborais (Mampilly e Branch 2015, *cit. in* Aidi, 2018) – representam a continuidade de luta e resistência pan-africana, aqui reemergida como resposta à intensificação das políticas de austeridade no contexto da guerra contra o terrorismo.

Cabo Verde e a cronologia dos protestos públicos

Historicamente, Cabo Verde passou por marcantes levantamentos populares, sobretudo no período colonial (Mascarenhas 2014). No período pós-independência, dois acontecimentos merecem destaque: o levantamento da população camponesa de Santo Antão, em Agosto de 1981, reagindo à política de reforma agrária, controlada apenas através do uso da força, no qual resultou uma morte do lado dos manifestantes (Silveira 1991); e o levantamento dos estudantes do Ensino Secundário da cidade da Praia[5], reforçados pela população desalojada de um dos bairros da cidade, em Abril de 1994, reagindo às políticas educacionais consideradas injustas na altura. A resposta violenta da Polícia de Choque desencadeou violentos confrontos com os manifestantes (Lima 2012). Contudo, na segunda metade dos anos de 2000 emergiram um novo ciclo e novas formas de protestos públicos, intensificadas a partir de 2010, no rescaldo dos protestos políticos que a partir de 2008 passaram a ocorrer um pouco por todo o mundo.

O *rap* apresenta-se como uma destas novas formas de protestos, tanto na sua versão *gangsta,* como afrocêntrica e/ou pan-africanista, consolidado na segunda metade dos anos de 2000 como uma forma de protesto subalterno com capacidade de transpor para o espaço público os discursos ocultos proferidos nos espaços informais apesar das constantes tentativas da sua partidarização, institucionalização e mercantilização. Para além do *rap*, houve a intensificação de petições públicas e a emergência do ativismo cibernético, o reaparecimento de manifestações culturais de cariz afrocêntrica e/ou pan-africana, carregados de uma forte componente simbólica, o ativismo juvenil comunitário e ocupações de equipamentos públicos abandonados, a intensificação das ações dos movimentos sindicais e os protestos de rua mobilizados através das redes sociais.

Em 2006, a petição 'Salvemos o ilhéu de Santa Maria', a primeira a ser entregue na ANR desde a criação do decreto 3/2003 que institui que as petições sejam assinadas por pelo menos 300 pessoas para terem efeito legal, trouxe novo alento a uma sociedade civil até então apática e acrítica. No biénio 2008/2009, criou-se o projeto *Blogjoint*, coletivo de *bloggers* do chamado movimento blogosférico cabo-verdiano, que para além da promoção de uma crítica social articulada, buscou construir uma agenda temática de discussões e de protestos públicos. Na sequência da efervescência blogosférica, em 2010, surge a petição 'Salvar Éden Park' promovida pelo blogue Café Margoso, com a pretensão de despertar as instituições públicas, bem como a sociedade civil, para a necessidade de recuperar do abandono a maior sala de espetáculos do Mindelo, património cultural e de memória coletiva da cidade. Nesse mesmo ano, o mesmo blogue associou-se ao movimento *Cordá Monte Cara* no intuito de mobilizar um protesto de rua contra o bipartidarismo que no entender dos promotores tem fraturado São Vicente, reproduzindo a inércia social. Em 2013 surge o movimento anticorrupção *Ação Transparência e Integridade*, na sequência da primeira ação popular entregue na ANR, em 2007, exigindo o cumprimento do ETCP e denunciando a corrupção e o nepotismo no país.

No que toca ao reaparecimento de protestos simbólicos através de manifestações culturais e protestos de cariz comunitário, em 2010, a associação *Djuntarti*, influenciado pela associação *Fidjus di* Cabral e pelo projeto de liderança comunitária orientado pelo movimento *Shokanti* promove a primeira marcha em homenagem a Cabral, no dia 20 de Janeiro, data de seu assassinato, tendo ocupado a mais emblemática praça da capital cabo-verdiana[6], onde através do *break dancing*, *graffiti*, *rapping* e artes cénicas se criou espaço para uma demonstração juvenil de insubordinação simbólica, retomada a partir de 2013 pela *Korrenti Ativizta* e renomeado como *Marxa*

Cabral ou *Marcha do Povo*. Em 2012, a associação *Kilombo* viu no lançamento da primeira pedra para a construção do edifício referente ao projeto *Casa Para Todos*[7], no bairro de Tira Chapéu, a oportunidade de protesto contra o que entenderam ser uma forma de reprodução das desigualdades sociais no bairro. Entre os anos de 2013 e 2014, como resultado dos desencontros entre as promessas políticas e práticas governativas e as consecutivas falhas na execução de políticas sociais inclusivas, a *Korrenti Ativizta* levou avante a política de ocupação de equipamentos públicos abandonados na Achada Grande Frente e Lém Ferreira, tendo assim surgido os espaços *Pilorinhu* e *Finka Pé* respetivamente.

Contudo, a maioria desses protestos teve pouca adesão e foram efémeros, uma vez que se desmobilizaram logo após a primeira demonstração e as suas ações não tiveram qualquer efeito prático. Outros tiveram algum impacto no tecido social cabo-verdiano embora posteriormente institucionalizados ou desmobilizados por conflitos internos. Com maior visibilidade, os protestos de rua mobilizados através das redes sociais ganharam alento em Cabo Verde e em 2011, impulsionados pelas movimentações a nível mundial, cerca de três centenas de pessoas saíras à rua, depois de mais uma convocatória da associação *Pró-Praia* perante o que se considerou ser os desmandos da ELECTRA[8]. Em Outubro desse mesmo ano, o movimento *Basta de Apagões* convocou uma ocupação da principal praça do Plateau, numa demonstração de repúdio à má gestão governamental da crise energética na capital, em que marcaram presença cerca de duas mil pessoas de vários quadrantes sociais e político-partidários[9] que espontaneamente transformaram a ocupação numa marcha que terminou à frente da casa do então Primeiro-Ministro.

Em 2012 e 2013, embora sem o brilho da geração de 1994, foi a vez dos estudantes da universidade pública protestarem nas ruas da Praia e do Mindelo contra o regulamento interno, a má funcionalidade da universidade que no entender dos mesmos tem repercutido na formação dos alunos e contra a taxa de exame da segunda época. Em 2014, a UNTC-CS[10] convoca um protesto contra o novo código laboral que considerou inconstitucional, juntando cerca de cinco mil pessoas nas ruas dos principais centros urbanos do país. Nesse mesmo ano, pouco mais de 300 jovens de Ribeira Grande, em Santo Antão, autodenominados *Movimento Basta*, saíram à rua protestando contra aquilo que apelidaram de interesses egoístas, mentiras, incapacidade de liderança e a falta de oportunidade na ilha.

Os protestos de 30 de Março representaram o ponto máximo deste novo ciclo de protestos em Cabo Verde, mas também o seu fim[11]. Com o título 'Cabo Verde à Beira da revolução', o extinto semanário 'A Voz' deu à estampa, no do dia 3 de Abril de 2015, quatro dias após os protestos, que

cerca de cinco mil pessoas saíram simultaneamente às ruas em vários pontos do país, dando claros sinais de descontentamento com o sistema político cabo-verdiano. Três dias antes, a 27 de Março, pessoas ligadas à juventude do PAICV, convocaram também através da plataforma *Facebook* um primeiro ensaio que juntou cerca de 150 pessoas à frente da ANR. Imitados no início de Abril nas ilhas da Boa Vista, Fogo e São Nicolau, por terem sido os mais mediatizados da história do país, fizeram com que os cabo-verdianos sonhassem perigosamente com uma espécie de revolução social e política.

Contudo, a excessiva mediatização e fulanização deste protesto contribuiu para a invisibilização de outros grupos contestatários participantes e cidadãos anónimos. Por outro lado, a falta de uma agenda política concreta impossibilitou a continuidade do movimento após um *clinch* político (Zizek 2013) protagonizado pelo veto a tempo *record* do Presidente da República. O vazio deixado pela MAC#114 teve uma tentativa de preenchimento cinco meses mais tarde protoganizada pela *Korrenti Ativizta* com a ocupação durante cerca de uma semana do Ilhéu de Santa Maria, após o anúncio do projeto *Cape Verde Integrate Resort & Casino*, a ser construído nesse ilhéu. Entretanto, igualmente por falta de uma visão integrada da ação e de uma agenda política concreta, o coletivo acabou por cair no mesmo erro que a *MAC#114*, embora seja importante reconhecer a importância do ato em si, por ter colocado, mesmo que momentaneamente, na agenda pública a discussão da construção do empreendimento. Tendo as figuras mais mediáticas da *MAC#114* posicionado a favor do projeto e, por conseguinte, contra o protesto protagonizado pela *Korrenti Arivizta*, logo ficou evidenciada a desarticulação existente entre os vários grupos de protesto em atividade na Praia em particular e em Cabo Verde no geral.

Autores como Zlavoj Zizek argumentam que os vazios deixados por estes tipos de protestos necessitam de tempo para serem preenchidos da melhor maneira, "uma vez que se trata de um vazio fecundo, de uma abertura para o verdadeiro novo" (Zizek 2013:119). No caso da *MAC#114*, entendo que não tendo havido um "novo" protagonizado pelas estruturas políticas alternativas, este "novo" acabou por surgir nas eleições legislativas de 2016, pelas mãos de um dos mais antigos representantes institucionais das estruturas político-partidárias do país, o MpD, com uma vitória esmagadora.

No caso específico da Korrenti Arivízta, mas que também se pode estender ao MAC#114 ou a alguns dos indicados em cima, a afirmação de Zizek (2013) de que tipos de movimentos como estes são frutos de uma era pós-ideológica, portanto, desprovida de razão e movida apenas por uma insistência no reconhecimento com base num vago ressentimento inarticulado, poderá, à primeira vista, fazer algum sentido. Contudo,

recorrendo a Nelson Maldonado-Torres, diria que este tipo de declaração contém em si uma alta dose de racismo epistémico. Isto porque provém de alguém que aparenta ter alguma dificuldade em pensar uma filosofia legítima fora dos cânones eurocêntricos de conhecimento ou que "não consegue considerar o radicalismo político fora da díade marxista-cristã" (2008:100). É de realçar que esta afirmação surge ao se referir a jovens magrebinos e negros subsarianos, porventura associados à religião islâmica que, em 2005, protagonizaram a revolta das banlieues parisienses. Com isto quero dizer que, assim como Mandani (2011) e Aidi (2018) apontaram no estudo dos movimentos sociais, concordo com Nelson Maldonado-Torres quando defende a ideia de que a amnésia sistémica presente na grande maioria dos intelectuais e pesquisadores ocidentais, por mais radical que sejam as suas críticas ao modernismo ocidental, se insere numa lógica de colonialidade de conhecimento que os impede de pensar uma epistemologia que não seja com referência às grandes realizações do mundo ocidental. Ou seja, que "o projeto da busca de raízes na Europa… conduz… à rejeição das relações geopolíticas mais amplas que operam na própria formação da modernidade" (Maldonado-Torres 2008:109).

Organizações de rua e sociedades em movimento

Para além das formas de manifestação de mal-estar em formato de protestos públicos, tidos como legítimos e democráticos, entre os anos de 2003 e 2012, Cabo-Verde ficou também marcado pelo surgimento de outras formas de manifestação de mal-estar espelhadas num novo tipo de violência de rua, surgido inicialmente na Praia e, posteriormente no Mindelo, protagonizados por gangues de rua, denominados de *thugs*.

Num outro trabalho (Lima 2010) dei a entender que a rápida democratização do país nos anos de 1990 fez emergir espaços marginais fora das lógicas de controlo institucional, regulamentos comunitários e vigilância estatal, proporcionando o surgimento simultâneo daquilo a que Diouf (2003) designou de geografias de delinquência e de resistência. Isto quer dizer que no caso dos jovens cabo-verdianos desafiliados e socializados no contexto democrático, tanto fizeram do uso da violência quanto das formas tidas como legítimas e democráticas como ferramentas de protesto político contra a sua condição social, ainda que, para lá do discurso por vezes radical, na prática, o status quo social raramente tenha sido posto em causa.

No caso da violência urbana, embora a literatura sociológica tradicional comprometida com as ideais do progresso social não a tenha considerado como uma forma de protesto público, a chamada de atenção de Roque e Cardoso (2012) para o fato dos estudos da violência terem ignorado a sua

componente política através da substituição artificial da noção de violência política pela violência social torna-se pertinente. Contudo, convém salientar que com isto não estou a afirmar que tanto na Praia como no Mindelo, a violência expressa nestes grupos os transformou obrigatoriamente num movimento social. Embora estes atos possam ser pensados enquanto reação do mau funcionamento das instituições políticas e o significado da sua reivindicação social encontrado na descontinuidade entre aquilo que é prometido e aquilo que é recebido, o que constatei é que lhes tem faltado uma estratégia e um objetivo concreto, que lhes poderia fornecer simultaneamente identidades de resistência e de projeto (Castells 2003), elementos constituintes dos movimentos sociais.

Para tal, o trabalho de Brotherton e Barrios (2004) ganha relevância. Ao combinar conceitos utilizados nas pesquisas sobre gangues e literatura dos movimentos sociais, estes autores construíram um modelo conceptual entre gangues e movimentos sociais, definindo-os como um grupo formado por jovens e adultos pertencentes a classes sociais marginalizadas, que proporciona aos seus membros a construção de uma identidade de resistência, uma oportunidade de empoderamento individual e social, uma voz de contestação à cultura dominante, um refúgio das tensões e pressões do quotidiano do bairro ou gueto, assim como um enclave espiritual onde os rituais sagrados podem ser gerados e exercitados. Com a expressão organizações de rua, toma-os como possíveis agentes de mudança e considera-os como grupos sociais que se vão adaptando num universo marcado por relações de poder desiguais, dotados de um repositório ativo de conhecimento de resistência sociocultural, enquanto funcionam como reprodutores do sistema de valor cultural dominante.

Ao considerar os grupos de jovens armados na Praia como associações juvenis comunitárias informais (Lima 2010) quis reforçar essa ideia, na medida em que as minhas primeiras observações de terreno apontavam-nos como grupos constituindo redes de indivíduos surgidos nos bairros desafiliados, com a particularidade de utilizarem a violência como forma de chamar a atenção, de buscar reconhecimento dos poderes públicos ou dos organismos não-governamentais. No entanto, reflexões posteriores levaram-me a repensar estes conceitos, visto que tanto os movimentos sociais como as organizações de rua estão assentes em pressupostos paradigmáticos euro-norte-americanos e, por isso, podem não captar a totalidade destes fenómenos no contexto cabo-verdiano.

Indo de encontro ao argumento de Zibechi (2015), que analisa o contexto latino-americano, a análise dos movimentos sociais tende a classificá-los a partir de três componentes: uma estrutura de mobilização ou

sistema de tomada de decisões; uma identidade coletiva ou registos culturais; e repertórios de mobilização ou métodos de luta. Portanto, segundo o autor, nas situações em que os movimentos não funcionam dessa maneira, torna-se necessário uma árdua tarefa de descolonização do pensamento no que toca ao debate sobre as teorias dos movimentos sociais fora do contexto onde foi sociologicamente produzido. Nesta lógica, a utilização do termo sociedades em movimento parece-nos mais adequado, mesmo sendo vago, visto que não remete a instituições e enfatiza a ideia de que algo se move. Ou seja, permite nomear e pensar o movimento de uma sociedade ou sistema de relações sociais em seu conjunto, partindo do fato de existirem várias sociedades na sociedade ou pelo menos dois conjuntos de relações sociais minimamente articulados.

Esta proposta analítica de ação coletiva mantém o aspeto identitário como central e aprofunda a análise dos movimentos a partir de um outro lugar que não as formas de organização e os repertórios de mobilização, mas sim as relações sociais e os territórios. Desta forma, obriga ao surgimento de novos conceitos em que se destacam a autonomia, a cultura e a comunidade, visto tratar-se de movimentos territorializados. No caso das gangues, o trabalho de Hagedorn (2008) salienta esse fato ao destacar o papel deste tipo de agrupamento no seio dos movimentos sociais urbanos e nas suas lutas contra o processo da gentrificação.

Os estudos realizados por este autor indicam que existe hoje uma reivindicação por parte das gangues de rua de uma identidade de vítima que lhes têm fornecido uma identidade étnico-racial consolidada a partir da perspetiva traumática da história de escravatura e exploração. Assim, tendo também observado esta tendência no caso praiense, entendo esta proposta teórica na análise do processo de transformação das gangues em organizações de rua num contexto em que as sociedades se movimentam de forma intensa. Este processo tem sido efetuado a partir da apropriação de identidades herdadas dos grupos sociais da resistência do passado social esclavagista e colonial.

Como aponta Honneth (2011 [1992]), reforçado por Innenarity (2016), os conflitos patenteados nos movimentos sociais deslocaram das esferas da classe social, da igualdade e da economia para o espaço da identidade, da diferença e da cultura, colocando, portanto, a política pelo reconhecimento no centro da questão. No caso cabo-verdiano, uma análise cuidada do período posterior à política de pacificação na cidade da Praia, a partir de 2012, evidencia este processo, com o surgimento de novas formas de protagonismo social e novos espaços de afirmação e contestação social e política que paulatinamente foram substituindo as gangues de rua enquanto

espaços de inserção social e coesão identitária (Lima 2014) em alguns bairros da cidade. Stefani (2016, 2014), analisando a *Korrenti Ativizta* demonstra como se processou esse fenómeno nos bairros de Achada Grande Frente e Lém Ferreira.

Além da *Korrenti Ativizta*, mais dois outros coletivos se destacaram nesse processo: o coletivo *Ra-Teknolojia*, cujo objetivo tem sido a consciencialização dos jovens através do *rap*, programas de rádio e palestras comunitárias para os ideais afrocêntricos[12], através de uma crítica contundente ao eurocentrismo reproduzido em Cabo Verde e denunciando o privilégio branco; e o movimento *Sankofa*, que se insurgiu no interior da *Korrenti Ativizta*, com a qual comunga os mesmos propósitos, apresentando, no entanto, uma cadeia de comando horizontal e discursos anti-elitista, anti-partidário e anti-institucional mais agressivos, entretanto com um campo de atuação menos mediatizado. É de salientar, no entanto, que a *Korrenti Ativizta* foi influenciada ideologicamente pelo *Ra-Teknolojia*.

Estes coletivos, embora desprovidos de uma agenda coletiva concreta, orientam-se pela necessidade de reconhecimento e apresentam continuidades do modelo *thug* (Stefani 2016, 2014). Os seus integrantes são ex-membros de grupos de jovens armados, ex-presidiários e ativistas socioculturais, que a partir de uma lógica transcomunitária, reivindicam o ideal cabralista de (re)africanização dos espíritos e das mentes e apelam a uma nova revolução contra um sistema político-partidário corrupto que traiu os ideais de luta pela independência nacional.

A luta continua: *rap* e construção de uma identidade de resistência

O *rap*, sobretudo o do cariz afrocêntrico e pan-africano, desempenhou um importante papel nesse processo de (re)africanização dos espíritos e das mentes, uma vez que proporcionou através das narrativas de Tupac, uma profunda reflexão das múltiplas dimensões da violência, simultaneamente a partir da perspetiva de vítimas e de agentes, criando condições para que pudessem olhar ao seu redor a partir de uma nova perspetiva de compreensão dos processos históricos que estão na base de formação sociocultural cabo-verdiana.

> *Rap* faz parte de um movimento social inserido numa luta de africanos para os direitos humanos e é a única arma de combate que nos restou após o silenciamento dos movimentos pelos direitos civis. Tupac é um produto dos *Black Phanters*. Veio de um berço revolucionário. Tupac soube desde cedo que é um africano e que não existe justiça social para os negros nos Estados Unidos. Onde é que um jovem cabo-verdiano se situa? Falta-lhe uma identidade… O nosso trabalho de ativismo é incutir a esse jovem uma identidade… Apresentar Tupac e Cabral para além da sua imagem, buscando mostrar a aplicabilidade

hoje das suas teorias. Se os próprios gangues lerem Cabral e a sua teoria do domínio da zona terão a seu dispor uma importante estratégia militar que os proporciona ter um trabalho mais positivo no seu bairro (Kadamawe, líder do *Ra-Teknolojia*, Praia, Julho de 2011).

Num *workshop* organizado na Praia, em Maio de 2013, o líder da *Korrenti Ativizta* afirmou que a força de "Tupac foi ter focado naquilo que a sociedade precisava de ouvir", fazendo com que através do *rap* se começasse "a compreender um conjunto de situações que te rodeiam e a expressá-la". A introdução pelo *Ra-Teknolojia* da busca da personalidade africana[13] através dos princípios do *hip-hop*, mais concretamente da ideologia de Tupac e da perspetiva revolucionária de Amilcar Cabral, deveu-se sobretudo à familiarização destes jovens com estas figuras globais[14]. Se, por um lado, foi o *revolutionary gangsta rap* de Tupac que forneceu inicialmente elementos para a (re)construção identitária em torno de uma cultura que têm no contexto africano a sua génese, o aparato ideológico de Cabral veio complementar este processo, contribuindo assim para a rejeição da identidade atlântica defendida pelos *Claridosos*[15], construída a partir da tese luso-tropicalista do sociólogo brasileiro Gilberto Freyre.

Com a ideia de (re)africanização dos espíritos e das mentes, Cabral quis promover uma reconversão cultural do homem cabo-verdiano através da reconquista da sua personalidade africana (Cabral 2013 [1970]). Para Cabral (2015 [1963]), o cabo-verdiano é um africano e tem uma personalidade própria a que chamou de personalidade cabo-verdiana. De modo a demonstrar que esta personalidade é africana, buscou desenvolver um trabalho de desmistificação dos mitos da origem[16] e das hespérides[17], sustento ideológico da identidade e nação cabo-verdiana. Coube-lhe, assim, apresentar evidências arqueológicas sobre a origem das ilhas, apresentado como resultado de um pedaço de terra da região senegalesa denominado de Cabo Verde, parte oeste da cidade de Dacar (Cabral 2014 [1969]).

Ao comprovar que o arquipélago era parte física do continente africano, havia a necessidade de desconstruir a ideia de uma suposta identidade afro-portuguesa do homem das ilhas, embora reconheça alguma influência da cultura portuguesa. Para ele, o cabo-verdiano não é português e mesmo aqueles que tentam passar como portugueses, na prática, não se identificam com ele, na medida em que "não é um português nem um tipo das ilhas, mas sim um elemento marcado pela presença africana" (Cabral 2015 [1963]:95). Isto porque, o conjunto de etnias que constitui o fundamento ancestral da ocupação humana maioritária nas ilhas são provenientes da zona compreendida entre o rio do Senegal e a Serra Leoa (Duarte 1974). Estes fatos, segundo Cabral (2015 [1963]), explicam porque é que em Cabo

Verde, percebido como um protótipo de colónia[18], se desenvolveu uma tradição de luta anticolonial e anti-racista, espelhada no espírito de rebeldia e de resistência cultural da sua população, sobretudo aquela camponesa da ilha de Santiago. Por isso, para ele, era de crucial importância utilizar este saber revolucionário endógeno no processo de consciencialização do cabo-verdiano para a luta, especialmente o camponês, acreditando que com isso estaria a contribuir para a sua (de)assimilação ou (de)aculturação imposta pelo colonialismo missionário (Villen 2013) e reproduzido pela intelectualidade cabo-verdiana (Lima & Robalo 2019).

Do meu ponto de vista, ao fazer este trabalho de reconversão cultural, de apelo ao regresso às fontes, Amílcar Cabral põe em prática um tipo de pensamento que o quilombola brasileiro António Bispo dos Santos denominou de saber contra colonial. Isto é, um pensamento que compreende a colonização não como um fato histórico, mas sim como um processo, uma vez que estes povos em nenhum momento se perderam. Pelo contrário, souberam resistir e no processo manter a sua cultura intacta. Neste sentido, compreendo esta prática como pedagogia de impacto, que nas palavras deste quilombola, se inscreve num tipo de pensamento orgânico, oposto ao pensamento sintético eurocêntrico, mesmo na sua visão académica alternativa em modo pós-colonial e/ou de-colonial. "A diferença entre o pensamento colonialista e o contracolonialista. E estou dizendo contracolonialista e não decolonialista. E por que digo isto? Se qualquer um de vocês chegar a um quilombo e falar de decolonialidade, o nosso povo não entenderá. Mas se disser contra-colonialismo, nosso povo entende" (Santos 2019:24).

Foi, portanto, através do *rap*, enquanto fenómeno contracolonial (Lima & Robalo 2019), que a consciencialização dessa identidade africana e negra se fecundou. Através daquilo que Santos (2015) designou de guerra das denominações, ajudou a revalorizar uma cultura antes denegrida, resignificando-a e, no processo, dotou-a de uma capacidade afirmativa. Por outro lado, reatualiza o que Cabral (2015 [1963]) chamou de problema rácico cabo-verdiano. Neste sentido, tendo em conta a importância da variável "raça" no processo de mobilização desses jovens, sobretudo na transformação das gangues em organizações de rua (Lima 2018), a recuperação do legado sociológico de W.E.B. Du Bois urge como necessário, uma vez que coloca no centro da discussão do estudo deste tipo de agrupamentos a questão racial, que segundo Hagedorn (2006) devem ser hoje percebidos a partir de uma análise histórica da opressão e resistência racial, étnica e religiosa ou, no caso cabo-verdiano, esclavagista e colonial. Isto quer dizer que entender uma parte dos movimentos sociais juvenis urbanos emergentes hoje na cidade da Praia, leva-nos a tomar em consideração as três ideias conceptuais avançadas

por Hagedorn (2008):1) desmoralização; 2) identidade de resistência; 3) permanência do racismo. Segundo o autor, quando associadas, estes ideais fornecem uma melhor explanação de como as pessoas em situação de opressão são capazes de se organizar em grupo, de modo a dar sentido à sua existência num mundo globalizado marcado por incertezas e desigualdades.

Em Julho de 2005, aquando da comemoração dos 40 anos da independência do país, ano que coincidiu com o lançamento do livro de José Maria Neves mencionado na introdução deste artigo, esses jovens afirmaram de forma uníssona que ao contrário do institucionalmente propalado, estas só tinham sentido se tomadas como uma comemoração da dependência ou, por outras palavras de continuidade colonial. A explicação dessa atitude encontrava em autores como Fanon (2015 [1961]), Mbembe (2014a, 2014b, 2013) ou Varela (2017) um enquadramento teórico válido, uma vez que se argumentava que a elite política ao alcançar o poder traiu as esperanças da revolução, visto terem substituído o poder colonial por um poder nacional oligárquico servil aos antigos colonos. Portanto, no meu entender, a desmoralização sentida por esses jovens tinha a ver com a impressão de terem sido enganados e encontrarem-se sub-representados em termos políticos, o que fazia com que as noções de sobrevivência e identidade tivessem sido desvinculadas dos objetivos políticos do Estado e da noção abstrata da democracia.

É preciso lembrar que como afirma Varela (2008), na atual governação global neoliberal, os Estados pós-colonizados, além de continuarem a suportar os condicionalismos económicos impostos pelas instituições financeiras internacionais, sofrem também, através das agendas das agências dos programas de ajuda para o desenvolvimento, condicionalismos políticos. Nesse sentido, a expressão da boa governação para classificar estes Estados apresenta-se como vazio e relativo, já que serve também, paradoxalmente, para designar muitas transições políticas consideradas de sucesso pese embora não terem tido como base processos ditos democráticos. Por outro lado, em vez de dar mais força aos Estados-alvo, encerra-os num ciclo vicioso de dependência, apesar da dita ajuda ao desenvolvimento estar a diminuir.

No caso cabo-verdiano, esta dependência é anunciada da seguinte forma: "Os instrumentos criados não são suficientes para responder isoladamente às questões do presente, nem para preparar esse futuro que aponta para o desenvolvimento avançado, senão no quadro de uma agenda global, liderada pelas Nações Unidas e de uma intensa cooperação e parceria internacional, tanto na vertente multilateral como na vertente bilateral" (Neves 2015:87). A noção de boa governação aqui defendida pelo então Primeiro-Ministro, ao se assentar na fórmula da democracia representativa, suscita um conjunto

de críticas, inclusive de coletivos como a *MAC#114* e a *Korrenti Ativizta*, uma vez que "torna-se num instrumento de expansão da governação global neoliberal, mediante um dos seus consensos que é o Estado de direito democrático" (Varela 2008:3), perdendo desta feita a soberania política, simbolicamente proclamada no dia 5 de Julho de 1975.

Logo, de uma dependência consentida[19] de matriz ideológica socialista, vivida no período do partido-Estado se passa para uma dependência declarada de matriz ideológica híbrida, agora no contexto democrático. Por estas razões, o sentimento de desmoralização quando manifestada de forma intensa se torna a ocasião para que os jovens que assim o sentem resistam aos mitos da modernidade e criem formas de ancoragens identitárias para si e seus grupos.

Forjada nas posições subalternas, desvalorizadas e/ou estigmatizadas pela lógica de dominação, estes grupos moldam identidades contra-hegemónicas e edificam trincheiras de defesa e de resistência em relação às instituições dominantes, reivindicado uma identidade de vítima (Gilroy 2002), que lhes fornece uma identidade africana consolidada a partir da perspetiva traumática da história da escravatura e do colonialismo, em oposição à identidade atlântica, reproduzida pela elite cultural e apropriada pela classe política.

Notas inconclusivas

Embora possa parecer forçado falar de persistência do racismo no contexto cabo-verdiano, as lógicas de reactualização da hierarquia racial (Lima & Robalo 2019), herdada do Estado burocrático racista colonial (Varela 2017), permitiu-me entender a maneira como a desmoralização produz uma identidade de resistência como reação das relações sócio-raciais historicamente reproduzidas e legitimadas. Ou seja, permitiu-me compreender de que forma as condições de desespero que determinadas populações são submetidas em espaços de diferença produzem grupos de jovens culturalmente alienados e armados, por um lado, e, social e politicamente conscientes, por outro, que têm em comum o sentimento de revolta contra uma estrutura de distribuição desigual de oportunidades.

Contudo, mesmo tendo a palavra revolução como bandeira, o que se denotou foi que, na sua maioria, estes movimentos são essencialmente culturais e assistencialistas. Ainda assim, não obstante o vazio deixado pelas movimentações de 2015 e aproveitadas pelo MPD, o pós-eleição de 2016 trouxe novos impulsos à luta social organizada, com destaque para o surgimento do movimento *Sokols* na cidade do Mindelo e do *Movimentu Federalista Pan-Afrikanu – Kabu Verdi* na cidade da Praia. Em termos de

movimentos identitários de cariz afrocêntrica e pan-africanista, apesar de todos se auto-identificarem como cabralistas, percebe-se uma subdivisão destes coletivos em quatro vertentes ideológicas: a renascença africana de Cheikh Anta Diop; o socialismo africano de Kwame Nkrumah; o rastafarismo de Marcus Garvey; e o afrocentrismo de Molefe Kete Asante.

Por fim, convém salientar que estes movimentos, independentemente da sua pertença ideológica afrocêntrica ou atlântico-cêntrica, surgem num contexto em que as cidades cabo-verdianas, sobretudo a capital do país, passam por processos de transformação urbana sem precedentes, resultante de dinâmicas de revitalização dos centros históricos e das zonas balneares, enquadrados numa política de retoma do projeto colonial das cidades litorâneas atlânticas. Embora apresentadas fazendo parte de uma agenda pública orientada pela ideia de 'cidade para todos', estas intervenções têm sido contestadas e acusadas de que servem apenas os interesses das instituições públicas e seus parceiros internacionais. Isto é, de fazerem parte de uma agenda de governação global neoliberal e neocolonial que tem na segregação urbana de alguns espaços e grupos sociais o seu principal objetivo. Assim, para os movimentos que têm África como referência, a única solução de salvação do continente e por consequência, o país é a realização da unidade e renascença africana.

Notas

1. Por se tratar de uma espécie de autobiografia do autor e do partido que dirige, torna-se compreensivo o facto de ter ignorado os anos de 1990, década em que o país foi gerido pelo MpD.
2. A sigla *MAC#114* significa Mobilização para Acão Cívica e o número 114 refere-se ao artigo do regimento da Assembleia Nacional da República a que os deputados ocorrem quando ofendidos na sua honra/dignidade.
3. Incluímos nesta categoria jovens pobres e/ou negros.
4. também que no contexto árabe, a intifada palestina, no ano de 1987, deve ser vista como o antecedente político das revoltas árabes.
5. A primeira ocupação da rua por parte dos estudantes do ensino secundário tinha sido em 1992, também contra uma lei governamental, no sector da educação. Os estudantes voltaram à rua por mais duas vezes depois de 1994. O primeiro nos finais dos anos de 1990 e o segundo no início dos anos de 2000, ambos contra as provas de acesso ao Ensino Superior introduzidas pelo Governo.
6. Praça Alexandre Albuquerque, no Plateau.
7. Projeto de habitação social financiado por Portugal.
8. Empresa de abastecimento de energia elétrica e água.
9. Alguns promotores do protesto foram os militantes do partido da oposição de então e, igualmente, participou a ala denominada *Movimento de Cidadania*,

que apoiou a candidatura de Aristides Lima para a eleição presidencial desse ano, após a escolha pela Comissão Política do partido de um outro candidato. Daí resultou um mal-estar no PAICV que desencadeou uma luta interna entre duas alas, cuja rivalidade perdura até esta data, sob uma nova configuração. O movimento eclipsou-se pouco tempo depois.

10. União Nacional dos Trabalhadores de Cabo Verde – Central Sindical.

11. Ainda se tentou ressuscitar o espírito de 30 de Março nos protestos de 1 de Maio do mesmo ano, numa parceria entre a *MAC#114* e a UNTC-CS, mas a aderência ficou muito abaixo das expetativas, embora, para os protagonistas da manifestação dos trabalhadores, o que interessou foi ter havido pessoas na rua.

12. A inspiração base do coletivo é o pensamento afrocêntrico de Molefi Kete Asante e o pan-africanismo de Marcus Garvey.

13. Sendo certo que a *Ra-teknolojia* introduziu no seio de membros de gangues de rua, *rappers* e jovens ativistas da Praia os princípios do *hip-hop* e as ideologias revolucionárias de Tupac e de Amílcar Cabral, é importante frisar que também contribuíram para esse processo, entre a segunda metade dos anos 2000 e o início dos anos 2010, a associação *Movimento Hip-Hop (MH2CV)*, o movimento *Shokanti*, a associação *Fidjus di Cabral* e o ativista e historiador Kwesi Tafari com a organização de cursos e leituras em grupo dos textos de Cabral.

14. Funcionaram como porta de entrada de figuras afrocêntricas e pan-africanas como Marcus Garvey, Cheikh Anta Diop e Molefi Kete Asante.

15. Nome como ficou conhecido a geração de intelectuais que fundou, em 1936, a Revista Claridade, na cidade do Mindelo, sob o lema "fincar os pés na terra" e que esteve no centro de um movimento de cariz regional de emancipação cultural, social e política da sociedade insular crioula.

16. Acredita-se que a origem do arquipélago se encontra referenciada nos textos egípcios atribuídos a Platão, em que descreve o povo atlantes, que, como castigo por terem tentado dominar o mundo foram devastados por um cataclismo, castigo de Zeus – e engolidos pelas águas do Atlântico, ficando apenas os cumes das montanhas, que corresponderão aos arquipélagos localizados na parte central deste oceano.

17. O mito de origem é conjugado com um outro do jardim dos deuses ou jardim das hespérides, em que se acredita que as ilhas de Cabo Verde, juntamente com as ilhas dos Açores, Madeira e Canárias são fragmentos deste território, recuperado simbolicamente com a designação de Macaronésia.

18. Ressalta que toda a vivência do cabo-verdiano foi desenvolvida no contexto colonial, de dominação de uma minoria branca sobre uma maioria africana e que, portanto, aquando da Conferência de Berlim, em 1885, o arquipélago já tinha uma longa história de violência colonial.

19. Termo utilizado por Pedro Pires ao comentar a minha fala sobre esse assunto, numa conversa aberta intitulada 'Cultura e resistência. Revisitar Amílcar Cabral', no dia alusivo ao nascimento de Amílcar Cabral, em 2017, organizado pela Fundação Amílcar Cabral.

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Choosing Heaven:
Negotiating Modernity in Diverse Social Orders[1]

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Abstract

Situated within the topic of geographical contexts of knowledge production, this article interrogates the youth policies of Kenya, Ghana and Tanzania to understand how they articulate the concepts of 'tradition' and 'modernity' in planning for youth development in their national socio-cultural settings. The focus is on each country's approach to cultural transformation, in trying to divulge how the policymakers see the role of culture, both local and global, in young people's lives, and articulate this notion in the policies to produce a politically desired alternative to Western modernity. The article goes on to discuss the extent to which 'African modernity' constructs are set out in these policy documents as attempts to 'de-westernise' the concept. It recognises Ghana's approach as the most decolonial, for it distances the country's cultural transformation process from the perceived universality of Western values. The article suggests that modernity, as an 'imaginary pursuit', becomes powerful only when one chooses to imagine it in the first place.

Keywords: youth, tradition, modernity, cultural transformation, Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania

Résumé

Situé dans le thème des contextes géographiques de production de connaissances, cet article interroge les politiques de jeunesse au Kenya, au Ghana et en Tanzanie pour comprendre comment elles articulent les concepts de « tradition » et de « modernité » dans la planification du développement de la jeunesse dans leurs contextes socioculturels nationaux. L'accent est mis sur l'approche de chaque pays en matière de transformation culturelle, en tentant de découvrir comment les décideurs politiques voient le rôle de la culture, à la fois locale et mondiale, dans la vie des jeunes, et articulent cette notion dans les politiques afin de

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produire une alternative politiquement souhaitable à la modernité occidentale. Le document poursuit en discutant des constructions de «modernité africaine» et leur présentation dans ces documents politiques comme des tentatives de « désoccidentalisation » du concept. L'approche du Ghana est reconnue comme la plus décoloniale, car elle éloigne le processus de transformation culturelle du pays de l'universalité perçue des valeurs occidentales. L'article suggère que la modernité, comme « quête imaginaire », ne devient puissante que lorsque l'on choisit de l'imaginer en premier lieu.

Mots-clés : jeunesse, tradition, modernité, transformation culturelle, Kenya, Ghana, Tanzanie

Introduction

With 65 per cent of population aged below thirty-five (Tracey and Kahutia 2017), Africa is largely a youthful continent. With enabling policy and legislation in place, this substantial number of young people can produce a demographic dividend, bringing much-needed economic development and growth to the continent. The African Union (AU) declared 2017 as the year of 'Harnessing Demographic Dividend Through Investments in Youth', giving member states an occasion to review their commitments to engaging young people meaningfully in democratic governance processes and socio-economic development.

Including youth in governance processes has been envisioned by the AU within the African Governance Architecture's Youth Engagement Strategy (AGA-YES), which recognises participation of young people as agents in development as their fundamental human right. This continental normative framework is further aligned with two major and current development agendas – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which seeks to 'leave no one behind', and the African Agenda 2063, which aspires to build 'An Africa where development is people-driven, unleashing the potential of women and youth' (Aspiration 6) (AU undated).

To better understand the socio-economic space in which young people on the continent live and the problems they confront on a daily basis, in 2017–18, the Africa Institute of South Africa (AISA) and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) embarked on a six-country research project entitled *Entry-Points for Utilising the Demographic Dividend in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Examination of the Dynamics of Youth Participation in Local and National Socio-Economic Transformation Processes*. Guided by the question: What are the main challenges and opportunities that the youth face in Africa, and how best can they be addressed to ensure that Africa realises a demographic dividend, the project was conducted in Botswana, Ghana,

Côte d'Ivoire, Tanzania, Kenya and Zambia. The study was designed using 'youth as a resource' conceptual framework, which views young people as agents of change rather than societal problems. It is aligned with the three-lens approach to youth participation developed in 2007 by the Department for International Development (DFID) in the United Kingdom (Maguire 2007), which is premised on the idea that youth should participate in development as beneficiaries, partners, and leaders. Findings from AISA's demographic dividend study inspired this article, becoming a point of departure for a broader reflection on the socio-cultural context of youth development in three of the countries visited, namely Kenya, Tanzania, and Ghana.

It is often said that African youth live in 'plural worlds' (Nilan and Feixa 2006). On the one hand, they navigate a world that is characterised by different 'traditional' African modes of maturation. On the other hand, they negotiate their identity in the world of 'modern' globalised culture. These complex social realities may appear incompatible, yet they are unequivocally intertwined in the cultural identities and lives of youth. The perceived mismatch between 'traditional' and 'modern' is the result of a Eurocentric conceptualisation of modernity; one which excludes the possibility of tradition continuing in the present time. This view does not reflect African realities. Considering that modernity is an 'imaginary construction' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993: xiv) that exists as a result of human interactions, how it is defined, politically and culturally, depends on social context.

With that in mind, the present article is an exploration of how 'tradition' and 'modernity' are articulated in the national youth development policies of Kenya, Tanzania and Ghana with reference to culture. The aim is to understand how the concepts may be used by the policymakers as political instruments and to determine whether the way they are constructed may affect the implementation of these policies. The article goes on to suggest the role that 'tradition' and 'modernity' should play in policymaking, as well as in the lives of young people in Africa.

Youth – A Troublesome Category

Different legal definitions of youth based on biological age apply across the African continent. For instance, the African Youth Charter considers every person between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five to be a youth (AUC 2006). The United Nations specifies the age range fifteen to twenty-four (UNDESA 2013). The Commonwealth Youth Programme considers youth to fall in the age range fifteen to twenty-nine (The Commonwealth undated). Laws and policies addressing young people's issues in African nation-states

define youth in different ways, and sometimes different documents in the same country contradict each other. For example, in Kenya, both the 2010 Constitution and the Youth Development Policy (MIIY 2019) consider youth to be people aged eighteen to thirty-four (or more specifically those who have not reached the age of thirty-five). However, the Policy further states that to be comprehensive in addressing youth issues, the interventions it suggests should also apply to young people between fifteen and seventeen years of age. Thus, in effect, the document expands the official youth age bracket. In Tanzania, the National Youth Development Policy considers youth to be people fifteen to thirty-five years old (MLEYD 2007). To vote, the citizens of Tanzania must be eighteen (URT 2005:14). Yet, girls as young as fifteen may be married (boys need to be at least eighteen years old to do so) (Law of Marriage Act 1971).[2] The National Youth Policy of Ghana applies the term 'youth' to people between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five (MYS 2010). The right to vote is acquired by Ghanaians when they turn eighteen – the age of majority, according to the Constitution.

This dissonance between laws and policies is an obstacle to implementation when one considers the term 'youth' as a historically constructed, social category that is relational and culturally defined (Durham 2000, 2004; Abbink 2005). 'Youth' is difficult to pin down analytically because it takes on different meanings, depending on the particular context and situation. The term is vague, it tends to be defined in terms of age or biosocial stage, but even these are culturally determined (Durham 2000).

Age is relative (Fortes 1984). The age status of a particular person may shift from site to site. Thus, discourses around age, like those related to gender or race, carry pragmatic and political dimensions (Durham 2004) that need to be considered when seeking to understand the social and political implications of calling someone 'youth'. Furthermore, youth as a biosocial stage may not be recognised at all by some African cultural communities (Schlegel and Barry 1991; see Talavera 2002; Ginsberg et al. 2014); a person could simply transition from childhood to adulthood with puberty. Alcinda Honwana and Filip De Boeck (2005) argue that the status of a person as a child, youth or adult in the African context has more to do with societal expectations and responsibilities rather than years of life. From that point of view, youth is generally constructed as a period between childhood and adulthood. It is:

> a time of growth, of searching for meanings and belonging; a stage of moulding characters, interests, and goals; a process of constructing and reconfiguring identities; a creative period with both risks and possibilities (Honwana 2012:11).

Bob Coles (1995) identifies three main transitional stages in the life of youth:

1. the school-to-work transition (finishing education and entering labour market),
2. the housing transition (leaving parental home),
3. the domestic transition (establishing one's own family).

This model seems to imply a linear change from one stage to another, whereas in reality the stages are interdependent and intertwined. Therefore, Johanna Wyn and Rob White (1997:98) argue, the term 'transition' is inadequate, because the lines between the different phases are blurred. In order to establish a home, one needs to find a job and earn money. Oftentimes, to complete education, one needs to work first to be able to pay school fees. At times, the transition from childhood to adulthood may be delayed, purposefully or by adverse socio-economic factors. In such a case, a young person may feel suspended between childhood and adulthood, in the state of 'waithood' (Singerman 2007; Honwana 2012).

> A 40-year-old who is unemployed and unmarried is still a *youthman*. In contrast, at the age of 10, child soldiers, AIDS orphans, or child labourers assume adult roles, even if many of them are later on pushed back into waithood (Honwana 2013).

Finally, depending on the context, the life stages of 'being youth' and 'becoming an adult' may have different character.

Deborah Durham (2000, 2004) emphasises the relational character of the term 'youth' in Africa. While age organises people's progress into social rights, generational relationships – as in older/ younger than – control relational rights and responsibilities. Building on that, she suggests that the term 'youth' acts as a 'social shifter' – it does not have an absolute meaning; rather, it is a deictic, taking on meaning in relation to the speaker.

> Thinking of deictics and shifters helps one recognize the nature of discourses as relational, pragmatic, and part of a shifting and contested historical and social arena. (…) To call someone a youth is to position him or her in terms of a variety of social attributes, including not only age but also independence-dependence, authority, rights, abilities, knowledge, responsibilities, and so on. But in the pragmatic and political processes in which such namings take place, the category itself is reconstructed and the attributes repositioned among those involved (Durham 2004:593).

She explains, the concept of 'shifters' makes social analysis problematic, as '"shifters" create the social configurations of their utterance but rely on meanings external to the utterance itself' (Durham 2004:593).

The process of (re)making or imagining youth is dynamic and often contested. In its centre lie the issues of power, agency and the moral configurations of society, i.e. 'the grounds and forces of sociality' (Durham 2000:117; 2004). From a cultural perspective, becoming an adult is a process linked to a variety of ways of maturation, which traditionally used to include gaining fertility and climbing the social ladder through acquisition of traditional knowledge (Aguilar 1998a).[3] Subordination of the young to the elder was tied to knowledge and power, on the one hand, and control of productive and reproductive resources, on the other. Knowledge and power claimed by elders 'created' youth (Schloss 1988), while initiation reproduced culturally constructed age distinctions, assigning to people social and cultural identities based on an age group. In terms of control of resources, on account of their position, elders claimed the labour of youth (and women) (Meillassoux 1981). Nowadays, children more often 'become adults' through formal Western-style education, becoming taxpayers, or gaining election rights, which serve as contemporary 'rites of passage' (Aguilar 1998b). These 'new' types of knowledge and maturation can be disputed by traditionalists as the basis for coming of age. Indeed, 'the clash of disparate forms of knowledge reveals the new generational cleavage of postcolonial society' (Durham 2000:118).

The discourses around different forms of knowledge, access and control of knowledge, as well as attempts to legitimise or undermine them have all been, and still are, used as mechanisms of power and social control. In addition, the state keeps on exercising control over the entire population through the way it defines the categories of child, youth, adult or elder in the first place (Scott 1998). Governments constantly construct youth through policies, typically using cross-cutting notions to define the group. These constructions – political or pragmatic acts, according to Durham (2004) – take place in the context of processes of globalisation. Western discourse on youth, presenting them in a supporting role, adds to the complexities of African notions of childhood and adulthood, and the crossing of the frontier between the two stages. There is a variety of discursive constructions of youth in Africa, and these have changed over time, depending on the socio-political developments. Young people were seen as the 'promising generation' in the immediate post-independence time, only to be called the 'lost generation' in the post-Cold War era (Klouwenber and Butter 2011: 58–9). The shifts in society also had an impact on the perception of youth. For instance, the quality of being rebellious, once considered a necessary attribute of the group (Spencer 1965; 2004) is now being used against youths through seeing them as antisocial and prone to criminal activity. Jon Abbink (2005) asserts that youth does not participate in socially

destructive movements due to some 'natural inclination' to violence. It is the 'breakdown of a socio-political and moral order in the wider society and the degree of governability of a certain type of state' that should be held responsible (Abbink 2005:14). Youth is also regularly pulled into political games by different state and non-state actors, as their 'alliance is valuable and their enmity dangerous' (McIntyre 2003).

In respect of youth agency, scholars argue that the concept no longer merely denotes the ability of young people to act independently, but tends to include the idea of self-authoring – the production of novel selves (Davies 1991). This particular approach to youth agency has 'a strong flavour of consumerism', argues Durham (2000:117), which may be an effect of Western cultural influences. Young people continually reimagine themselves. At the same time, 'claims to the position of youth, claims about the nature of youth, and moral claims about youth are centrally involved in the reinvention of political and social space' (Durham 2000:118).

African youth and the social landscape in which the group functions influence each other. Paradoxically, Honwana and De Boeck (2005) argue, young people are both *makers* and *breakers* of society, while simultaneously being *made* and *broken* by the society in return.

'Tradition vs Modernity' or 'With Tradition into Modernity'?
Theoretical Framework

Even though colonial rule in Africa formally ended in the previous century, the shadow of colonial hegemony still lies embedded in the forms of knowing and understanding the world. According to decolonial scholars, 'knowledge production and everyday relations are informed by European colonial modalities of power and propped up by imperial geopolitics and economic arrangements' (Collard *et al.* 2015:323). Within this school of thought, the argument that colonial power lies at the core of the construction of modernity (Mignolo 2000) is of particular importance for this article. It brings attention to the persistent grip of imperial power over the socio-economic realities of Africans, and also provides an alert about the possibility of alternative articulations of/ within power (Grosfoguel 2012) – 'southern thinking' that is at least partially freed from Western modernity, or that manages to vernacularise Western models and frameworks (Connell 2007).

'Modernity' is a vague concept, typically defined in relation to 'tradition'. Western linear theory of social change and development processes clearly divides history into pre-modern period, characterised by 'immature' state of traditional societies, from modernity, constructed on

the premises of rational and scientific thinking, secularisation, materialism, individualism and man's control over nature (Rostov 1960; Gusfield 1967). Eurocentric binary opposition juxtaposes traditional cultures, with their holistic ways of doing things, against modern culture, which focuses on science, specialisation and spatio-temporal universalism (Giddens 1991). The Western theoretical understanding of the concepts of modernity and tradition was used in colonial times as a tool to marginalise and suppress the colonised, who did not match the Western vision of an 'enlightened' lifestyle. Western modernity sees traditional communities as in need of being saved, i.e., developed from a primitive origin to a utopian end (Gillen and Ghosh 2007:26); lifted up from a state of savagery to civilisation (Ferguson 2006). From a Western perspective then, modernity is constructed as a telos, a supreme end of a human's progressive development.

Bruno Latour (1993) argues that the Western conceptualisation of modernity as a pinnacle of rationalisation and scientific enlightenment is a delusion; it is based on a dualistic distinction between nature and culture, which in reality is simply not possible. From this perspective, Latour posits, 'we have never been modern', as the natural and social worlds are always intertwined. Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff (1993:xiv) echo Latour (1993), in claiming 'simultaneity of the meaningful and the material in all things'.

The polarity of tradition and modernity is also based on an assumption that tradition resists change and innovation (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993), that culture is static. Thus, traditional institutions and values are seen as obstacles to modernisation. Yet, if cultures are dynamic, traditions can change. And if they change, then fundamentally 'every society in our modern world is "traditional"' (Gyekye 1997:217), for the cultural creation of the present needs the past (Ton Kin 1992:68–70). From an indigenous perspective, tradition is a process that involves cultural continuity and innovation (Porsanger 2011:239); it is not just the transfer of beliefs, attitudes and practices, but a cumulative process of change that is rooted in indigenous understandings of time, space and knowledge. As Joseph Gusfield (1967:353) observed, '"traditional society" is often itself a product of change'. It does not have a monolithic social structure, and represents a diversity of norms and values. Old traditions are not necessarily replaced by new ways of doing things – the new additions may merely increase the range of alternatives creating a syncretic culture. Accordingly, 'the outcome of modernising processes and traditional forms is often an admixture in which each derives a degree of support from the other, rather than a clash of opposites' (Gusfield 1967:355). Historical context and cultural setting help to determine which new element is rejected, accepted, or adapted.

Accordingly, the unidirectional character of the social, cultural and economic transformations that the Western model prescribed as part of the social change process is a fallacy; its properties and outcomes depend on many variables. Based on these premises, the idea that history is a teleological unfolding or a gradual rise through a hierarchical progression of development stages (Ferguson 2006), independent of socio-cultural settings, can be questioned, in which case modernity stops being a telos. Different cultures can now negotiate their own 'alternative modernity' in ways suitable for their socio-cultural and economic contexts. In such an open-ended model, there are many modernities, and many global systems are possible. New modernities can emerge by mixing elements of local cultures with ideas and solutions adopted from the 'global' culture. However, cultural hybridities that develop as a result (Bhabha 1994) reveal underlying power relations, which direct the way the cultural interaction between the local and the global, the hegemonic and the subaltern, the centre and the periphery, leads to the process of cultural transformation.

The term 'modernity', James Ferguson (2006) further suggests, is often used today simply with reference to some fixed global status – a state of being 'first class' – which may be achieved one day. But as it is no longer a telos, it is not a given that one could expect as an end result of a gradual rise in the world socio-economic hierarchy. Consequently, reaching this highest standard of living becomes more of a distant dream than a promise. Unreachable for most, the status turns into a high-hanging fruit planted by the West.

The process of constructing alternative modernities as a way of breaking free from imperial designs can be considered an example of what Walter Mignolo (2009) calls de-linking from Western modernity through de-westernisation. It is a process that does not question the transformation itself, but interrogates the rules of engagement within the capitalist economy established by the West, demanding the right to shape the properties and modalities of the developmental path to suit the context. A more radical path suggested by Mignolo (2009:3) is the decolonial option, which questions the rhetoric of capitalist economy, in trying to imagine other possibilities (for e.g., 'regeneration of life' over 'production and reproduction of goods'). This option undermines the universality of the process of transformation as a whole and its end result. In other words, it neither prescribes the path nor the destination, believing that 'there are not only many roads to heaven but also many heavens' (Lall 1992:7). The decolonial option, Mignolo (2000:59) argues, replaces the discourse of globalisation/civilisation with mundialización/culture, for,

> unlike globalization, mundialización brings to the fore the manifold local histories that, in questioning global designs, aim at forms of globality that arise out of cultures of transience that go against the cultural homogeneity fostered by such designs (Mignolo 2000:59).

By recognising a multiplicity of heavens and a diversity of social orders, this approach emphasises the diversity of the world.

Methodology

Building on Mignolo's statement, this article uses the notion of culture as an analytical tool to understand how the categories of 'tradition' and 'modernity' are articulated in the youth policies of Kenya, Tanzania and Ghana.

Culture is a complex notion that can be defined in a number of ways. It has been understood as meaning embedded in human interactions (Alexander 2003), a set of tools to be used to inform behaviour (Swidler 1986), or as a system of norms and values that organises a society (Parsons 1951). The classical anthropological definition of culture describes it as a way of life, 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society' (Tylor 1871:1). Culture can also be seen simply as art, exhibiting both intrinsic and instrumental values.

Culture functions on different levels (individual and collective), takes on different aspects (static and dynamic), and may acquire varied properties (e.g., contextual – ecological, economical, socio-political; perceptual and material elements). Ann Swidler (1995) speaks of three important characteristics of culture, namely: publicness (public symbols acting as a system of meaning), practices (habits, styles and skills recreating culture), and power (which shapes culture, but also culture as a form of power).

With so many definitions, aspects and dimensions, it is difficult to settle on a clear meaning for the term 'culture'. The spiritual, intellectual, and emotional features of culture can be approached in two ways – from an essentialist point of view, in which case they become finite, historical phenomena that determine the individual, or in a non-essentialist or dynamic way, as socially constructed and continually renegotiated. In brief, culture can be regarded either as objective reality or as a 'social construction'. Cultural essentialism looks at aspects of culture as objective 'schemes', which may lead to people being categorised according to established patterns. The non-essentialist approach to culture sees it as an outcome of a dynamic process of change, in which people construct their identities rather than

acquire them (Baumann 1999). None of the many identities 'created' in this process are ultimate, and none of the values associated with them are universal. They are all contextual.

Given the complex, contextual character of culture, this article does not delve much into the definition of the notion used by each of the three countries under investigation but focuses instead on the approach to culture in the respective policy documents. The approach to culture informs the construction of the categories of 'tradition' and 'modernity', which become political instruments in relation to youth development. Looking at how these policymakers see the role of culture in the lives of youth further reveals how they envisage the development trajectories of their countries. It also exposes potential policy implementation obstacles.

The article also recognises the difficulty in defining youth, given the deictic, relational and socio-culturally specific nature of the term. However, it is beyond the scope of this work to examine the construction of 'youth' through the discourses evident in the selected policy documents. Rather, the author follows the technical definitions of the group provided in the policies to understand how the policymakers see the roles and responsibilities of youth within national projects. The underlying cultural assumptions about the group that may transpire from the analysis of each document are discussed if they add value to the research question of the article. Given the central role that young people play in negotiating tensions between cultural continuity and change, traditional and modern, local and global, leading to the creation of 'African modernity', the focus of the article is on youth policies.

Policy Observations

The Kenya Youth Development Policy

The Kenya Youth Development Policy (KYDP), which was adopted in 2019 (MIIY 2019), considers youth to be between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four (i.e. those who had not yet reached the age of thirty-five), though the document also makes provision for young people of fifteen to seventeen years. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, in 2015/2016, this group represented 35 per cent of Kenya's population and 55 per cent of the labour force (MIIY 2019:1). Despite that fact, youth in the country is considered marginalised in socio-economic outcomes, including employment. The 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census report indicates that 29 per cent of Kenyans were in the youth age bracket that year. Of the total youth population, 38 per cent were not in employment. Those employed constituted 18 per cent of total Kenya's population (MIIY

2019:6, 8). The Census also stipulates that 51 per cent of all voters registered for 2017 elections were young people, an increase in comparison to previous elections of 2013 (MIIY 2019:6). In response to these statistics, the KYDP means to put in place measures to remove obstacles to youth socio-economic development in order to engage young people productively and thus accelerate economic growth in the country. It also aims to further advance youth political participation. Within this overall goal, the document emphasises the need for equal opportunity for youth.

In defining youth, the policy uses the term to refer to both biological age and the state of youth-hood. It explains that youth-hood is understood as

> the specific stage between childhood and adulthood when people have to negotiate a complex interplay of both personal and socio-economic and cultural changes to manoeuvre the transition from dependence to independence, take effective control of their lives and assume social commitments (MIIY 2019:xi).

The policy does not explain how 'youth' as a social category is aligned with the stipulated biological youth age bracket.

The document stipulates specific categories of youth, recognising their different needs, expectations and obstacles with regard to the many socio-cultural stages that they go through between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four, physical changes they experience, or the socio-economic challenges they face along the way. Accordingly, the KYDP differentiates between: male and female youth; educated and uneducated young people; formally trained and informally trained; rural and urban residents; in-school and out-of-school young people; adolescents and young adults; physically challenged and able-bodied youth; economically engaged or not; detained and not-detained; migrant and non-migrant; skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled; street and vagrant youth; youth infected and affected by HIV and AIDS; female youth and the boy child; unemployed youth; incarcerated youth; and youth in humanitarian settings.

However, despite listing the many variables and recognising youth as a social category, the document does not ascertain the differences between them in addressing issues affecting young people in the country. The KYDP lists health (including nutrition and well-being); education (including training and skills development), unemployment (including underemployment and inactivity), environment protection, agriculture, entrepreneurship, civic participation, and transformative leadership as its main areas of focus. It further sets out special target groups among youth for the relevant government affirmative action – these are: youth with disability; street and vagrant youth, youth living with HIV and AIDS, unemployed

youth, out-of-school young people, incarcerated youth, young people who are migrants and in humanitarian settings, as well as youth living in informal settlements. Although these youth categories are clearly defined, there is no indication how they are to be mainstreamed or what measures are to be put in place to ensure that assistance is adapted to their specific needs.

The KYDP applies cross-cutting notions of youth that tend to be used as descriptors of the whole group independently of context (see Durham 2004). For example, as Durham (2004:598–9) argues, 'being at school' has become a normalised condition of youth in Africa. At school young people are prepared for national service, infused with national goals of progress and self-sufficiency. In a way, they can be controlled. Out-of-school young people exist in the space of youth but are unable to claim the rights ascribed to the group or fulfil the associated obligations. Together with other vulnerable young people – those living on the street or struggling to find employment – they cannot reach the goal of independence and self-reliance.

The KYDP sets out key values that are to guide implementation of the document, namely: patriotism, respect of diversity and ethical values; equity and accessibility; inclusiveness; good governance, and mainstreaming youth issues. Under 'respect for diversity and ethical values', the policy elaborates that it

> respects the cultural, religious, and social backgrounds of the different communities and conforms to universally recognised human rights, without discrimination based on sex, race/ origin, age, ethnic, creed, political affiliation or socio-economic status (MIIY 2019:25).

Aligned with these values is the objective of the policy to, among other things, 'nurture value driven, morally upright, ethical generation of patriotic youth for transformative leadership' (MIIY 2019:35). The issue of morality, moral values, positive morals or moral uprightness is repeated several times throughout the document. However, there is no indication of how the policymakers understand these terms or the concepts of morality and ethics. Proper definition of these notions seems pertinent, considering the cultural diversity of Kenya and the abovementioned pledge to respect the cultural, religious, and social backgrounds of the different communities.

The KYDP recognises the importance of culture in the lives of youth, though it speaks of culture indirectly. The term per se does not appear in the document. However, a closer look at how the policy sees the transfer and exchange of cultural values through inter-generational dialogue, mentorship, family system and community as a whole, allows the deduction that the policymakers see culture as a way of life, and system of values and controls that gives meaning to people's experiences.

The policy understands culture as dynamic, while at the same time recognising that people are culturally embedded within a system of meaning that is historically created. Thus, it shapes the lives of people and controls their behaviour but can, and in some instances should, change in the process of negotiation and manipulation of symbols that leads to the creation of new meanings. The document thus integrates an essentialist approach to culture with a non-essentialist stance.

The inclination towards a more essentialist understanding of culture is disclosed in the KYDP in a number of statements related to the role of family as a key unit that is to 'pass on' values and inculcate moral precepts in youth, and the responsibility of community elders who, as 'custodians of morals, communal values, traditions and customs', are to 'bequeath this wisdom to the youth' (MIIY 2019:51–2). The document seems to repeat the widely accepted view that tradition is 'handed down' or 'transmitted' from the past to the present. This passage of values should, however, only include the positive aspects of culture (MIIY 2019:51), according to the policy. The question therefore remains, which values can or should be considered as positive, and who is to decide what should be discarded as negative or harmful.

By recognising that continuity of culture that is dynamic includes social change, which brings about innovation, and showing that systems and values can adapt to present realities, the KYDP moves towards the non-essentialist view of culture. It indicates the potential of culture to change by mentioning that cultural standards and values which characterise a community should not infringe on people's rights – they should have relevant standards. In this particular case, the KYDP refers to 'retrogressive' cultural practices. Using such a judgemental language, the document seems to suggest that culture can be instrumentally changed when its norms and practices are not aligned with some 'higher', more progressive principles. The document suggests that there are 'universal' criteria (such as the universal human rights) based on which people's ways of life can be regulated. It also explicitly demonstrates that it espouses the belief that culture transforms by passing from a higher to a lower level of organisation in a linear way.

It appears that Kenyan policymakers tried to follow global (universalised) Western standards while simultaneously staying true to local values and norms. For instance, saying that the document 'respects the cultural, religious, and social backgrounds of the different communities', they also claim that the policy shall 'conform to universally recognised human rights without discrimination based on gender, race, origin, age, ethnicity, creed, political affiliation or social status' (MIIY 2019:25). It remains unclear

whether the global or the local system should be applied on matters where the two approaches do not agree.

What happens when people from different cultural, religious and other backgrounds do not uphold the 'universally recognised rights'; and how are the local cultural beliefs regarded when they create attitudes that disempower certain segments of society? Finally, which system should be considered when it comes to choosing 'positive morals and values' that should be transferred to the youth by the elders?

Speaking of equality, the KYDP recognises that, from a cultural perspective, female youth in Kenya are disadvantaged due to certain social and cultural practices and traditional gender roles (MIIY 2019:32). However, it is silent on how to bring about change through practice and reconcile it with the claimed respect for diversity. The policy recognises marriage at the legal age of consent as a right of youth (MIIY 2019:28). Yet, it does not mention the socio-cultural factors that lead to the occurrence of child marriages in the country (see Girls Not Brides undated); factors that will have to be addressed to produce a lasting change in behaviour. The document upholds youth's right to ownership and protection of property (MIIY 2019:29). Yet, despite the Matrimonial Property Act (2013) which protects women's access to their property, patriarchal traditions and customary laws do not always recognise women's rights in this regard (Mbugua 2018). The policy does not provide solutions for how to address cultural norms that go against the recommendations; that is, how to marry the traditions and customs held in custodianship by the elders with the premise of universal human rights.

Traditionally in Kenya, the responsibilities of the members of the family and community were defined by maturity of the members and their gender. The passage from childhood to adulthood was aligned with advancing in the community hierarchy, and associated with acquiring new roles in the family and society at large (Aguilar 1998a). The KYDP deplores the weakening of the 'family ties inherited from our traditional societies, which called for mutual respect between the various age groups' (MIIY 2019:30). It sees 'signs of rebellion' visible among the youth as the outcome of this process. At the same time, in a move to empower youth, the policymakers urge parents to offer room for youth participation at all levels (MIIY 2019: 30), and call for exchange of knowledge and values between the different generations (MIIY 2019:53)

The policy calls for support to youth leadership in public, private and political spheres (MIIY 2019:67) and tasks the government of Kenya with enhancing youth leadership skills (MIIY 2019:56). The document thus praises the 'old' community and family structures built on respect and

social hierarchy, but seems to simultaneously undermine the traditional role of elders in running communities; the role that centred on the power and control that the seniors exercised over resources, among other things. Suggesting a change in the position of youth, who are seen as rebellious and in need of guidance, while being called to leadership and dialogic exchange with adults, the document does not reflect on the effect such change would have on the traditional family structure and the functioning of communities and societal well-being. This recommendation is aligned with the policy's stance on the dynamic nature of culture, which enables systems to change and adapt to new realities. However, it does not explain why such a change is indeed needed, if the traditional ties that ensured mutual respect between various age groups are longed for and considered valuable for people. Seemingly, the policymakers try to 'update' the 'traditional culture' in a move to align it with foreign 'universal' standards, without taking into consideration meanings embedded in both local practices that they expect to change and the new principles they want to see taking root.

The KYDP admits that societal attitudes are responsible for the low status of youth, which results in limited youth participation in economic and political spheres (MIIY 2019:12). The cultural perceptions of age that subconsciously continue to regulate social relations in the Kenyan society (Aguilar 1998b; Durham 2000, 2004) are therefore acknowledged. However, such socio-cultural barriers are mentioned in the policy only briefly, next to challenges with proper organisation and orientation. Meanwhile, this factor constitutes a serious policy implementation obstacle. For instance, Kenyan women in some communities may not have a youth identity at all, even when falling within the defined youth age bracket. They move from childhood to adulthood with marriage, transitioning from one social role to another. In the Western Province,

> when we are unmarried, the community views us as children who cannot "address" elders and ask for votes. When we get married, young women "belong" to their husbands. We are no longer youth but adults. We therefore cannot vie for political seats on a youth ticket even when we are within that age bracket (Siri-Njongo and Mwangda 2011:36).

In the above example, a married woman will be an adult, even if age- and policy-wise, she is still considered a youth. And yet, like a child who is dependent on parents, she now 'belongs' to her husband. The change of status comes with the responsibility of managing the household, even though it is not associated with the ability to think and act independently (see Durham 2004:596 for an example from Botswana, where a woman's status shifts through death of a parent, managing a household, or supporting others).

The National Youth Development Policy of Tanzania

The National Youth Development Policy (NYDP) of Tanzania was adopted in 2007 (MLEYD 2007). It defines youth as people between fifteen and thirty-five years of age. Citing the 2002 Population and Housing Census, the document states that youth constitutes 35 per cent of the total population (MLEYD 2007:1). The NYDP largely treats the group as homogenous, describing the situation of youth in Tanzania with no regard to the different stages of life that young people within the set age bracket go through, their location – urban/ rural, their education level, or their family status. Only disabled youth and nomadic people are named as separate youth categories that need interventions particularly appropriate to their circumstances. Gender is also considered, though marginally, to the extent that the policy recognises cultural practices that prejudice women.

Among the priority areas, the document lists economic empowerment, environment, employment promotion, youth participation, HIV and AIDS, gender, arts and culture, sports, adolescent reproductive health, and family life issues. With regard to these priorities, the focus of the policy is on agriculture and urban employment, information, labour-intensive works, the mining sector, natural resources and tourism infrastructure development, education, and training and services.

Culture is presented in the NYDP as being in danger of being diluted. The term 'culture' probably refers here to the national culture of the country (as the singular form used and reference to national values would suggest) or the local cultures that the inhabitants of Tanzania represent as a collective.

The policy sees foreign influences in culture as being damaging to the well-being of the Tanzanian people. It claims that 'through modern technology and media some foreign cultures have adversely affected the once established cultural practices' (MLEYD 2007:4), in result of which young people have allegedly 'lost their identity'. The document does not provide more detailed information about what cultural practices have been affected or in what way it considers the influences to be harmful. However, given that the policy deplores the change of 'once established practices' as being damaging, this suggests either that 'established practices' are seen as a fixed legacy which should be 'deposited' in the next generation in their 'pure' form, or that cultural practices are treasures that can be changed internally but should be protected from any outside influence. There is also a third option – when a change in practices that comes through a foreign culture is acceptable because its effects are favourable for society. The question regarding the third option, and the initial statement about adverse effects of change, is who holds the right to decide what is 'acceptable' or 'harmful' when it comes to culture.

The NYDP does not shy away from naming some of the local cultural practices that it deems harmful to the health of the youth, namely female genital mutilation and early marriages (MLEYD 2007:19). The criteria for these judgements are not specified. The longevity of these traditions could be associated with the solid grasp that local cultures have on the population.

Another point that the NYDP makes is that cultural identity can be lost, which would suggest that it is seen as fixed, inherited, and it defines a person as part of a cultural community. This view creates a perception of culture as something that is imposed on an individual, shapes them, but is not necessarily reciprocally shaped by them. Its repertoire of expressions cannot be expanded to include foreign influences either, if it is to remain genuine.

The policy attributes harmful changes in traditional lifestyles and the associated socio-economic well-being of people to globalisation (MLEYD 2007:4). Globalisation is also blamed for 'imposing new cultural norms and values which conflict with national values' (MLEYD 2007:13). The strong language used would suggest that these new norms and values were not willingly accepted by people, even though hegemonic ideologies need to be internalised by the 'dominated' to induce consent.

In the way the NYDP considers youth and its development, it seems that the policymakers specifically blame young people for subscribing to ideas and ideals that policymakers view as contradictory to national goals and principles. Here the policy juxtaposes global culture with its norms, which youth seems to embrace, with the 'politically' desired national values, which are clearly not always compatible. The likelihood that youth will be interested in global culture is not very surprising, as young people across Africa tend to be in the centre of negotiations between the local and the global (Durham 2000:114). Their social condition is heavily influenced by the interaction between these two pressures (Diouf 2003). They are major players in the processes of globalisation. The policy statement seems therefore to suggest that policymakers view the alternative forms chosen by youth as invalid with regard to national objectives.

The NYDP further deplores the disintegration of traditional families and community life, claiming that children are no longer raised by their communities, whose role was taken over by public institutions dealing with youth development (MLEYD 2007:4). The policy is not clear about the reasons for this state of affairs. Policymakers seem to believe that there has been a shift in the society – from communitarianism (collectivism), which emphasises community relationships and integration of an individual into a social network (including the importance of the family unit), towards a

more individualistic society, with the noticeable centrality of individuals, relatively independent of others, and their personal development outside of the community.

Whether the youth development provided by the public institutions mentioned in the document is benefiting young people is not disclosed. Similarly, there is no discussion over the role that such institutions should play in the lives of youth. Given their public character, one would expect them to provide the young people with citizenship education to prepare them for their obligations towards the country. However, according to the NYDP, there is currently no mechanism to prepare youth for their responsibilities as good citizens of a democratic nation – i.e., to protect the country and its Constitution, and to respect established rules and ethics.

The policy states that youth have a right to participate in all aspects of social, economic, cultural and political life of their country (MLEYD 2007:11), which includes access to the political arena in Tanzania. However, there is no clearly defined system in place to help young men and women to take up leadership positions (MLEYD 2007:6). The policy specifically acknowledges the unequal access of girls to decision-making and leadership positions. Discrimination towards young women with respect to land ownership and inheritance is also noted (MLEYD 2007:11). The reasons for this state of affairs are not mentioned, but it can be assumed that the traditional perceptions of age and gender roles have a bearing on the situation. Accordingly, implementation of the policy would require a cultural change.

The NYDP raises the issue of 'disintegration of traditional families and community life' and calls for a mechanism that would prepare youth for their role in society. It further argues that young Tanzanians 'need to be appraised [*sic*] on the need to preserve the culture and heritage of the nation' (MLEYD 2007:19). It is surprising that traditional family and community structures, which used to provide traditional education and prepare young people for community life, are not recognised as a genuine culture-specific regulatory mechanism.

In the end, culture is a powerful control mechanism and neither this, nor its true value or meaning for people's lives, is fully appreciated. The policymakers seem to have a somewhat nostalgic attitude towards 'traditional culture', understanding that some aspects of it may not seem fitting anymore, but not realising that local cultural practices can also change and adapt to respond to the contemporary challenges Tanzanian youth is facing. Moreover, the document remains blind to the still-strong influence of local cultures – in the form of still functioning subconscious cultural perceptions and value systems in use – on Tanzania's contemporary society life.

To preserve tradition, the NYDP proposes establishment of a mechanism which would, on the one hand, protect 'acceptable' cultural practices and promote Tanzanian cultural values and, on the other, defend youth from 'harmful' external cultural influences. Without indicating who should decide on what is acceptable and what is harmful, the policy acknowledges the dynamic character of culture and its ability to change. However, by suggesting the introduction of a mechanism to protect and preserve traditions, the policy is more inclined to seeing in culture a fixed system that organises a society, rather than a self-regulatory, meaning-making 'set of tools' that people can use. Hence, while 'traditional' norms and practices appear to silently endure the passage of time and the 'invasion' of more contemporary standards and expressions, often propagated by the mass media and spread through new technologies (MLEYD 2007:4), the policymakers seem to be stuck between cultural transformation, which in certain cases seems advisable, if not unavoidable, and the 'glorious old days'.

Speaking of new influences, the NYPD dedicates a lot of space to discuss the harmful effects of information and communication technology (ICT), and the breakdown of cultural and national values due to the 'liberalisation' (presumably referring to the liberal influence) of television and radio programmes (MLEYD 2007:13). In trying to remedy the situation, it suggests regulating the use of the media to prevent its ill-effects. It is noticeable that the NYDP does not address the sensitivity of youth to more liberal content and their need for it, which may provide an insight into the ways youth see themselves. One would want to ask, why does youth choose to follow a different path, what drives the group, and why should it be considered a wrong direction? Finally, what kind of cultural upbringing and citizenship education do young Tanzanians receive, if the cultural and national values can be so easily destroyed by the power of mass media? The policy focuses on regulating access to undesirable content, addressing the supply rather than the demand. It is surprisingly silent on the potential use of traditional education as a salve for the underlying causes of the situation.

In its NYDP, Tanzania recognises the positive and negative aspects of the 'traditional culture', while attributing the destruction of the country's moral core and value systems largely to foreign influences. The socio-economic ills of the country are presented mostly as an outcome of globalisation. The policymakers criticise the impact of Western culture on their country's development. They call for the preservation of the established system, albeit denouncing certain 'harmful' practices that are part of it.

The National Youth Policy of Ghana

Featuring the theme 'Towards an Empowered Youth, Impacting Positively on National Development', the National Youth Policy of Ghana (NYPG) was adopted in 2010 (MYS 2010). It views youth as all persons falling in the age bracket fifteen to thirty-five. In 2010, based on the 2000 Ghana Housing and Population Census, the group constituted 33 per cent of the population (Paragraph 3.4). In the 2010 Ghana Housing and Population Census, youth aged fifteen to twenty-four made up 20 per cent of all people in Ghana (GSS 2013:54). The policy acknowledges 'youth' as a social category, defining the term as 'a period between childhood and adulthood' (Paragraph 3.1), but does not develop that thought much further.

The NYPG recognises that the youth is a heterogeneous group composed of males and females, living in rural and urban areas, adolescents and adults, physically-challenged and able-bodied, educated and uneducated, in-school and out-of-school, organised and unorganised, skilled and unskilled. It is interesting to note that the policymakers distinguish between adolescents and adults. Even though the difference between the two is not explained, it can be assumed that the distinction in the NYPG follows the terminology used in the Ghana Housing and Population Census, where youth aged fifteen to nineteen are considered 'old adolescents', and twenty to twenty-four year olds are considered 'young adults'. Oddly, though, the 2010 Census counts youth aged between twenty-five and thirty-five together with adults (up to fifty-nine years of age).

The NYPG acknowledges that each youth group has different characteristics, needs and aspirations. However, it does not delve further into this matter. It only addresses different needs of the so-called 'special attention groups', among which are youth engaged in crime and violence, youth with disability, youth with special talents, youth at risk, and female youth.

Among the key principles of the NYPG are patriotism, self-reliance, honesty and integrity, participation, equity, access, leadership, good governance, gender mainstreaming, respect, as well as coordination and collaboration (Paragraph 5.2.1). In addressing youth needs and priority areas for action, the policy puts emphasis on a number of issues, namely: education and skills training; science and technology; employment and entrepreneurial development; agriculture; health; arts and culture; governance, democracy and leadership; as well as nationalism and conscientisation of the youth, among others (Paragraph 6.1). The list looks very similar to the one found in the youth policies of Kenya and Tanzania, as each country uses cross-cutting notions of youth when speaking of needs and challenges without providing much context.

Speaking of culture, the NYPG hints at the instrumental value of culture as art by encouraging youth to create wealth opportunities for themselves 'in their backyards and environment' (Paragraph 6.1.5). Much greater emphasis is, however, placed in the policy on culture as a meaning-making mechanism and a set of values, behaviours and beliefs.

The NYPG describes the national culture as a means of upholding moral upbringing and law-abiding citizenship (Paragraph 9.3.1). It argues the importance of a 'proper cultural context' in which youth would be provided with the 'correct moral compass to guide them in leading responsible youth and adult lives' (Paragraph 9.6.1). Young people are clearly not trusted to make the right choices, viewed as not mature enough to decide for themselves – as needing guidance. The use of the terms 'proper' and 'correct' is problematic, as the terms of reference are not stipulated. It is equally unclear what the policymakers mean when they call for the promotion of 'good Ghanaian culture and beliefs' (Paragraph 9.3.1). The challenge of defining what is 'good', 'proper' and correct', and according to whose standard, is left open. 'Ghanaian culture' is another term that may be confusing, as it lacks definition. It seems the document speaks of the national culture of the country, in which case the description 'good' is rather misleading; one would not expect bad elements in that kind of political construct. Otherwise, the policy may be referring, again, to the multitude of local cultures that form part of the diverse cultural landscape of the country. In that case, the evaluative word 'good' would suggest that, according to the policymakers, cultures can be divided into good and bad, or else some elements of cultural practices may be seen as positive or negative. It is not clear how elements will be assessed and deemed to be good or bad.

Creating cultural awareness among youth is stipulated in the document as a social, political and economic development strategy (Paragraph 6.1.13). The NYPG sees traditional socialisation structures as the way of transferring cultural values. Arts and culture are also described as the medium through which norms should be transferred, as well as 'progressive skills, techniques of social relations and survival' (Paragraph 6.1.13). Culture and heritage, according to the policy, give people a sense of identity and self-respect. The policymakers turn to religious organisations, traditional authorities and socio-cultural groupings to provide youth with guidance in this regard and educate them 'through examples rather than precepts' (Paragraph 9.6.1.). That way, young people are expected to willingly 'adopt our beliefs, values and cultural heritage' (Paragraph 9.6.1.).

The use of 'our' in this statement suggests that the policy does not consider youth to be members of the collective yet. Who can claim the membership

of that imagined community? Those with a well-developed sense of cultural belonging? Those who have acquired traditional knowledge? The statement evokes traditional initiation processes in which elders exercised power over the young ones through their superior knowledge. Initiates have to go through a journey to acquire an expected amount of knowledge and maturity to prove themselves worthy of being called a member of the community.

Youth is clearly depicted here as a group that can join the collective, but only on the already established terms. This means the elders still hold the power to 'create' youth. However, before young people are made to belong, they need to be prepared and have knowledge and cultural identity infused in them. Briefly, the policy prescribes traditional education and living the culture, instead of learning about it, as ways of preserving local norms and ensuring that cultural practices continue to be practised. It is expected that, in this way, young people will naturally absorb the culture and will be able to willingly accept its values. However, one wonders how the policy sees the future of those who rebel against 'our' norms and beliefs, and try to negotiate their way into the collective on their own terms. How does change happen, if at all?

The NYPG also dedicates some space to the families, warning of the weakening role the community plays in the lives of young people. Recognising the erosion of traditional social support systems for youth, which it claims leads to deviance (Paragraph 4.0), the NYPG calls on the families to 'create culturally-sensitive guidance systems and provide the resources needed for (…) development of the youth to contribute to their respective societies and/or communities' (Paragraph 9.2.1).

Here cultural upbringing is again promoted as a way of producing responsible citizens. There is no elucidation of how its precepts, especially traditional gender roles, correlate with the recommendation to 'provide equitable conditions for males and females' (Paragraph 6.1.8) and 'advancing the aspirations of female youth (…) as equal partners in the national development agenda' (Paragraph 7.0). However, the policy clearly discourages all gender-related discriminatory cultural practices (Paragraph 6.1.8), as well as negative attitudes (Paragraph 7.0). These attitudes, as can be assumed, result from specific cultural perceptions of the role of women in society and the traditional family structure.

The policymakers clearly recognise the need for culture to be dynamic and change when its practices are no longer useful or become invalid for a particular context. And it is usually youth with whom the 'innovation' within culture tends to start, as they find themselves in the centre of

negotiating tensions between continuity and change in the process of cultural transformation. Consequently, while the society prepares youth for being part of the community, society claims the power to shape the collective they will join.

The NYPG does not make anyone responsible for providing equitable conditions for males and females, or for changing gender-related discriminatory cultural practices. It also does not seem to allow youth to reject long-established cultural norms and empower them to follow a different path on pain of being excluded from 'our collective'. They cannot exercise individual agency.

Among challenges, the NYPG mentions 'negative effects of urbanisation and modernisation' (Paragraph 4.0). The document does not provide any explanation of the nature of these effects. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that the policy sees science and technology as prerequisites for the youth to join the global scientific revolution, and lists them among its priority areas (Paragraph 6.1.3). It also promotes participation of youth in 'modern agriculture' (Paragraph 6.1.7), but does not clarify what the term 'modern' might mean in this context. How is 'modern' agriculture different? Is it agriculture that uses innovative technology and novel machinery, or simply 'non-traditional' agriculture? How can policymakers criticise 'modernisation' while promoting technological progress at the same time? The NYPG may be referring here to the modernisation theory, according to which

> development meant assuming the mental models of the West (rationalization), the institutions of the West (the market), the goals of the West (high mass consumption), and the culture of the West (worship of the commodity) (Peet 1999:85–6).

The NYPG seems to be critical of the undesirable results of transformation in the socio-cultural sphere, and of the values and modes of operation propagated by the West. But it encourages the pursuit of innovation and technological advancement in the economic sphere as the prerequisites for the country being 'modern'.

Modernity – A Pursuit of the Imaginary

The youth development policies of Kenya, Tanzania and Ghana all use biological age as the defining characteristic of youth. Socially constructed definitions of youth are not directly integrated in any of them, though the Kenyan and the Ghanaian documents acknowledge that youth is a social category and a heterogeneous group, including people from different

backgrounds, with different needs, aspirations and challenges, without pursuing the topic any further. None of the texts mention the relational character of youth, consider the term as historically constructed, or refer to the 'social shifter' phenomenon identified by Durham (2004). None of the texts acknowledge 'waithood' or make provision for young people older than the specified age-range in each country who may find themselves in this transitional phase.

The policies all use broad cross-cutting notions of youth, constructing the group through the challenges it experiences: high levels of unemployment, access to quality education, as well as health-related problems. Each document provides a list of targeted youth, emphasising the need to cater specifically for the most marginalised and vulnerable, including female youth, out-of-school youth, rural youth and the disabled. However, the texts rarely refer further to these clusters with specific recommendations.

Looking at culture, the Kenyan policy does not refer to it explicitly at all. The other two documents use the term in the singular form, which suggests that they refer to the respective national culture. All three documents recognise the dynamic nature of culture and leave the door open to potential change in practices, especially if these practices are no longer valid or even harmful to people in some way. The Tanzanian and Ghanaian youth policies see foreign influences largely as unwanted elements, destructive to their local culture.

The policies of Kenya and Tanzania see culture as both a repository of values and norms bequeathed from previous generations that control the behaviour of people, and a 'living organism' that shapes social realities of youth. Culture is acknowledged as being constraining, but also subject to change based on lived experiences.

The Kenya Youth Development Policy seems to want to combine 'traditional' Kenyan values with Western 'universal' norms, acknowledging that change and continuity are both elements of the process of cultural transformation. At the same time, the policymakers clearly do not consider instances when the two systems are arguably incompatible. The modalities of the process of cultural transformation are not clearly defined, but they seem to be guided by the Western-construed 'universal' standards for a 'modern' society. Consequently, modernity is articulated as a status in a global system that makes one belong to the group of developed and progressive, albeit on one's own terms. The core of this modernity revolves around traditional culture, which has the capacity to change, but should also be protected from unwanted influences that weaken traditional values. The policy seems to view certain Kenyan cultural practices as relics of the past that

should be eradicated because they are not aligned with 'universal' standards. Hence, Kenya is arguably striving to arrive at its 'alternative modernity' by 'modernising' its culture. Yet the possibility of transforming culture by adapting some of the 'old' practices to current realities, or reviving traditions instead of simply rejecting them, is not spelled out as an option.

The National Youth Development Policy of Tanzania repeats the mantra of the need to protect local culture, its traditions and expressions, from the damaging effects of globalisation, modernisation and the Western imperial system of values, but sees the need to challenge local cultural practices and norms that are no longer fitting and desirable for the contemporary society.

The document sees local (national) culture as traditional and opposes the influences of global culture. The latter is depicted as a system incompatible with the ideologies envisaged by the policymakers as the country's foundation, as well as with the cultural values the policy wants to mainstream among young people. The NYDP articulates Tanzania's modernity as being rooted in local traditions and values, and sees globalisation as a destructive force, affecting young people's cultural identity and their socio-economic well-being. Tanzania's policymakers see youth's identity being lost due to the impact of global culture. Cultural hybridisation or cultural liberalism are rejected, even if the document, like its Kenyan equivalent, is clearly influenced by principles and norms that are external to local culture.

The National Youth Policy of Ghana sees culture as a way of life that is acquired by an individual as a member of society. As such, the policy recognises the importance of cultural upbringing and traditional socialisation structures in shaping the value system of its nation, including the youth. The policy rejects Western ideology and norms, but understands the advantages of the country having a strong science and technology focus. Hence, it is eager for Ghana to join the global scientific revolution, seeing it as a prerequisite for claiming the state of being modern. Modernity is thus seen not as a status in a global hierarchy, but rather a technological advancement of the country. Ghana's policymakers seem to separate people's culture from the world of technology. Culture is treated as that sphere of life that should not be interfered with by foreign influences, as it is where the soul of the nation resides. Science, however, is presented as a separate sphere, a matter of global interests. Being recognised as part of the scientific revolution means claiming access to the 'modern' world. The policy seems to suggest that modernity as pure science can be divorced from society. Construed in this way, Latour (1993) argues, modernity is a utopia, for culture and nature always mix.

Searching for African Heavens

Ferguson (2006:17) speaks of a 'colonial shadow relation between "Africa" and "the West", which persists and has even haunted the continent since its independence. It subsists on Africa's 'aspiration to membership', which depends on the continent's progress towards 'development' and 'modernity', both of which can be deemed 'imaginary pursuits'.

Colonialists claimed their culture and values were universal. Drawing from social Darwinism, they constructed indigenous[4] identities as homogenous, unchanging, their cultures fixed and ahistorical. For the West, the 'Other', stuck in the past, undeveloped, 'savage', was racially stereotyped and regarded as being in need of 'saving' from primitiveness by the modern European human. Modernity – a desirable state of development characterising 'advanced' nations – has become a telos and a criterion against which 'developing' countries have been evaluated.

Questioning the supposedly universal trajectory of economic and socio-cultural transformations needed to achieve 'Western modernity', the non-Western countries managed to break out of the modernity-telos cage and decided to create their own 'alternative modernities'. In Africa, after independence, intellectuals tried to give the continent its own modernity too. In an attempt at de-westernisation (Mignolo 2009), this new modernity was to be adapted to the cultural and historical experiences of Africa. Nkrumah's 'African Personality', Senghor's 'Negritude', and Nyerere's 'African Socialism' were efforts at giving the project of modernisation an African soul (Mkandawire 2005). However, the project has failed, for tradition can also be used as a legitimating principle and turned into an ideology. The project ended up adapting the same language of one-sidedness and idealisation that the colonial oppressor had used before. As a result, African nationalism represented the entire continent as ahistorical and asocial (Mkandawire 2005).

What, then, should African modernity look like? Kwame Gyekye (1997: xii) claims that the *self-created modernity* – forged and refined in the furnace of conversations between African intellectual creativity and Africa's complex cultural heritage' – needs to draw on African experiences and 'appropriate' rather than 'transfer' or 'transplant' technology. It also needs to be ready for some radical changes in terms of leaving behind those aspects of 'traditional' expressions that no longer serve their purpose. For, as Gusfield (1967:358) argues, both tradition and modernity are categories of choice. This choice is made based on the value systems of people.

Ferguson (2006) argues that in the pursuit of a higher standard of living associated with modernity, Asian countries focused on transforming their economies, but in line with their local cultural precepts and philosophical

standpoints. In Africa, however, culture is widely seen as a relic and an obstacle to development, he claims. Hence, the countries on the continent chose more often to 'modernise' their cultures by eliminating 'backward practices', in hope of reaching the status of a 'modern' state. The youth development policies of Kenya and Tanzania seem to follow that trajectory. Ghana, on the other hand, has arguably chosen a different path than its East African counterparts, associating being 'modern' simply with scientific advancement and the global technological revolution.

Whatever the trajectory chosen to pursue an 'alternative modernity', the motivation behind it remains the same, namely an 'aspiration to membership'. It does not question modernity (or development) as a concept or a path (whether as progress or regress; see Ferguson 2006). It simply changes its features. Mignolo argues that, if knowledge-making is to serve well-being, it 'shall come from local experiences and needs, rather than from local imperial experiences and needs projected to the globe' (2009:19). Hence, the aspiration matters. It is key to deciding on the path but also, more importantly, on the destination. Imagining different types of modernity or different ways of arriving at modernity does not address the problem of the 'imaginary construction' that is modernity. It presupposes that everyone imagines it in the first place. It is by renouncing the 'aspiration to membership' that one becomes free to choose one's own future, being guided by one's own value system, without the burden of someone else's expectation.

Indigenous methodological thinking considers axiologies (value systems of people) as a key dimension, next to epistemology and ontology (Porsanger 2011:233). Speaking of the importance of value systems, Kristine Nystad (2003, quoted in English in Porsanger 2011:233) gives an interesting example of reindeer herding among the Sami people. This occupation is considered a more valuable option than typical 'modern' job and formal education. It is not a choice between two opposites – moving forward with time or choosing to stay 'stuck in the past' – but 'a preference for continuity in the traditional Sami way of living within contemporary society'. It is therefore a question of values attributed to a particular lifestyle.

Seen in this light, the approach taken by Ghana in its National Youth Policy with regard to cultural upbringing of youth and instilling in the young people the values of their culture can be better understood. The idea is to prepare youth to participate in the contemporary world fully aware of who they are. Raised in a particular socio-cultural setting, they should then be able to choose consciously their path, appreciating their local values and beliefs, instead of automatically pursuing some 'universal' objectives and 'borrowed' standards, driven by the 'aspiration to membership'.

The suggested 'renunciation of aspiration', driven by people's axiologies, could be then seen as a form of decolonial detachment, not just from Western modernity but from modernity in general. It offers liberation from the discourse of globalisation/ civilisation, which mainstreams the neoliberal world order, by replacing it, as suggested by Mignolo (2000), with mundialización/ culture that recognises a multiplicity of social orders. Accordingly, the view that civilisation (or modernity) is the highest point in the linear progressive development trajectory from savagery would lose its merit. Instead, culture in all its diversity will constitute the only reference; its transformation, marked by both continuity and change, will neither be bound by linear time nor a fixed destination.

Conclusion

Conceptualising tradition and modernity as binary opposition makes tradition's continuity in the present impossible. Such an approach connects the notion of tradition only to the past and sees it as a relic. The Western theoretical understanding of the concepts of modernity and tradition is incompatible with African contexts, where every modern society is traditional. However, de-westernising modernity simply by flavouring it with African culture does not seem an effective solution; it only breeds African nationalism that appears as a shadow of Western hegemonic power. Such an 'alternative modernity' remains construed as a status founded on Western imagination, or a destination one should aspire to reach. In other words, modernity remains a goal one is subconsciously being forced to aim for. And what if one decided not to play the game?

The decolonial option offers African countries a possibility of imagining not just other ways of arriving at the ultimate destination of modernity (whether Western or African or another alternative), but possibly imagining an entirely different destination. It speaks of freedom from the 'colonial shadow relationship' Africa keeps with the West.

To break out politically from shadowing the West, policies on the continent need to design African heavens using local axiologies, instead of responding to imperial global agendas. The latter continue to divide countries and people according to their level of 'modernisation' and 'enlightenment'. The ways cultures shape behaviours and create meanings through norms and values need to be better understood by policymakers so that the legal documents they adopt do not perpetuate Western-created paradigms in which the communities living their culture are defined through the prism of the 'modern' Western human.

Of the youth policies studied for the present article, Ghana seems to best understand the importance of local axiology in actively living and creating one's culture. Unlike Kenya and Tanzania, Ghana highlights the importance of personal development of youth in the spirit of local beliefs and value systems in order to 'bring about' recognition for 'our own' in young people. This in turn is supposed to lead youth to choose willingly a different heaven for themselves, away from the Western one built on the principles of consumption, capitalism, and love for commodity. Here axiology plays an important role by equipping youth with a sense of personal value and a strong cultural identity which should help them renounce the pursuit of a Western illusion.

The youth policies of Ghana and Kenya recognise the term 'youth' as socially constructed, even though they do not further address youth development with that in mind. The text of Tanzania's policy follows the categorisation of youth based on biological age only. Disregard for socially constructed definitions of youth in policies causes a 'semantic rift' between the official state classifications, and local conceptualisation and cultural perceptions. Correlating traditional rites of passage with other 'legal' and societal ways of reaching adulthood, such as through marriage, giving birth, becoming taxpayers, or gaining election participation rights, remains a challenge.

The resulting misalignment of youth realities with the existing legislation and policy regimes results in implementation obstacles, as young people may struggle to identify themselves with the picture of youth painted by the policymakers. They may simply disagree with the path that these policies propose for their future. For instance, the global culture that the policymakers try to steer youth away from when constructing 'African modernity' plays an important role in the lives of young people. Instead of controlling access to its different aspects in an attempt to 'protect' youth from its influences, providing young people with a steady footing in their own culture would enable them to chart their own path consciously rather than blindly follow the crowd.

The place that culture occupies in youth's realities and imaginations needs to be examined with a deeper understanding of how young people experience the processes of globalisation. By looking at how they negotiate their different fractured identities today, while navigating their lives in mixed temporalities of the continent, would help envisage a future in which they will be able to construct their selves out of many variables. If this is successfully done, the lives of youth will not be regarded as a struggle between 'plural worlds'. Cultures can change and adapt to present conditions. Traditions can be reinvented and cultural practices can be re-embedded within contemporary (rather than 'modern') society.

Notes

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2. In 2016, the High Court ruled against child marriage and directed the government to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 for both sexes. On 23 October 2019, the Tanzania Court of Appeal dismissed the government's appeal against the High Court judgment.
3. The persistent myth of authority resting with elders due to their age is a result of the colonial interpretation of the system. Colonial administrators assumed models of knowledge based on their own perception of age, i.e., using biological age, instead of local understandings of life stages as linked to traditional knowledge, rites of passage, and the local cosmology.
4. I refer to 'indigeneity' after Chilisa (2012), who refers to the term as a cultural group's ways of knowing and the value systems that inform their lives.

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