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Youth in Angola: Social and Political Transformations
Introduction

The proclamation of independence on November 11th, 1975, after years of armed struggle against the Portuguese colonial regime (1961-1975), did not bring to the Angolan people, the coveted aspirations. Disagreements between three formers national liberation movements, Angola Popular Liberation Movement (MPLA), the National Union for the Angola Total Independence (UNITA) and the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA) led immediately the country to a civil war that lasted until 2002, with a brief period of peace between 1991 and 1992 (Bicesse Agreements). The resumption of war in 1992, after the holding of the first elections, because of non-acceptance of election results by UNITA, led the country into a war even bloodier and destructive, which caused a severe damage in nation’s public administration and economic enterprises, many people were killed and others internally displaced. The lack of future prospects and issues of insecurity (compulsory military service) led to an increase of young immigration to the cities (particularly Luanda) and overseas in search of safety and better future.

This situation changed in 2002 with the establishment of permanent peace (Entendimento de Luena). Since then, the country has entered into a new Era of national reconstruction, repatriation of displaced citizens, satisfaction of basic needs of its population, access to education and employment, returns of young and qualified Angolans from overseas, and so on. Economic growth that occurs in recent years, especially the last two years, reflected in the lives of Angolans, particularly on youth everyday life. In this new reality, to be youth appears as a prerequisite because their status is synonymous with vitality, entrepreneurship, modernity, creativity and dynamism.

Based on field data collected in Luanda, this paper seeks to understand the major challenges that younger’s Angolans are facing nowadays, concerning the country new reality post-war: social transformation (education and employment), democratic participation (citizenship), expectations and aspirations. The main objective is to explore how young Angolans are redefining their role in society taking into account the transformations (social, political, economic, and cultural) that the country is facing through the last 11 years (since the establishment of peace). Furthermore, we also

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1 In Portuguese
2 This “second” civil war took place inside the cities throughout the country. It started in Luanda but soon spread all over the country.
3 Luena’s Agreement (Peace Treaty).
analyze the influence of war/peace time in young’s life’s course, younger’s views related to the country’s future development and public policies that Angolan government defined to support youth.

**Methodology**

Taking into account the evident interconnection between the different periods of Angola history and the impact of these historical events in each interviewed life’s trajectory, the perspective of methodological analysis relies primarily on holistic look around all these events. For this purpose, we chose the qualitative methodology once they allow to describe, understand and interpreting the surrounding environment, namely “they allow us to understand the process and the character of social life” (Altheide, 1996: 42), which means that the object are people and their social environment in the different manifestations.

In order to fulfill the established goals, we use as main methodology for gathering information the semi-directive interviews, held to the Angolan youths in the city of Luanda. The methodology of sampling adopted here, consequently non-probabilistic, results from the combination of “convenience sampling” and “snow ball” data collection. The interviews were conducted during the months of August and September 2012 in Luanda and 20 interviews were recorded. Also in Luanda, we combined the interviews with the technique of direct observation and bibliographic research, namely statistical data.

Fieldwork represents always a process of familiarization and detachment (Costa, 2003). Thus, the fact that the researcher was familiar to the social space - and have herself experienced part of the events described – conditioned, sometimes, to keep the distance. On the other hand, this proximity allowed to deep the previous knowledge, as well as the construction of new knowledge. Thus, this proximity was simultaneously a constraint and an “asset”.

During the analysis of data collected we found that, for these interviewers, the youth experiences are linked to different historical contexts of the country, and their life trajectories drawn in accordance with these events. Their speech, whether optimistic or pessimistic, energetic or apathetical, is reflected in their representations about the country’s past, present and future, and also on their trajectories and expectations as young.
**Being Youth, a Condition?**

Historically and socially, the youth has been characterized as a stage by which we all have been through, between childhood and maturity, marked mainly by experiences, a physical, emotional, psychological and social development, for an awareness, attitudes and decisions concerning important situations that may influence and shape each one’s future. Youth, has not always been a universal and stable category. Rather, it is a construct of the modern and urban world, and has played changing roles throughout the twentieth century (Lüküslü, 2005: 29). According to Bourdieu, youth “is no more than a word” (1983:143), subject to all sorts of manipulations, while building a “young identity” that is mainly based on “provisional irresponsibility” (Bourdieu, 1983: 144-145). Youth is a time of growth, a time that we all experience individual and collective experiences, a stage of construction and reconstruction identities, affections, tastes and consumption, a time of ideological construction. A period marked by great enthusiasm and creativity and intense desire to change the world around, investing in that all our energies. Young people identify themselves when they share the same interests, the same habits, clothing, and entertainment. Pais (1990) proposes that we look to youth:

not only as a social group whose main attribute is to be composed of individuals to a given stage of life but also as a social group with social attributes that distinguish the young (1990: 151).

At the individual level, youth is a critical step in each one’s formation and transformation, ranging from the maturation of body and spirit, to the choices for the final insertion into community life. Social roles and expectations, biological age and responsibilities are factors that are take into account when we define youth. The social and individual development of young people are also faced with difficulties that affect their transition to adulthood and puts them constantly into the “frontier between childhood and adulthood” (Honwana & De Boeck, 2005: 4): unemployment, labour market integration, access to housing, health care, and so on, constraints that influence the youth living (spending habits), lead to a longer stay at parents home, the postponement of marriage, as well as risk behaviors (drug abuse, crime, disease transmition), early pregnancy, among many others.

This frontier is getting harder to be settled, as the constraints intensifies, keeping young people in a stage of “life on hold” (Diouf, 2003: 6) once they are not children anymore because they do not need adults to take care of them, but neither they are adult,
once they still remain dependent on family. Meanwhile, this period of “waitinghood” (Honwana, 2012) for the best opportunity to cross the border puts youth in constant conflict with themselves and with society. They want social, political, and economic changes, and they want to participate in it, as we’ve seen in some Arab countries. They fight for human rights, peace, liberty, but they also become violent to get it. Through Europe thousands of young people manifest themselves in the streets of the major capital cities, where young people come out to claim for best prospects for their future.

Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, young people situation is much more problematic, not only because they constitute one of the most marginalized social category, which avoid them to play a political and economic role locally, translocally and globally (Honwana & De Boeck, 2005: 9) as well as they face an environment marked by diverse crises and its consequences, derived from many reasons.

Demographically, Africa is the youngest region of the world. Not only is the continent that has more young people, as well as is the continent in which young people constitutes the majority of each country population (Siziba, 2009; Diouf, 2003; Sommers, 2007). In 1996 the average age in the continent was of 17 (Trani, 2006: 332) and in 2006, about 44 percent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa was under fifteen years of age (Honwana, 2012: 13). However, “the overwhelming majorities are marginalized, poorly educated and poor; significantly, female youth tend to be seriously underrepresented in both young and women’s groups” (Sommers, 2007: 20), which poses many challenges to the countries development and to each one’s individual experiences and life chances.

Studies related to contemporary African youth and the insertion of young people into socio-economic and political order of post-independence Africa, have shown how young people are today confronted with lack of opportunities, blocked social opportunities and despair about the future in a condition Henrick Vigh has described as social moratorium (Vigh, 2010). However, despite all these difficulties, young people in Africa are actively participating in social, economic and political developments and in the process, constructing their own identities” (Honwanda & De Boeck, 2005: 1) and have “demonstrated tremendous creativity in making a living for themselves in a climate of social instability and endemic conflict” (Honwana & De Boeck, 2005: 2). Young Africans are, according to the author’s simultaneously creative and destructive forces, makers and breakers, made and broken.
Angolan youth is not much different of those from the rest of the continent. The country is going through rapid, dramatic, processes of change, and youngsters are those who are more powerfully challenging hierarchy and power and acting more efficiently through global social networks, thus blurring the traditional frontiers between Angola and the developed world.

Angolan population is mostly young. In 2003, 85 percent of Angolan population had less than 40 years (MICS\(^4\), 2003: 28). According to Angola National Statistic Institute (INE\(^5\)) (2010), in 2009 the average of Angolan population corresponded to 15 years (INE, 2010: 2). However, most young Angolans face serious constraints in relation to their status as young. First of all, access to education is still a problematic issue since that only 22 per cent of children enter primary school at age of six (PNUD\(^6\)-Angola, 2002), which conditions it’s continuity to secondary and higher education, subsequently affecting the professional integration. According to BAfD/OCDE\(^7\), in 2008 the percentage of unskilled labor amounted to a total of 94 percent of the group of 15-19 years old, 74 percent of the group of 20-24 years and 68 percent for the range of 25-29 years (BAfD/OCDE, 2008: 122). On the other hand, we also need to look to women condition and if we take gender asymmetry, Angola is placed in 126\(^{\text{th}}\) position (in a total of 135 countries) (World Economic Forum, 2011).

These disappointing statistics are partially the result of almost 27 years of civil war (1975-2002). Due to these disastrous years, “almost two generations of youth in Angola have missed important opportunities to enter adulthood successfully” (Rodrigues, 2010: 170). During this prolonged period of civil war, over 330,000 Angolans fled to neighboring countries, and many more were displaced within Angola (Farrell & Isaacs, 2007). The war also inflicted widespread destruction in infrastructures thus enormously affects the country’s economic, social and political development. The disruption of families, the decline of parental authority and responsibility and the state itself caused vulnerabilities in areas such as education, employment and livelihoods, healthcare and nutrition. Those constraints make the structure of Angolan youth quite diverse. We can find young people socially divided “according to its interests, their

\(^4\) MICS: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey.
\(^5\) INE: Instituto Nacional de Estatísticas (Angola National Statistic Institute).
\(^7\) BAfD: Bando Africano de Desenvolvimento (AfDB: African Development Bank); OCDE: Organização para a Cooperação e Desenvolvimento Económico (OECD: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development).
social origins, their perspectives and aspirations” (Pais, 1996: 26). So, we can find young people who sought refuge in urban areas in search of security, others who have gone abroad in search of better life conditions, youth privileged by their social and economic background as well as young people marginalized by their social and economic condition. New reality imposes an update of that structure. The end of war and the new demands that Angola is facing lead to a resetting of the society itself.

The context of peace and the recent economic growth placed many social transformations in Angolan society as well as many challenges to the Angolan young people, particularly the process of democratization and the building of a fair and balanced society. This dynamic, which is recorded in all sectors of society, has provided significant social, political, cultural and economic transformations, thus enhancing the role of youth. By social transformation we understand the way in which society and culture are transformed in response to factors such as economic growth, war or political upheaval (Castles, 2002). In this case, peace has brought the opportunity to try and compensate for the chances youth have missed in recent past. On the other hand peace is giving the opportunity to all Angolans, particularly youth, to build a Nova Angola\(^8\) *(the new Angola)*, creating new forms of social and cultural interaction. Education, employment, civic participation, democracy, human rights, and many others issues that concerns African youth in general, are also the main challenges that concerns Angolan youth.

\(^8\) This idea of building the new Angola is internalized in all Angolans and is based on the ruling party (MPLA) ideology in first years of independency and is related to the dream of living in a country without war, discriminations and inequalities.
Young Angolans

Angolan youth has faced over the past decades challenges and constraints that have conditioned their youth experience and also their future. It was the young generation who spearheaded the ideological war against Portugal colonial rule and thus acted as key agents of political change that culminated in the proclamation of independency and later the establishment of a socialism regime. During the I Republic (1975-1991) youth absorbed the Party’s ideology and we witness a massive recruitment and involvement of youths in the revolutionary process. They all were enthusiastic to the idea of having defeated the colonial regime and exciting about the opportunity to be part of the “revolution”\(^9\) and to fight to defend the country “against the enemy” and “imperialism”. The promise of social change, justice and or, at best, equal opportunity was a good motivation to fight.

So, throughout the years, Angolan youth have been in the centre of all important historical events and have been influenced by those events, which explain why we find different perceptions about Angola recent social and political transformations. If some younger’s were influenced by socialism others were by liberalism. If some were affected by war and its constraints, others don’t even have conscience how war affected the country. These different experiences and paths interfere in each one’s idea about the country and the role of youth in Angola society.

We’re talking about people who share common experiences such as the same kind of educational, political or cultural influence, which was reflected in their life trajectory and influenced their views of the world that shaped their identity.

All their attitudes and ideas are, therefore, shaped not only based on their personal experiences, but also on the historical and social contexts that each one experienced, including the post-independence period, the construction of the socialist state, peacemaking, return to war (1992) and subsequent definitive establishment of peace (2002) and respective democratic state building.

Civil war is in the centre of the main embarrassment that young Angolans had faced, particularly, the resumption in 1992. The high expectations for prosperity and growth were blocked and we witnessed to the collapse of Angola society: deslocados

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\(^9\) This idea of revolution was transmitted by all the liberation movements to their supports. To do that they created and supported mass organizations in order to politicize youth, children, workers and women. As an example, MPLA, the ruling party since 1975 created JMPLA (party youth organization), OMA (party women’s organization), OPA (party children organization), UNTA (party workers organization), between others
(displaced people) towards urban areas (mostly Luanda), mines, orphans, disabled people, increase of poverty, among others, which caused vulnerabilities in areas such as education, employment and livelihoods, healthcare and nutrition, affecting youth experiences as well as acting as a blocking for youth future projects. War also created a “crisis in moral values” (Honwana, 2005:36) and the break of “rules and norms, for adults and for the elderly” (Honwana, 2005:36) that still affects youth throughout the country.

It is within this environment of societal chaos, that young had to give sense to their own existence. So, they had to use their creativity and imagination and transformed the difficulties into opportunities. They faced the constraints and survived; they learned do adjust to new realities and to took advantage of it. When we asked about their memories related to war time, Vemba 10, a 30 years old male electrician says:

The 1992 war was the awful. Suddenly it came out from the movies to my neighborhood. It was terrible. And after that the city and the country changed. People were lost. Nobody knew what to do. But we had to go on and to get used to that new reality. And we did.

Vemba also stresses that war conditioned his life and is the main responsible for his actual situation

On those hard times I could not go to school not even university. My friends were in the same situation. And it’s not because we didn’t want but because we couldn’t. These was no opportunity, we all were just worried about how to survive.

For young males another constraint conditioned their plans, as we can see by Ondjaki words, a 34 years old accountant:

War had started again. I had 14 years and my parents were already thinking about how it would be after my 18 birthday because they didn’t want me to do to war. And we found a way to escape from it.

This young “adult” generation was deeply influenced by a politicized education, based on stories of bravery and heroism linked to the anti-colonial struggle, in other words, influenced by a socialist ideology.

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10 In order to preserve their identities, all the respondents names have been changed.
The new reality put away the ghost of compulsory military service and allowed youth to take decisions about their own lives and make plans for future. Together with the increasing liberalization of Angolan society and economy, peace brought a new reality, new projects and challenges for youth. The changes that these new panorama operated in Angolan economic and social structure opened a new way for dealing with their constraints and plan their future. Still enjoying the new reality youth start to see a future beyond war and destruction. Now they can, finally, aspire to be part of a global world, to be connected in an international network, increasing by this way their social capital. These youth, with post-materialist characteristics, cultivate values such as “freedom of speech, individual liberty, social equality, self-realization, maintenance of quality of life, environmental values, protection of consumer rights, among others” (Espírito Santo, 2006: 91), and brings out a new identity of the Angolan youth.

Social and Political Transformations: The Role of Youth

Education, employment, health, housing, leisure activities/spaces, access to technology, between many others, are the main concerns appointed by the respondents. Education and employment are in the top of all the concerns.

Contemporary, the experiences are marked by youth access to education, and the relationship between education and youth is also manipulated and manipulable (Oliveira, 2011). The development of the capitalist society and the specialization of labor led to the massification of education and strengthen the idea that the place of children and young people is at school, being this institution responsible for their training and preparation for active life. The school assumed different roles within a system of values, serving as the local of cultural transmission and reproduction of norms, values, social practices and social relations (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964). Education is assumed to promote competitiveness and productivity, reduce inequality, poverty and disease, mitigate conflict and crises and promote human capability and achieve social justice (Ensor, 2012: 3; OECD, 2008). On the other hand, globalization and the diffusion of technology are keeping more pressure on education system once they require qualified human resources.

People in Angola, and not just the youth attach great value to education. Education was one of the ruling party (MPLA) priorities after independence and an essential condition to build a nation state (PNUD-Angola, 2002: 26). But, was also the area that
was most affected by war. During the war period it was difficult to access to education and that continued in the years after the end of the war. Many young Angolans saw their access to education conditioned, which currently reflects in access to skilled labor market, as Kizua, a 31 years old male construction worker says "when I was younger there was only one university and therefore I could not go for it.". Kizua strong believes that if he had a “degree or any qualification [his] life could be better now”, which leads us to the conclusion that most of young adults are specially unprepared to transition into sustainable livelihoods because they grow up during the war or in the post-war period.

The economic liberalization allowed the opening of private higher education institutions, thus extending the provision of higher education to a large number of Angolans, mostly in Luanda. In order to put available the access to higher education de Cabinda ao Cunene (from Cabinda to Cunene)\(^{11}\) avoiding by this way the brain drain and developing the different regions, the government opened universities in all Angolan provinces. Nowadays “there is much more offer. You have universities everywhere and across the country” (Kieza, 16 years old, female, student).

This boom of higher education institutions is favored by the higher demand for education. Not only youth now have the opportunity to study as well as they have the idea that “more education, better job” and for Welema, a 24 years old female student and sales assistant, that’s the reason “why all universities, state or private, are collapsing”.

Increasing the number of students in schools, seen by youngs like Kieza, a 16 years old female student, as a "sign of change" is perceived by others like Luena as worrying because "there is no longer control and quality. Universities go to sell diplomas. If you want a degree, just pay." For this 30 years old female petroleum engineer, there’s a marketization on higher education once “to open a private university is now a very successful business”.

The concern about education quality is now in debate in society. Angolans already realized that Angolan universities are not graduate their students as it should be. Youth itself is concerning about the quality and is criticizing their activities. They feel very frustrated when they’re “rejected because [their] graduation was obtained in Angola, How could that be? Where are you going to work if not in Angola?” (Navita, 25 years old, female, lawyer). The poor quality of education limits opportunities for young

\(^{11}\) From Cabinda to Cunene means to all the country, from north to south.
people (WB, 2007: 6) because “when comes a really problem you cannot solve it” (Luena, 30 years old, female, petroleum engineer). Luena also emphasizes that this situation applies for both “students and professors”. Despite the lack of quality, we must emphasize the positive point of that because “schools and universities are places were young people “develop fresh ideas about the kind of a society they want to live in” (Mokwena 2005:20).

These same fresh ideas can be related to the access to employment. Like many others countries in conflict, Angola development strategy were subordinated to military goals, in detriment of social policies (Faria & Liberato, 2013; Oliveira 2011). The civil war and subsequently the effects of structural adjustment programs have led to the stagnation and decline of the Angolan economy during de eighties and nineties (Lopes, 2011), which reflected, among other sectors, the decrease in jobs, predominantly affecting the employability of young people. Faced with a formal job market inoperable and devastated, the population, with particular emphasis on young people (especially young women), found in the informal sector, the answer to their needs. The “paralelo” or “candonga”, as is usually designated the informal economy, became the largest employer and source of training for many Angolans youth, particularly in Luanda. It is precisely this sector that ensures the survival of most Angolan families since it "produces, employs and distributes income" (Hugon, 1999: 90).

In a context of peace, Angola faced a major challenge with regard to the creation of formal employment. The peace has enabled the recovery and growth of the Angolan economy, especially the non-oil sector that since 2005 has recorded a positive performance, in particular, the civil construction, agriculture, industry and financial services (MINPLAN12, 2010: 22). Angola is among the countries that most have grown in recent years, registering a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of around 10.5 per cent (IMF, 2012: 73). This economic recovery has enabled the country social transformations especially in reducing the incidence of poverty, which fell from 68 percent in 2001 to 36.6 percent in 2009 (INE, 2010) and also an improvement in job vacancies. According to estimates, the unemployment rate has gone from 39.8 per cent in 2002 to 25.2 per cent in 2006 (BAfD/OCDE, 2008: 115) and to 20 per cent in 2009 (MINPLAN, 2010: 23). However, this optimistic reality does not affect all the same way since we are talking about skilled employment and, as already pointed out, great

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12 MINPLAN: Ministério do Planeamento (Ministry of Planning)
part of Angolan young people were children and teen in war time and faced constraints to access education, particularly higher education. So, for those unskilled young people, the informal remains the alternative to meet their needs.

Young people often find creative solutions to make things and respond to their demands. If there’s an opportunity they just transform it in a source of income, “I’m a business”, says Chiquinho, a 33 years old male whose activity consist of “buy here and sell there. All that [he] sees that can be sold [he] buys and then after [he] sells it. It allows [him] to survive and to have [his] own business”. This idea of “business” (negócio) or businessman (homem de negócios) is referred by Chiquinho in English and not in Portuguese or another local language, which transmits the intention to be considered different from those whose main economic activity is developed in informal economy. They are not just a simple informal workers, but they are in the top of the business and they do not consider they’re activity as informal.

For those who have a profession, a specific skill and mostly a degree, the reality is completely different “as stated by Ondjaki, a 34 years old male accountant:

Since I’ve finished my graduation I’ve change my job five times. And I feel that I will not stop here. Now, more than ever, the country needs human resources and for those who have qualifications it is much easier.

This position is also emphasized by Navita, a 25 years old female lawyer that states “My graduation allows me not only to be a lawyer but also to teach”.

However, this symbolic recognition of the acquired capital does not seem to track the success of their employability, since it has not been translated into improved economic conditions. The “diploma” did not give to them the expected (and idealized) social recognition which leads them to accumulate functions in different areas in order to face the higher life cost in Luanda:

I have qualifications and I can say that I have a good job but even so I have to work outside of my job because my salary does not allow me to live. If I want to build my house, I have to work in a hairdresser during the weekends (Luena, 30 years old, female, petroleum engineer).

This combination of diverse and different activities and this “promiscuity” between the formal and the informal is the current reality of the Angolan youth in order to cope their own needs. In fact, as the formal jobs increase their offers, informal activities reproduces and enlarges it. As there’s opportunity in informal economy, it can
be perceived as the beginning of entrepreneurship once its heterogeneity, dynamics, actualization and imagination allows to create and develop new sources of income.

The integration of youth in a society that aspires to be modern implies equally the right of citizenship, which means, the right of each one to participate in the society in which they form part. The constraints already appointed conditioned Angola youth civic and political participation. If during the I republic Angola youth were conditioned by central policy and also by war to perform their citizenship, during the II republic that reality changed. The liberalization also allowed the performance of elections (1992, 2008 and 2012) and the youth could express their choices and also their protest. New forms of social relations are emerging and the participation of youth in more varied social groups is widespread (Rodrigues, 2010). Young Angolans are engaging in civil society associations and youth associations, created by themselves, in order to build a fair and balance society, fighting against the corruption, greed, individualism and inequalities that characterizes Angola society. Most of these youth organizations are using the new Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) to get the message inside and outside the country. It’s the case of the Movimento dos Jovens Revolucionários (MJR)\textsuperscript{13} that claims for a free and equal society, the Amplo Movimento de Cidadãos\textsuperscript{14} (AMC) that fights for peace main keeping and citizenship, the Círculo Angolano Intelectual\textsuperscript{15}, mainly directed to intellectuals, the CENTRAL 7311\textsuperscript{16} that raises the voice of a free and democratic Angola.

All these associations are just the starting point to improve youth condition. The most important is that Angolan youth are telling to the governors BASTA! (enough):

Our future is in our own hands. We are the future of this nation. So, it’s better the government start to look to us and to improve our opportunities. We just want to be heard, do build our own house, to take care of our family. That’s all we ask. And for doing that first I need to have a good job, a good salary. Employees must recognize our skills and not just look to us like if we were incapable of doing what they want. We can do more than just war (Luena, 30 years old, female, petroleum engineer).

Additionally, broader access to information makes them question their reality and also elaborate ways of protest, mainly in urban spaces. These urban protests “usually

\textsuperscript{13} Revolutionary Youth Movement
\textsuperscript{14} Citizens Mouvement
\textsuperscript{15} Angolan Intellectual Circle (http://www.circuloangolano.com)
\textsuperscript{16} http://www.facebook.com/centralangola
spontaneous, also involve violence and a risk of repression” (Bayart 2000:6) as it happened in 2011. Following the events dubbed the "Arab Spring", and frustrated about their situation and lack of prospects for future, Angolan youth went to the streets in Luanda, to protest against the government policy and the renomination of José Eduardo dos Santos for the 2012 elections. As a result, many younger’s “were beating, others wounded and the organizers were arrested and convicted” (Lueji, 29 years old, male, locksmith). However, it was clear to everyone that the youth demanded for productive civic engagement.

Being young in an African country recently democratized and growing economically means, per se, to have the responsibility to forge a future for themselves. This future passes through a critical position in what concerns the country policies adopted, as well as the development process in its all dimensions (social, human, economic, political, etc). All respondents expressed their disillusionment about the country situation as well as their own situation. Although they recognize the efforts that the country has made and also an improvement in living conditions, they question the continuity of government policy and their role in all the process of reconstruction and development that is in course. The disenchantment with government policies is clearly visible in the words of Lueji, a 29 years old male locksmith “I did not vote. I went to the polling station but then declined to vote. There was nobody at the time of voting but I gave up. Politicians are all the same liars and I’m tired of them”. For him, youth has been, and still is, largely ignored by Angolan leaders:

Of course they don’t care about us. Just look at the new government. They’re all old, the same since independence. There are no young people there, not even in the provincial governors. Of course there’s a change because there’s more women there and also in parliament. But they are also old guy from the party. They don’t trust about our skills and we need to prove them that we’re also capable of doing, and in my opinion better, what they’re doing.

This youth feeling of discontent is leading the country to social transformations that could be the starting point for the construction of a democratic and equalitarian society.

17 Angola President.
To respond to the youth discontent the president of the republic (and also MPLA’s president), recognized that little attention has been given to youth. To capture the votes of young voters, the government directed policies to support youth such as "facilities" in access to housing (new centralities\textsuperscript{18}), open tendering for youth, creation of higher education institutions around the country (\textit{Regiões Académicas}\textsuperscript{19}), and creation of \textit{Bué} (Entrepreneur Supporters) to encourage young entrepreneurship, among others. On the other hand, Angolan government also approved in 2012 the Executive Plan to Support Youth and respective schedule of actions (Presidential Decree No. 139/12). This plan is nothing more than an update of the Angola Youth Program, government plan approved in 2005, which aimed to mobilize young people to participate more actively and permanently in the process of national reconstruction. The Executive Plan to Support Youth, adopted two months before the elections, reaffirms the important role of youth in peace-keeping and on building an egalitarian and democratic society and establishes a set of actions and programs to be implemented, to improve the condition of youth, in particular, access to education, employment, housing, health, among others.

Recently, in 2013, the executive (government) decided to listen directly young people, and created the \textit{Programa de Auscultação à Juventude} (Program Listen Young People) (PAJ). This new program main objective is to establish a dialogue between the \textit{executivo} and young Angolans, to disseminate and create policies and programs for young people, thereby mobilizing and involving youth in their own social development. The PAJ started on July 24\textsuperscript{th} and is taking place in every Angolan province, county and commune and will end in September with the completion of the \textit{Fórum Nacional da Juventude} (National Youth Forum), where the results of the program will be presented.

Since the beginning of the program, the main difficulties highlighted by young Angolans are: access to education and employment, access to health, improvement of sanitation and water and electricity distribution.

\textsuperscript{18} New centralities are new houses that are being constructed around the country, particularly for young people.

\textsuperscript{19} Academic Regions
New Ways of Protest

Youth are always looking for new ways to express their ideas and convictions as well as to protest about their situation. In some African countries such as Liberia, Malawi, Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Eritrea, Zimbabwe and Zambia theatre plays were adopted as a way of protest (Banham 2006).

In the face or Portuguese colonial policy, young people had to fight in order to be heard. They started to express their resistance against Portuguese colonial policy through poems, literature, songs. They fought against their condition as assimilados20 (assimilated) or black imposed by the colonial power (Neto 1997). In all the adversities they face, young people are always looking for the best opportunity to achieve their goals and for that, creating new spaces for intervention. In doing so, they found a way to protest against the status quo without violence and created a new music style that has emerged at the end of the 1990s and has been used since then by youth as a mean to express their claims and discontent. This new music style – kuduro - emerged from the musseques21 in Luanda, stipulated by the situation of shortage and scarcity that lived in Angola at the time. This new music style - influenced by sungura, kizomba, samba, reggae, afrohouse and rap - has the peculiarity of not being sung but spoken, and express the youth everyday lives in the musseques, particularly their condition as “outsiders” of the society. Young Angolans also use kuduro as social criticism, as we can see in the song – Angola Bwé de Caras (Angola has many Faces) – sung by Dog Murras, one of the Angolan most famous kuduristas22:

Angola has oil, diamond and plenty of wood
Angola is rich in malaria, typhoid and cholera
Angola of the “bosses” that “eat” alone and lots of ambition
Angola of the gasosa23 and corruption
Angola that belongs to the heirs who do nothing and have bwé de massa24
Angola of the honest kota25, that works too much but has no money

20 The primary requirement to be considered as assimilado is the ability to speak the portuguese language. But others requirements were also esssential: be at least 18 years old, earns sufficient income for himself and his family, be of good character , possess the quality necessary for the exercise of the public and private rights of the portuguese, must not have evaded militar servisse or have been declared a desertor.
21 Slums.
22 Kuduro singer
23 A particular form of corruption
24 Lots of money
25 Old men
The dimension reached by this new musical style was such that, currently occupies several hours on radio stations, television programs\textsuperscript{26}, as well as music and dance competitions.

So, despite of the different trajectories of youth Angolan, all have the particularity of being fighting for a better life condition in the country, as well as the construction of a fair and balanced society. Some are more pessimistic but are also trying to compensate the time they’re lost in past. Others present themselves more confident about the country’s future perspective and all have a common objective: to build the new Angola, using their own means, fighting every day.

\textsuperscript{26} As an example, the Angolan Public Television (TPA) TV show \textit{Sempre a Subir}, presented by kuduristas, is entirely dedicated to this music style, namely, new songs, new singers, the evolution of the style itself that has already generate new dance style such as: \textit{windeck, milindro, ladjum, kambuan, pica pau, comba, dança do cotovelo, etc.}
Conclusion

To be young in a country that has faced several constraints through the years, as is the case of Angolan youth, represents a challenge. The Portuguese colonial policy, civil war and economic hardship conditioned Angolan youth experiences and blocked their prospects for the future. Peace has brought many opportunities to improve their condition (end of military compulsory service, access to education and better jobs, citizenship, etc) but also many challenges such as how to respond to the society demands. Access to education, employment and citizenship still represents the main concerns of young Angolans.

From the data, it can be argue that Angolan youth are facing the constraints by their own, finding solutions for their concerns and from that constructing new identities. They create, they reinvent, they survive, they have fresh ideas about the kind of society they want to live in and they’re fighting to defend their ideas, either by protests, social networks or any other way, according to the opportunity. They want to be heard (as it happened in 2011 and 2012 street protests), to be part of the global networks and participate in the most important events (miss universe 2011) and also to organize international events, as happened in 2010 with the organization of the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) and recently with the preparation for the Hockey Skate World Championship (first time in Africa) which will take place in 2013 in the city of Luanda and Namibe.

Once again, it is in youth that lays the promotion of the new solidarities and the production of new parameters. Country’s destiny’s is, once again, in his youth people. For this purpose all – civil society, government, entrepreneurs, church - must be able to listen to them, to give them space to develop their ideas, to support their projects because. And the Programa de Auscultação à Juventude is a just a very good starting point. Listening young people directly will allow to better understand them as well as to identify their main constraints and elaborate programs to solve these constraints faster and efficiently.

Thus, although the number of interviews are not sufficient to make generalizations, the fact is that most young Angolans, despite difficulty, recognizes and identifies themselves an improvement about their condition, which allows them to be optimistic about the future of young people in the country. And they’re doing what they can to participate in that process because now it’s their time!
References


MICS (Inquérito de Indicadores Múltiplos), 2003, Luanda: Unicef/INE.


